

## Holding People's Assembly Elections before Reaching a Political Agreement Is Illegitimate and Undermines the Peace Process

At Least 56 Members of the Current People's Assembly Are Implicated in Committing Egregious Violations That Constitute Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

**SNHR**  
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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## **I. The People's Assembly Elections Are Illegitimate and Imposed by the Regime Security Services, without Any Involvement of the Syrian People:**

On July 19, 2020, the Syrian regime held the 'People's Assembly elections' of the third legislative term, the third such exercise since the start of the popular uprising in which Syria's people demanded long-withheld multiparty democracy and political pluralism, regular changes of power, freedom and justice. Since 1971, 'elections' for the 'People's Assembly' have taken place every four years, but the results of these elections have been always pre-decided in favor of one party, which nominated only one person from the Assad family specifically to be its secretary general, not from any other family of the cadres of the party that claims to have millions of families supporting it. We at the Syrian Network for Rights Human Rights (SNHR) affirm that the recent 'People's Assembly elections' are illegitimate based on these basic points:

**One:** Hafez al Assad banned any partisan activity opposing his rule and outlawed all political parties and movements, effectively ending the previous multiparty system. Meanwhile, under his aegis, the regime formed a sham political bloc, the 'National Progressive Front', consisting of several shell parties to provide a formal, token image of democracy. This bloc's backbone and actual controller is the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, which is in turn controlled by the ruling family. The Assad regime legitimized this control through a provision included in Article 8 of the 1973 Constitution, which literally states that the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party is the leader of the state and society, thus legitimizing one-party rule, dictatorship and, in fact, tyranny.

The Assad family's absolute control of the reins of power in Syria is further cemented by the conflation of the Presidency of the Republic with the post of Secretary-General of the Ba'ath Party in Syria, the latter of which is dynastic, passing from Hafez al Assad to his son Bashar al Assad. This article, which contradicts the most basic principles of human rights and democracy, remained in force until the creation of a 'new' constitution in February 2012, which altered the previous one in minor detail only, with no perceptible difference in its application on the ground, and according to which the Ba'ath Party retained absolute control, with the Secretary-General's position remaining exclusively in the hands of the Assad family and being available to no other member of the party. Syrians have become accustomed to the regime leadership introducing textual changes to the constitution which make no perceptible societal difference and are unaccompanied by any practical application. This applies to a large number of constitutional texts, with the Syrian regime continuously violating all the terms of the constitution without any accountability, supported by the power of the security services, which are another of the regime's tools. For example, the constitution prohibits the indiscriminate and arbitrary killing of Syrians, torture, and the violation of freedom and the right of expression; the Syrian regime has not only violated these terms in practice, but has

even abused the constitutional text itself. There are numerous constitutional provisions that directly contradict other constitutional provisions. For example, the Syrian constitution contains provisions that recognize some universal principles of human rights, while other provisions undermine and obstruct those phrases, and violate the most basic principles of human rights, such as texts that allow the president to control the three main seats of power, as the head of the executive authority, the army and the Ba'ath Party, as well as to head the Supreme Judicial Council, and furthermore to enjoy wide-ranging powers in controlling the People's Assembly and enacting laws.

**Two:** Syria has not only been ruled by only one party since 1963, but this party, which claims to have millions of members, has not nominated even one of these members for the presidency since 1971; instead, rule has remained solely in the hands of the Assad family for fifty years. One of the most glaring demonstrations of this terrible injustice, further insulting the constitutional, judicial and legal history of the Syrian people, was the process of transferring power from Hafez al Assad to his son Bashar following Hafez' death in 2000. Although Bashar al Assad, then aged 34, was unqualified to assume the presidency of the republic at the time according to the terms of the 1973 constitution, Article 83, this article, which required that the president of the republic be at least aged forty, was simply immediately amended to accommodate Bashar al Assad's age and appoint him as president. This once again underlined for all Syrians that no member of the Ba'ath Party or any citizen outside Hafez al Assad's descendants is deemed qualified and suitable to rule Syria, demonstrating the extent of the Assad family's complete control of and domination over the state and its institutions, including the People's Assembly, as well as the security services and the army establishment; in this, as in many other aspects, the Syrian regime can be likened to any other totalitarian regimes.

**Three:** The Ba'ath Party has dominated nearly two-thirds of the members of the People's Assembly since 1973, assisted by the power and intimidation of the security services, with the party using state employees, university students, Red Crescent volunteers, personnel of all the charities it established, and all the beneficiaries of its services, to ensure that all the voting and election processes are in its favor. In addition to all of these, it seems that the Syrian regime realized in 2016 that the Syrian governorates now contain less than a third of their previous population, since more than half of the Syrian people are either displaced or refugees, [according to the High Commissioner](#) for Refugees and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In what appears a compensatory move, the regime issued [Law No. 8 of 2016](#), which allows military and security personnel to participate in the voting process, despite the fact that [Article 134 of the Military Service Law of 2003](#), which is still in force, states that: "Military personnel are prohibited from belonging to political, religious or social parties, bodies, associations, organizations, or forums other than the Arab Ba'ath Party, and are also prohibited from expressing political opinions directed against the principles and objectives of

the Party. Military personnel may not attend events of foreign political representation bodies or contact them and any other foreign bodies except with the approval of the competent authorities". These military and security personnel will definitely vote for the Ba'ath Party.

As for the remaining third of the People's Assembly members, most of these are generally selected by the regime's security services based on the services these individuals have provided for the benefit of the ruling regime, regardless of their damaging effect on Syrian society, including their contribution to violations of human rights and crimes against humanity, with these positions of power being given as a kind of compensation and reward for those services.

