

Treasury Sanctions Iran-Backed Militia Leaders Who Killed Innocent Demonstrators in Iraq

December 6, 2019

Action Also Targets Corrupt Iraqi Millionaire for Bribery

Washington – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated three leaders of Iran-backed militias in Iraq that opened fire on peaceful protests, killing dozens of innocent civilians. OFAC designated Qais al-Khazali, Laith al-Khazali, and Husayn Falih ‘Aziz al-Lami pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13818 for their involvement in serious human rights abuse in Iraq. Additionally, OFAC designated Iraqi millionaire businessman Khamis Farhan al-Khanjar al-Issawi for bribing government officials and engaging in corruption at the expense of the Iraqi people.

“Iran’s attempts to suppress the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people for reform of their government through the slaughter of peaceful demonstrators is appalling,” said Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. “Peaceful public dissent and protest are fundamental elements of all democracies. The United States stands with the Iraqi people in their efforts to root out corruption. We will hold accountable the perpetrators of human rights abuse and corruption in Iraq.”

As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of the individuals named below, and of any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by them, individually or with other designated persons, that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons, are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC or otherwise exempt, OFAC’s regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons. In addition, any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a U.S. person, wherever located, of a transaction by a foreign person where the transaction by that foreign person would be prohibited by E.O. 13818 if performed by a U.S. person or within the United States would be prohibited.

QAIS AL-KHAZALI AND LAITH AL-KHAZALI

Qais al-Khazali is Secretary General of the Iran-backed Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) militia in Iraq. During the late 2019 protests in many cities in Iraq, AAH has opened fire on and killed protesters. Laith al-Khazali, Qais al-Khazali's brother, is also a leader of AAH. Qais al-Khazali was part of a committee of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) proxies that approved the use of lethal violence against protesters for the purpose of public intimidation.

In Diyala Province, Iraq, AAH has been involved in widespread forced disappearances, abductions, killings, and torture, targeting Sunni Iraqis with impunity. In late 2015, Laith al-Khazali controlled efforts to remove Sunnis from areas of Diyala Province, including killings to drive Sunnis from the area.

Additionally, Qais and Laith al-Khazali had leading roles in a January 2007 attack on an Iraqi government compound in Karbala. The attack killed five U.S. soldiers and wounded three.

Qais al-Khazali is designated for being a foreign person who is a leader or official of an entity, including any government entity, that has engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, serious human rights abuse relating to his tenure.

Laith al-Khazali is designated for being a foreign person who is responsible for, is complicit in, or has directly or indirectly engaged in serious human rights abuse.

The IRGC-QF, designated pursuant to E.O. 13224 on October 25, 2007, is a branch of the IRGC responsible for external operations and has provided material support to numerous terrorist groups, making it a key component of Iran's destabilizing regional activities. The IRGC-QF's parent organization, the IRGC, was designated pursuant to E.O. 13224 on October 13, 2017, and on April 15, 2019 was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the Secretary of State.

HUSAYN FALIH 'AZIZ AL-LAMI

Husayn Falih 'Aziz al-Lami (al-Lami) is an Iran-backed militia leader, tasked by other senior militia commanders with suppressing the late 2019 protests in Iraq. Al-Lami was part of a committee of IRGC-QF proxies that approved the use of lethal violence against protesters for the purpose of public intimidation. In late 2019, al-Lami was responsible for ordering the assassinations and suppression of protesters in Baghdad. Al-Lami directed militia fighters who shot protesters in early October 2019, a time when dozens of protesters were killed.

Al-Lami is designated for being a foreign person who is responsible for, is complicit in, or has directly or indirectly engaged in serious human rights abuse.

KHAMIS FARHAN AL-KHANJAR AL-ISSAWI

Khamis Farhan al-Khanjar al-Issawi (al-Khanjar) is an Iraqi businessman and millionaire who enjoys significant power on a regional and international level. According to a former senior Iraqi government official, al-Khanjar's influence has been mostly due to his willingness and ability to use his wealth to bribe others. Al-Khanjar has reportedly planned to spend millions of dollars in payments to Iraqi political figures in order to secure their support.

Al-Khanjar is designated for having materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services to or in support of, corruption, including the misappropriation of state assets, the expropriation of private assets for personal gain, corruption related to government contracts or the extraction of natural resources, or bribery.

GLOBAL MAGNITSKY

Building upon the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, on December 20, 2017, the President signed E.O. 13818, "Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption," in which the President found that the prevalence and severity of human rights abuse and corruption that have their source, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States, has reached such scope and gravity that they threaten the stability of international political and economic systems. Human rights abuse and corruption undermine the values that form an essential foundation of stable, secure, and functioning societies; have devastating impacts on individuals; weaken democratic institutions; degrade the rule of law; perpetuate violent conflicts; facilitate the activities of dangerous persons; and undermine economic markets. The United States seeks to impose tangible and significant consequences on those who commit serious human rights abuse or engage in corruption, as well as to protect the financial system of the United States from abuse by these same persons.

[Information on the individuals designated today..](#)