This third section incorporates multiple categories, including: militia leaders and relatives of the those killed from Syrian Regime forces, businessmen who established militias or who have contributed to the support of the Syrian regime and some tribesmen and clerics who support the regime. The 'People's Assembly' may also include a very small, single-digit number of individuals of an independent nature, with these members being appointed not in appreciation of their efforts, but rather to provide the Assembly with a patina of credibility.

**Four:** Syria is classified as the second worst country in the world in terms of safety, according to the [Global Peace Index 2020 report](#), followed only by Afghanistan. In addition to insecurity, entire governorates and large areas that make up the majority of the country broke free from the restrictive control of the Syrian regime, such as: Deir Ez-Zour, Hasaka, Raqqqa, the majority of Idlib governorate, large areas of the northern suburbs of Aleppo.

**Five:** Failure to build a new social contract, especially following the expansion of the sharp vertical divisions that afflicted society in the wake of the outbreak of the 2011 popular uprising for democracy, mainly because a number of members of society, including the vast majority of the Alawite sect to which Bashar al Assad belongs, stood by the Syrian regime; this group of regime beneficiaries and loyalists have provided support for and contributed to various types of violations committed by the Syrian regime, including violations that constitute crimes against humanity, with violations also being perpetrated by the other part of society against those who stood by the Syrian regime. A new social contract to unite Syrian society cannot be created while the current ruling authority remains in power, simply because this ruling authority is the main cause of destroying the social contract and creating the various causes of societal division.



**Six:** These elections are of no concern to the Syrian people, and the results are not binding on them except by virtue of the control of the security services and the power of military subjugation, because they are illegitimate.. Their lack of legitimacy comes also from blatantly violating the rulings of the international community - represented by the UN Security Council - pertaining to Syria. These 'elections' constitute a terrible violation of firstly: The Geneva Communiqué, which was included in [Security Council Resolution No. 2118](#); and secondly: [Security Council Resolution No. 2254](#). Both these resolutions clearly stipulate that the solution to the internal armed conflict is the formation of a transitional governing body exercising full executive powers with representation from both the regime and the opposition, which could then create a new constitution, and only then hold parliamentary and presidential elections based on this new constitution.

Article 4 of Resolution 2254 clearly states this sequence: "Expresses its support, in this regard, for a Syrian-led political process that is facilitated by the United Nations and, within a target of six months, establishes credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance and sets a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution, and further expresses its support for free and fair elections, pursuant to the new constitution, to be held within 18 months and administered under supervision of the United Nations, to the satisfaction of the governance and to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians, including members of the diaspora, eligible to participate, as set forth in the 14 November 2015 ISSG Statement."

Given the importance of the Security Council resolutions in ensuring international legitimacy, we believe that this factor is a fundamental one pushing the Security Council to move urgently to issue a clear resolution condemning the Syrian regime's violation of resolutions related to the political process.

In addition, the failure of the United Nations and the international community to ensure political transition does not in any way mean that the Syrian regime alone has the right to hold parliamentary elections. On the contrary, holding such elections make a nonsense of the regime's very presence in constitutional committee talks. These illegitimate elections once again prove, as SNHR has repeatedly stated, that the Syrian regime is wholly deceitful and not serious in engaging in any political process that guarantees the country's transition towards democracy and stability. Furthermore, the regime is actively encouraged not to comply with international law by two main factors:

First: The unlimited Russian support in the Security Council, as well as Russia's military and political support, in addition to Iranian material and military support.

Second: The failure of the rest of the world, especially the democratic and nominally civilized countries, to make greater efforts to ensure that the Syrian regime and its allies comply with the Security Council resolutions and their timetable.

Both of these factors have encouraged the Syrian regime to continue with its strategy of holding on to power through manipulation and deceit, and to hold so-called parliamentary elections, as well as to continue with committing various types of violations against the Syrian people, some of which amount to crimes against humanity. In the same vein, the regime has even started preparing for the holding of as illegitimate presidential elections whose outcome – the ‘victory’ of Bashar al Assad – is already pre-decided.

The timid reaction of the international community and of the UN Special Envoy over the Syrian regime's blatant violation of UN Security Council resolutions throughout the course of the peace process through to the holding of these ‘elections’ can unfortunately only be interpreted as a green light for the Syrian regime and an encouragement to proceed with the presidential ‘elections.’

**Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:**

“The Syrian regime treats the Syrian state as if it were private property in a far worse manner than the darkest days of the Middle Ages. It has proven to supporters that it can do whatever it likes and still enjoy impunity, and even continue to rule Syria and plunder its wealth. The Syrian regime has violated all UN Security Council resolutions hundreds of times, including those proscribing the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs, and enforced disappearance, as well as violating peace process decisions. It has done so because it believes in nothing but a zero-sum solution that results in the ruling family maintaining power with absolute legislative, executive and judicial powers in a way that surpasses the most depraved crimes of other totalitarian regimes.”

## **II. At Least 56 People's Assembly members - 22% of the Total - Are Involved in Committing Violations, Some of Which Constitute Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes:**

Since its establishment, the SNHR has documented multiple types of violations by the various parties to the armed conflict in Syria, with some of these violations amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes. We have always tried, as part of our work in documenting the violations, to identify the individuals working within the perpetrator parties and to identify the bodies they work for, their rank, the length of time during which they have they worked and other details, in addition to the individuals who contributed to supporting, financing and establishing local militias. This is an arduous and complicated process, given the concealment of these names by the parties to the conflict, the difficulty of obtaining details from the civilian population, and other challenges.

The database that we have built up during the past nine years, which is subject to continuous re-viewing, updating and editing, contains data of at least 14,737 individuals that we assess to have been involved in committing one or more types of violations. The vast majority of these individuals work under some entity controlled by the Syrian regime and its allies.

Various institutions of the Syrian regime have been involved in committing widespread and systematic violations, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, with every person who either ordered, incited, encouraged, justified, participated in, provided assistance for or facilitated those crimes being assigned individual responsibility. At the forefront of these institutions are the army and the security bodies. Since the first months of the popular uprising in March 2011, local, Arab and international media, as well as Syrian social media pages, have been constantly filled with innumerable violations against the Syrian people by these two institutions, and it has become virtually impossible after nearly ten years for anyone to deny the knowledge that these violations have occurred.

The SNHR's team cross-checked the data of persons who 'won' seats in the 'People's Assembly elections' with the SNHR database of individuals involved in committing violations, discovering that 56 members of the assembly are directly involved in committing violations against the Syrian people which may reach the level of crimes against humanity. These individuals, whose names can be made available, belong on the lists of US, European, Turkish and Canadian sanctions, and should be targeted through the sanctions of the Caesar Act.

We must further note in this context that the Ba'ath Party has established a local fighting militia called the 'Ba'ath Brigades', while the Syrian Social National Party, one of the National Front parties which recently changed its name, established another local fighting militia called 'Nusour al Zawba'a, in order to fight alongside Syrian Regime forces.

As we mentioned earlier, the 'People's Assembly' is nothing but a rubber-stamp for the Syrian regime, an institution affiliated with and under the regime's control that implements whatever is required of it, carrying out the regime's instructions to the letter, and enacting whatever laws the regime desires. As such, it has never criticized any of the widespread and systematic violations carried out by the Syrian regime, or by its security and military apparatuses.

We have emphasized that these elections are illegitimate because they contradict UN Security Council resolutions on Syria, but we would also like to highlight that nearly a quarter of the assembly members are directly involved in committing violations against the Syrian people, some of which constitute crimes against humanity, specifically the 56 aforementioned members. In addition to this, we have analyzed statements issued by all [250](#) members of the Assembly, noting that all their statements and writings support the Syrian regime and Bashar al Assad; taking into account the size of the report, we will summarize the data on 24 members among the 56 involved in the commission of violations against the Syrian people, as well as analyzing statements by eight other members who support the Syrian regime and the person of Bashar al Assad, with the most prominent of these being:



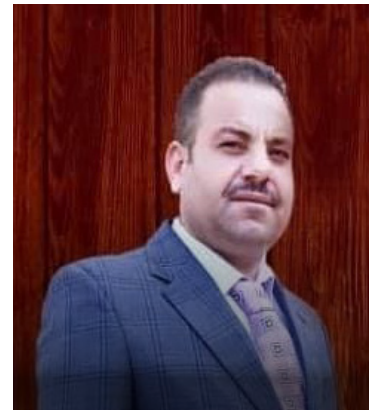
### **Madloul Omar al Aziz Aal Hmaish**

From Marat village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, nicknamed Abu Dabbah, he is from al Obeidat clan, one of al Baggara clans. Madloul worked with both al Nusra Front - one of the extremist Islamist groups - and with Ahrar al Sham Islamic Movement - one of the Armed Opposition factions - in Deir Ez-Zour governorate in buying and selling oil and exporting it to the Syrian regime between 2012 and 2015.

After Syrian Regime forces took control of the villages of Deir Ez-Zour suburbs west of the Euphrates River, he formed an armed militia that included around 100 fighters from the villages of Marat, Mazloom and Hatla, and received support from the Iranian-backed Imam Muhammad al Baqir Brigade. He also works within the Katerji company to export and buy oil from areas controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces.

Madloul supported the spread of Shiism in the villages of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, and received support from the Air Force Intelligence and Iranian militias in Deir Ez-Zour. The forces of Madloul al Aziz established many checkpoints that were spread across the areas of Deir Ez-Zour, the Badiya and the International Road, with the personnel at his affiliated checkpoints known for imposing financial fees on those passing through them, in addition to carrying out kidnappings for ransom, and participating in many military operations alongside Syrian Regime forces.

Madloul won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Deir Ez-Zour governorate.



### **Mhanna Sheikh Fayyad al Naser al Thyab**

[From al Shamitiya village](#) in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, born in 1982, he has a high school certificate, and is one of the sheikhs of al Bousaraya clan. On October 28, 2013, members affiliated with Ahrar al Sham Islamic Movement - one of the opposition factions - kidnapped him from his home in al Shamitiya village, due to his pro-Syrian regime stances, following two days of clashes between members of his clan and Ahrar al Sham Movement.

After his release, he established groups of al Bousaraya fighters militia, supported by al Bustan Charity<sup>1</sup>. These groups fought alongside the regime's Air Force Intelligence Division in many Syrian areas, and participated with Syrian Regime forces in imposing control over many areas of Deir Ez-Zour governorate at the end of 2017.



<sup>1</sup> Al Bustan Charity, which was founded by Rami Makhoul, the cousin of the Syrian regime's president, has supported regime forces and many local militias.

The groups affiliated with him confiscated and burned the property of al Bousaraya clan, opponents of the Syrian regime. Mhanna also recruited young men from his clan for both the National Defense Militia and the Iranian-backed al Quds Brigade, and has coordinated with Russian forces to recruit young men for them to fight in Libya.

[Mhanna won membership](#) in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

### **Naseeb Ajwad Abu Mahmoud**

From al Dour village in the suburbs of the Suwayda governorate, born in 1954, he holds a degree in Military Sciences, graduating from the Armored Forces Academy in Moscow, as well as from the National Defense College of the Higher Military Academy in Syria. A retired officer with the rank of Major General, Naseeb held many leadership positions between 2010 and 2016 (commander of a tank brigade, commander of an armored division, chief of the General Inspection of the Armed Forces). During his tenure in these positions, he participated in many military operations carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the governorates of Homs, Hama and Idlib.



Naseeb [won membership](#) in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Suwayda governorate.

A campaign poster for Naseeb Ajwad Abu Mahmoud published as part of his [election campaign](#).

### **Maher Mahfoud Qawarma**

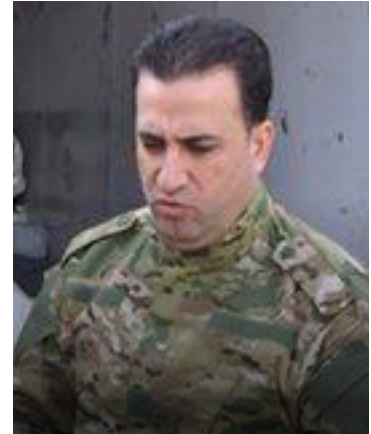
From Mharda city in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1965, he holds a certificate from an institute of physical education, and is a founding partner in two companies, namely 'Zakharef for Conferences' and 'al Sarmad Software'.

Maher is a member of the Ba'ath Party in which he has held several positions. He is known among the local population for his close ties with the security branches. He participated in establishing and supporting several groups affiliated with the National Defense Militia in Mharda city, with these groups participating in military operations in the suburbs of Hama governorate that were outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, including the bombing, looting and displacement that took place in these areas between 2013 and 2019.

[Maher](#) was [a member](#) of the [People's Assembly](#) in the first and second legislative terms, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Hama governorate.

### **Ammar Badea al Assad**

From Latakia governorate, born in 1970, he has a degree in mechanical engineering, and holds a PhD in economic sciences and maritime management. He has held several positions in regime bodies, including managing operations in the port of Latakia, and heading the Latakia branch of the Engineers Syndicate. Ammar participated in establishing and supporting the National Defense Center in Latakia city and supported the militias led by his two brothers, Numeir and Wasim al Assad, as well as supporting the Desert Falcons militia and the Sea Commandos<sup>2</sup> backed by Iranian militias. He is one of the cousins of the Syrian regime's President Bashar al Assad and is known for his close relationship with him. Ammar is also known for engaging in suspicious smuggling business.



[Ammar was a member](#) of the [People's Assembly](#) in the first and second legislative terms, and he won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Latakia governorate.

### **Yousef Hasan al Salama**

From Balqasa village in the western suburbs of Homs governorate, born in 1965, he holds a PhD in administrative sciences, serving as the commander of the Damascus Center for the Ba'ath Party Brigades, and the supervisor of the Ba'ath Brigade of the Fifth Corps, whose members are deployed at many checkpoints in Damascus city.

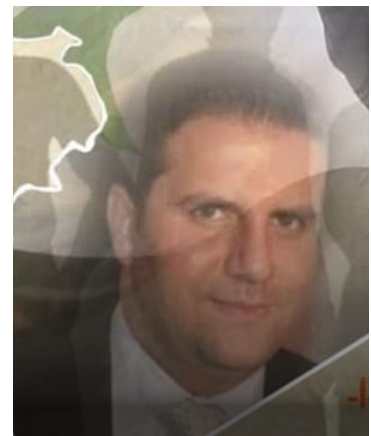
Yousef won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Homs governorate.



### **Fadel Muhammad Warda**

From al Se'in village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in Damascus city in 1977, he holds a law degree.

Fadel participated in establishing the National Defense Militia Center in al Salamiyaarea in the suburbs of Hama governorate and assumed its leadership, taking charge of many military operations in various areas of Hama governorate and the eastern suburbs of Homs governorate, as well as appointing many perpetrators of violations as leaders of groups affiliated with the National Defense Militia in al Salamiyaarea.



<sup>2</sup> The Desert Falcons and Sea Commandos militia groups, established in Latakia governorate, are supported by relatives of the Syrian regime's president, the regime-backed al Bustan Charity, and businessmen in Latakia governorate, and participated in the military operations in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, Damascus Suburbs governorate and other areas. These groups carried out looting and kidnappings in the Latakia governorate. They were also trained by Russian officers and received military support from Iran.

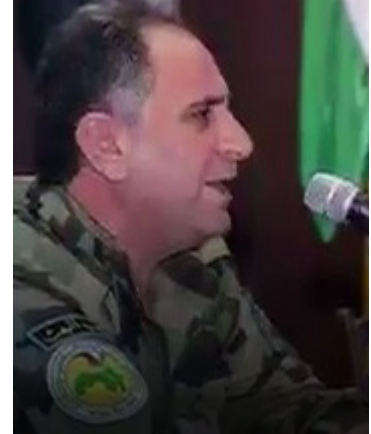
[Fadel and the leaders](#) of the groups affiliated with him are known for carrying out looting operations<sup>3</sup> in the areas of the eastern suburbs of Hama, which they stormed, with his forces imposing escorts and royalties<sup>4</sup> at their checkpoints.

Fadel was a [member of the People's Assembly](#) in the first and second legislative terms, and he won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Hama governorate.

### **Basem Suleiman Sudan**

From Zinyou village in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, born in 1969, he holds a master's degree in business administration. He took command of the Ba'ath Brigades Militia in Latakia since its establishment at the end of 2012, then assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Ba'ath Brigades.

[Basem was a member of the People's Assembly](#) in the second legislative term, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Latakia governorate.

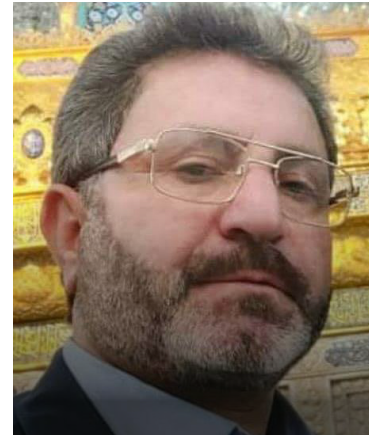


### **Muhammad Amin Hussein al Raja**

From Hatla town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, he holds a law degree from the Euphrates University in Deir Ez-Zour.

Muhammad is currently commanding the Syrian Hezbollah militia in Deir Ez-Zour backed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps militia, and has also worked to spread Shiism in the villages of Deir Ez-Zour.

[Muhammad was a member](#) of the People's Assembly in the second legislative term, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Deir Ez-Zour governorate.



### **Isam Nabhan Sebahi**

From Qamhana village in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, he holds a law degree and has worked in several positions in the Customs Directorate of Aleppo. Isam participated in establishing the Ba'ath Brigades in Hama governorate in the end of 2012 before assuming the positions of deputy of the Ba'ath Brigade in Syria, and commander of the northern sector in the National Defense Militia. Prior to that, he participated in the brutal suppression of peaceful protests and shootings of the demonstrators in Qamhana village and Hama city in 2011,



3 'Escort' is a mafia-style service when groups affiliated with Syrian Regime forces 'escort' vehicles carrying various commercial goods and protect them from looting when passing through the Syrian regime's checkpoints in exchange for massive sums of money, with vehicles which refuse to be 'escorted' being looted, robbed, or confiscated by the same forces, or simply being forbidden from passing through checkpoints.

4 Similar to 'escorts', 'Royalties' refers to payments imposed on civilians or vehicles in exchange for allowing them to pass through checkpoints.



along with security forces and a number of his family members. After his establishment and leadership of the Ba'ath Brigades in Hama governorate, he participated in the military operations in the governorate. He belongs to the Ba'ath Party and held several positions in the party branch in Hama governorate.

Isam won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Hama governorate.

### **Hussein Hasan al Jum'a al Hajj Qasem**

From Aleppo city, born in 1980, he belongs to al Bo Sha'ban clan and is one of the founders of Liwa al Sfira (Brigade) with his brother Mer'e al Jum'a. Hussein left the leadership of Liwa al Sfira to his brother Mer'e, with his involvement now being limited to providing his sibling with financial support following his 'victory' in the elections of the [second legislative term of the People's Assembly](#).



Liwa al Sfira was active in the areas of the southern suburbs of Aleppo and received support from al Baqer Brigade<sup>5</sup>, which is backed by Iranian and Lebanese sectarian militias, and participated in the bombing and looting operations that coincided with the military operations launched by Syrian Regime forces on the areas of the southern suburbs of Aleppo that were outside regime control.

Hussein won membership in the [People's Assembly](#) in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Aleppo areas Department.

[A video](#) taken in November 2017 for Hussein Hasan al Jum'a al Hajj Qasem delivering a speech to the sheikhs and dignitaries of the clans in the suburbs of the Aleppo governorate, in the presence of field commanders of local militias and security committees in Aleppo governorate.

### **Hussam Ahmad Rushdi Katerji**

Born in 1982, Katerji, a businessman, owns many companies operating in various fields, such as al Katerji International Group, Jouzour for Agriculture and Livestock company, Katerji for Commerce and Transportation, the Alep for Security Solutions and Study, Arfada Petroleum, and others.

Hussam founded and supported several armed groups of his own, known among the local population as 'al Katerji Groups', which are particularly spread throughout Aleppo city and Raqqa governorate. His forces have worked in the field of 'escorting' commercial vehicles between the various areas of control in the Syrian governorates, and have participated in



<sup>5</sup> The Imam Muhammad al Baqer Brigade was established on a sectarian basis at the end of 2012 with the support of the Lebanese Hezbollah militia and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps that support it. The brigade has worked to conscript children and young people into its ranks and to spread Shiism in the areas where it is present, especially in the governorates of Aleppo and Deir Ez-Zour.



the suppression of dissent and arrests in Aleppo governorate. He has also contributed to supporting the security branches in Aleppo city with financial grants.

In October 2017, [Reuters](#) published a report on Hussam, in which it spoke about his mediation in the transfer of oil and wheat from areas controlled by ISIS and then Syrian Democratic Forces to the Syrian regime.

Hussam Katerji is considered one of the businessmen who support the Syrian regime in circumventing the international economic sanctions imposed on it.

[Hussam was a member](#) of the People's Assembly in the second legislative term, and he won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Aleppo governorate.

### **Hasan Muhammad Shahid**

From the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1981, he owns the Shahid Brothers Company for Supplies and Transportation.

Hasan contributed to the establishment and support of Fawj al Asasina Militia, in cooperation with the Imam Muhammad al Baqer Brigade, supported by Iranian and Lebanese sectarian militias, which worked alongside Syrian Regime forces in the southern suburbs of Aleppo. He also worked to conscript children and young men from his area into the ranks of his forces.

[Hasan was a member](#) of the People's Assembly in the second legislative term, and he won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Aleppo areas Department.



### **Oruba Nayef Mahfoud**

From Baqrafa village, which is administratively a part of Masyaf area in the suburbs of Hama governorate, the head of the cultural center in Masyaf city, she participated in supporting Syrian Regime forces in many of the activities that she organized in Misyaf area. Oruba, who is the wife of the leader Kamal Mahmoud, the commander of Fawj al Hawarith Militia, participated in the recruitment of young men for the National Defense Militia, and transferred much of the charitable aid that was sent to the Red Crescent branch in Misyaf to benefit recruits in the National Defense Militia and Fawj al Hawarith.

Oruba won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Hama governorate.



[A video](#) taken on August 1, 2019, for Oruba Mahfoud on 'Syrian Arab Army Day' after assuming the duties of the presidency of the Arab Cultural Center in Misyaf in Hama suburbs.

### **Omar Hussein al Hasan / al Mar'e**

From Aleppo governorate, he belongs to al Baggara clan and is considered one of its dignitaries. He is the political representative for the Imam Muhammad al Baqer Brigade in Syria, which is supported by Iranian and Lebanese sectarian militias. Omar won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Aleppo areas Department.



### **Aal Hasan Muhammad Shaban Berri**

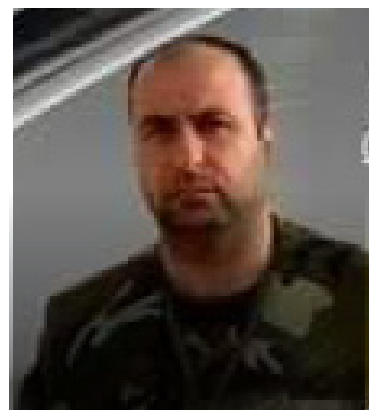
Born in 1972, he is one of the sheikhs of the Berri clan, which is known for its absolute loyalty to the Syrian regime.

At the beginning of 2012, he established the armed groups of Berri, which are known among the local population as al Berri Militia. He recruited young men and boys within these groups, which participated in military operations alongside Syrian Regime forces in storming the neighborhoods of the eastern city of Aleppo at the end of 2016. They also established several checkpoints in Aleppo governorate, and seized many properties of activists and opponents in the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo.

[Aal Hasan Berri](#) was [a member of the People's Assembly](#) in the first and second legislative terms, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Aleppo governorate.

### **Thaer Jawdat Hasan**

From Latakia governorate, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Military Sciences from the War College. He was formerly a Lieutenant Colonel in the Syrian Regime forces, who retired from military service after suffering an injury that led to an amputation of a lower limb while participating in military operations. Thaer won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Latakia governorate and was a candidate for the National Unity List of the Ba'ath Party.



### Hasan Badea Kousa

From Latakia city, born in 1967, he holds a technical diploma in tourism sciences. He is head of the Latakia Chamber of Tourism. He contributed to supporting Liwa al Quds' Latakia brigade, and has close ties with the leaders of the local militias in Latakia city.

Hasan won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Latakia governorate  
Hasan Kousa, on the left of the photo.



### Samer Muhammad al Debs

A businessman from Damascus city, born in 1962, he is the Chairman of the Damascus and its Suburbs Chamber of Industry. He has established several packaging factories in Syria, and provided financial grants to leaders in the National Defense Militia in Damascus city, as well as contributing through his commercial relations to supporting the Syrian regime in import and export operations and evading economic sanctions. [Samer a Debs](#) was [a member of the People's](#) Assembly in the first and second legislative terms, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Damascus governorate.

[A statement](#) by Samer al Debs, as Chairman of the Damascus and its suburbs Chamber of Industry, at the Third Industrial Conference in Aleppo on November 6, 2018, in which he expressed support for Syrian Regime forces and reconstruction.



### Fouad Muhammad Subhi Aldani

From Binnesh city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1977, he owns the al Fouad Industrial and Commercial Group. He has fought within the ranks of Syrian Regime forces since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Since the beginning of 2014, he has been a member of the Tiger Forces' 25th Special Tasks Division led by 'Suhail al Hasan', and took over the leadership of the Numour al Assad group in it.



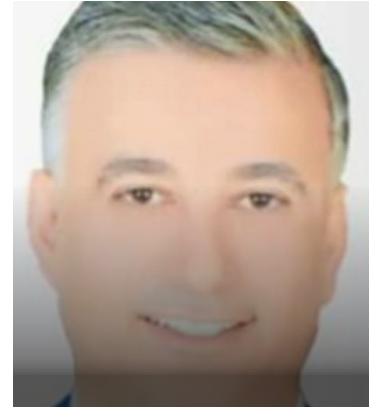
[Fouad won membership](#) in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Idlib governorate

[A video published](#) during the election campaign for Fouad Muhammad Subhi Aldani showing his military role in the 25th Special Tasks Division.

### **Ayham Najdat Jrykous**

From Slinfa area in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, born in 1975, he holds a degree in human medicine, and is one of the founders of the 'Latakia One Heart' association. He took over the file of the kidnapped in Latakia governorate, and established several groups of armed popular committees affiliated with the militia of the National Defense Forces in Slinfa and al Heffa areas in the suburbs of Latakia governorate.

[Ayham was a member](#) of the [People's Assembly](#) in the first and second legislative terms, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Latakia governorate.



### **Hasan Hamza Saloumi**

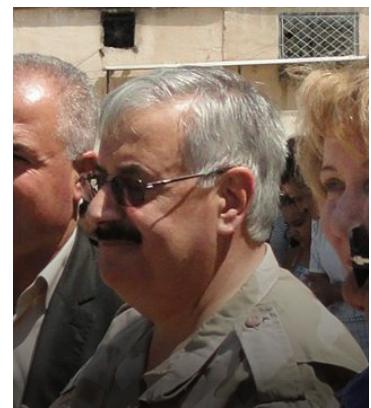
From Hasaka governorate, he led several militia groups within the National Defense Forces in Hasaka and participated in many military operations alongside Syrian Regime forces.

[Hasan was a member](#) of the [People's Assembly](#) in the second legislative term, and won membership in the assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Hasaka governorate.

A video published during the election campaign for Hasan Hamza Saloumi shows him wearing military uniform and taking part in military operations with Syrian Regime forces.

### **Mustafa Sukkari al Mustafa**

From Ma'r Shahour village, east of Hama governorate, born in 1951, he holds a Bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Law from the University of Damascus. He has held many leadership positions within the regime, including: Head of the Anti-Narcotics Service in Aleppo, Head of the Criminal Security Branch in both Hama and Damascus, Assistant Commander of Damascus Suburbs Police, Police Commander of Tartous governorate, and Police Commander of Damascus governorate. He was promoted to the rank of Major-General and was appointed assistant to the Minister of Interior, in addition to holding several positions in the Ba'ath Party.



Mustafa won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (A) for Hama governorate

[A video](#) taken on August 1, 2017, shows Mustafa Sukkari al Mustafa [congratulating](#) the Syrian army forces on 'Army Day'.

### **Basema Saleh Shater**

A Brigadier-General, from Damascus city, who holds a bachelor's degree in dentistry, she manages the file of the wounded and injured in the regime's Ministry of Interior, and was appointed as the director of the ministry's Medical Services Department.

Basema made several field visits<sup>6</sup> to regime forces sites in the governorates of Damascus and Damascus Suburbs to support the military operations launched by the regime forces against the cities and towns that had broken free of their control in these two governorates.

Basema won membership in the People's Assembly in its third legislative term for Category (B) for Damascus governorate.

[A video](#) promoting Basema Shater and the tasks she undertook. The video was published as part of [her election campaign](#) on social media.

[A video](#) taken in August 2015 showing Basema in a television interview on al Manar TV making statements in support of the Syrian regime and its forces.

Examples of statements by a number of the People's Assembly members about their support for the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, and the military forces involved in committing violations, some of which amount to crimes against humanity against the Syrian people:

### **Muhammad Ezzat Mazhar Arabi Katbi**

[A video](#) taken in March 2020 showing Muhammad Ezzat delivering a speech in which he expresses his support for the Syrian regime at a celebration of the Ba'ath Vanguard Organization in Aleppo.

### **Wahid Mahmoud al Zaal**

[A video](#) taken in November 2019 showing statements by Wahid al Zaal confirming his support for Syrian Regime forces and the Syrian regime's president.

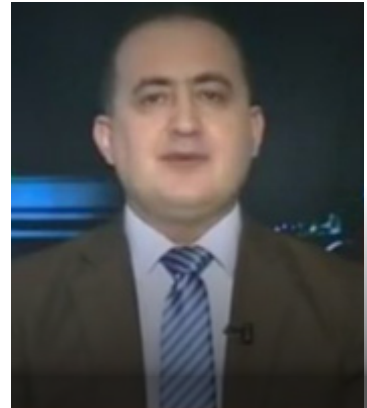
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<sup>6</sup> Al Wahda, the first woman with the rank of Major-General in Syria. Doctor Basema Saleh al Shater: "President Assad did justice to me and honored me, and great responsibilities await me" <<<https://bit.ly/3iFhezy> >>



**Nidal Abdul Hafiz Mhanna**

A photo published by Nidal Mhanna on [his account](#) on the 'Facebook' social networking website showing his media intervention through which he supported Syrian Regime forces and their battles.

**Ahmad Nabil Kuzbari**

[A video](#) taken in October 2019 of Ahmad Nabil Kuzbari delivering a speech in Geneva in which he supported the Syrian regime and the army establishment

**Muhammad Khair Ahmad al Akam**

[A video](#) taken in August 2019 showing Muhammad Khair al Akam during a television interview on al Ghad TV, confirming the 'liberation' of Idlib governorate from 'terrorism' in which he voices support for Syrian Regime forces.

**Muhammad Khair Jasem al Nader**

[A video](#) taken in June 2018 showing Muhammad Khair al Nader confirming his support for the Syrian regime and its military operations.

**Ahed Daher al Sukkari**

[A video](#) taken in October 2013 showing Ahed al Sukkari in a television interview on Sama TV, talking about his support for the Syrian regime.

**Yagi Jamil Ali**

[A video](#) taken during the election campaign for Yaghi Jamil, in which he confirmed his support for Syrian Regime forces.

### **III. The Syrian Regime Held the 'Elections' at the Height of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic, Whilst Deliberately Spreading Disinformation about the Number of Cases of Infections and Deaths Due to the COVID-19:**

For nearly ten years, the Syrian regime has bombed residential city neighborhoods, villages and towns, and besieged entire areas, causing the death of more than a quarter of a million civilians, by means including dropping barrel bombs and using chemical weapons, as well as torture and barbaric detention conditions that have led to deaths due to torture. The regime is still detaining at least 130,000 Syrian citizens up to the current day, including 100,000 forcibly disappeared persons. Despite all this, the 'People's Assembly' has not once demanded that the regime reveal the fate of even one of these individuals, or launched an investigation into the killing of at least 14,000 Syrian citizens inside the Syrian regime's detention centers. Based on all these factors, and on other types of violations, some of which reach the level of crimes against humanity, it is abundantly clear that the Syrian regime does not care at all about the lives of Syrian citizens as it does not seem to care of the spread of the COVID-19 within Syrian society. Its sole concern only ever being to preserve the ruling class, it has called for elections for the 'People's Assembly' despite the fact that Syria is suffering from a catastrophic outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, amid what we have seen from the massive announcement of deaths on social media pages in the past two months, without anyone inside Syria daring to mention that the cause of death was infection with the COVID-19.

We have seen the gathering of voters in the elections, including government employees, members of the army and police services, their families, and personnel with the Syrian regime's charities, without the slightest regard for the simplest rules of physical distancing. The vast majority of members of these groups have not worn protective masks, which confirms that the Syrian regime does not care about the lives of citizens and shows that its sole concern is to proceed with a unilateral solution through these elections in order to prepare for and guarantee its victory in the presidential elections and remain in power. Thereafter, all that the Syrian regime needs to do, from its own viewpoint, is to announce the end of the political process, claiming that there is no longer any need for it after it completely regained control of all the Syrian territories and, nominally at least, held parliamentary and presidential elections. This is in short what the Syrian regime seeks to achieve, regardless of the horrific costs in murders and arrests of opponents, and in deaths due to infection with the COVID-19.

## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations:

### **Conclusions:**

Since the Assad family took control of power in Syria, the 'People's Assembly' has been only one of its tools of power; this body has never represented the Syrian people or held a government accountable for its violations against Syrians. Also, the Ba'ath Party, which has always claimed that it has millions of members, has nominated nobody since 1970 except Hafez al Assad, continuing this tradition after his death by nominating his son Bashar al Assad. Amending the constitution for this purpose constituted one of the most grotesque insults to the Syrian people, society and history, providing one more stark illustration of the extent of the Assad family's domination of every aspect of the Syrian state, maintained through its absolute control over the security and military services. It is possible to describe the 'People's Assembly' in Syria as a war assembly which exists to support the Syrian regime. This is why it was not surprising to any of the millions of Syrians calling for an end to this authoritarian and dictatorial regime in favor of a pluralistic and democratic system, that this body did not direct any criticism or demand any accountability of the Syrian regime throughout all the years of its rule. The assembly has maintained this complicit acquiescence as a tool of the regime since 2011, while witnessing the governments led by the President of the Republic committing widespread violations that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, extending to the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, the displacement of more than 13 million Syrian citizens, with the Syrian regime having killed more than a quarter of a million civilians, including nearly 14,000 Syrian citizens due to torture, and 'disappearing' nearly 100,000 others, according to the SNHR database, and to reports of UN committees and International organizations.

Despite all that, not a single regime minister has been questioned or dismissed. On the contrary, the 'People's Assembly', which is supposed to be the voice for society in the face of the ruling authority as well, did not oppose any of the violations and crimes committed by the Syrian regime and the arbitrary decrees it applied against Syrian society.

The Syrian regime needs these elections, despite their being an obvious sham, in order to show that there is a legislative authority by which laws are issued, and to suggest that it is not a totalitarian state imposing authoritarian rule. The facts, however, expose the reality and have consistently proven that the 'People's Assembly' has never been anything but one of the tools of power that the regime uses whenever it wants, like all the other institutions under its absolute control, such as the army or the Immigration and Passports department. This is evidenced by its being used to enact and rubber-stamp whatever laws the ruling regime desires, whether or not these oppose international human rights law and the interests of the Syrian people, as is the case with the laws on burglary and control of property, for example.

The most important issue and the subject on which we wish to focus in our conclusion to this report remains the fact that these so-called elections constitute a crushing blow to the peace process, violating the Security Council resolutions on the political process, opposing the international will represented by the UN Security Council. Based on all of the above facts, these elections are conclusively proven to be wholly illegitimate and lacking in any credibility, as well as being in no way representative of Syrian people and Syrian society. Rather, they are imposed by brute force of arms and the oppressive power of the security services, aiming solely to strengthen the Assad family's control of power and to pave the way for Bashar al Assad's 'victory' in the upcoming presidential elections, leading to the next step, in which the regime aims to announce the end of the political process and its participation in this indefinitely.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **The UN Special Envoy to Syria:**

- The UN Special Envoy should be more stringent with the Syrian regime in opposing its flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions related to the political process, and in directly condemning these elections.
- The UN Special Envoy must declare an unambiguous position for the sake of all the Syrian people in regard to the illegitimacy of these elections and the extent to which they violate the Security Council resolutions.
- Any failure by the UN Special Envoy to take a clear and deterrent stance will encourage the Syrian regime to move forward towards destroying the remainder of the political solution and to work on holding formal presidential 'elections,' the results of which will be nothing but predetermined in favor of Bashar al Assad, similar to the farcical elections of the 'People's Assembly,' which the Ba'ath Party won, and will continue to win and transferring the presidency to the Assad family forever.

#### **UN Security Council:**

- Condemn the Syrian regime's breaches of Security Council resolutions and its insistence on continuing with elections that undermine the political process and contradict Security Council resolutions.
- The UN Security Council's failure to take a decisive stance on the elections held by the Syrian regime will mean that the UNSC is effectively giving a green light to the Syrian regime, encouraging it to violate the decisions of the political process and to move forward towards holding presidential elections whose outcome is predetermined to result in Bashar al Assad's 'victory'.
- Put pressure on the Syrian regime to complete the stages of the political transition towards pluralism and democracy within a period not exceeding 18 months.

**The United Nations and the international community:**

- Direct clear messages from all the countries of the world rejecting these elections and classifying them as illegitimate due to their violation of Security Council resolutions.
- Classify the Syrian regime's conduct of these elections as a unilateral step aimed at completely undermining the peace process.
- Place the largest possible number of those involved in committing violations that constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people on the European, Canadian, US and Turkish sanctions lists, and those of all the world's countries.
- Impose sanctions on the Syrian regime in response to the unilateral move to hold these elections which demonstrate the regime's disregard of the international community and the Security Council.
- Impose direct sanctions on the Syrian regime's allies, primarily Russia and Iran for supporting it in committing violations and in evading its responsibility in the political process.





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