

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Treasury Targets Repression and the Undermining of Democracy

December 7, 2021

Designations Across Three Countries Latest in Week of Actions Leading to Summit for Democracy

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating 15 actors across three countries in connection with serious human rights abuse and repressive acts targeting innocent civilians, political opponents, and peaceful protestors. As part of a whole-of-government commitment to democracy, Treasury is taking a number of actions aimed at promoting accountability for those who undermine trust in democratic institutions. Treasury is equipped with powerful tools to target the financial systems and flows that allow bad actors to profit from corruption and abuse. In addition, OFAC is designating two entities and two individuals that the Department of State has identified as responsible for certain gross violations of human rights in Iran.

"Ahead of this week's Summit for Democracy, Treasury is targeting over a dozen government officials across three countries in connection with serious human rights abuse that undermines democracy," said Director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control Andrea M. Gacki. "Treasury will continue to defend against authoritarianism, promoting accountability for violent repression of people seeking to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Today's actions are taken pursuant to the following authorities: Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, which builds upon and implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, and targets perpetrators of corruption and serious human rights abuse; E.O. 13553, which imposes sanctions on certain persons with respect to serious human rights abuses by the Government of Iran; Section 106 of the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which allows Treasury to designate persons listed by the Secretary of State as responsible for gross violations of human rights against individuals in Iran who seek to expose illegal activity carried out by officials of the Government of Iran, or to obtain, exercise, defend, or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms; as well as E.O. 13572, which, among

other things, imposes sanctions on certain persons responsible for or complicit in human rights abuses in Syria, as well as senior officials of, or entities owned or controlled by, persons blocked pursuant to E.O. 13572.

REPRESSION AND THE UNDERMINING OF DEMOCRACY

Democratic values and human rights are under threat around the world. Human rights defenders, members of civil society groups, journalists, and ordinary people seeking to exercise their right to freedom of expression and right of peaceful assembly face threats of violent repression from authoritarian leaders. Allowing this activity to continue unchallenged not only abandons and threatens victims of human rights abuses, but also poses a direct threat to the national security of the United States. Countries with repressive political regimes are often unstable over the long run, and they export instability regionally and worldwide. These regimes are often a threat to the peace and security of other nations. Standing up for human rights is not only consistent with American values but also U.S. national interests.

REPRESSION IN UGANDA: ABEL KANDIHO

As commander of the Ugandan Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), Major General **Abel Kandiho (Kandiho)** and other CMI officers have arrested, detained, and physically abused persons in Uganda. The CMI targeted individuals due to their nationality, political views, or critique of the Ugandan government. Individuals were taken into custody and held, often without legal proceedings, at CMI detention facilities where they were subjected to horrific beatings and other egregious acts by CMI officials, including sexual abuse and electrocutions, often resulting in significant long-term injury and even death. During these incarcerations, victims were kept in solitary confinement and unable to contact friends, family, or legal support. In some cases, **Kandiho** was personally involved, leading interrogations of detained individuals.

Kandiho is designated pursuant to E.O. 13818 for being a foreign person who is or has been a leader or official of an entity that has engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, serious human rights abuse relating to his tenure.

REPRESSION IN IRAN: VIOLENT SUPPRESSION OF PEACEFUL PROTESTERS AND PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The **Special Units of Iran's Law Enforcement Forces (LEF Special Units)** are the dedicated crowd control and protest suppression unit of Iran's LEF, one of the Government of Iran's main security apparatuses that played a key role in the crackdown on protesters in the aftermath of the disputed Iranian presidential election in 2009. Serious human rights abuses against prisoners detained in the post-election protests also occurred at a detention facility run by the LEF. Treasury designated the LEF pursuant to E.O. 13553 on June 9, 2011, for its role in the post-election crackdown. The **LEF Special Units** were also involved in the post-election protest suppression in 2009 and have been called upon to forcefully put down multiple nationwide protests since then, including the November 2019 protests resulting from gasoline price increases, during which Iranian security forces killed hundreds of Iranian protestors. The **LEF Special Units** were one of the main security forces on the ground in November 2019, alongside units of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iran's Basij Resistance Force (Basij), a paramilitary force subordinate to the IRGC. In multiple locations throughout Iran, **LEF Special Units** forces, along with those of a subunit, **Iran's Counter-Terror Special Forces (NOPO)**, used excessive and lethal force, firing upon unarmed protestors, including women and children, with automatic weapons. **NOPO** forces blocked main streets with armed vehicles and fired randomly at crowds with heavy machine guns.

The **LEF Special Units** and **NOPO** are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for being persons acting on behalf of the Government of Iran responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against persons in Iran or Iranian citizens or residents, or the family members of the foregoing, on or after June 12, 2009, regardless of whether such abuses occurred in Iran. The **LEF Special Units** are also being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, Iran's Law Enforcement Forces. **NOPO** is also being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for being owned or controlled by, or having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the **LEF Special Units**.

Hassan Karami (Karami) is the commander of the **LEF Special Units** and has overseen the unit during periods of nationwide unrest during which the **LEF Special Units** have employed excessive and lethal force against Iranian unarmed protestors, including during November 2019. He was sanctioned by the European Union in April 2021 for his role in the violent response to the November 2019 protests. **Mohsen Ebrahimi (Ebrahimi)** was appointed commander of **NOPO** in 2016 and has similarly overseen the unit during several subsequent periods of nationwide unrest during which **NOPO** employed excessive and lethal force against

Iranian unarmed protestors. **Seyed Reza Mousavi Azami (Azami)** commands a brigade of the **LEF Special Units**.

Karami and **Azami** are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the **LEF Special Units**. **Ebrahimi** is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, **NOPO**.

Gholamreza Soleimani (Soleimani) commands the Basij, one of Iran's most important domestic security resources. The Basij has been heavily involved in violent crackdowns in Iran, including following the June 2009 contested presidential election, and in November 2019, during **Soleimani's** tenure, when the Basij reportedly were among the Iranian security organizations that collectively killed hundreds of Iranian men, women, and children. Treasury designated the Basij pursuant to E.O. 13553 on June 9, 2011, for, among other activity, its role in the 2009 post-election crackdown. **Soleimani** was sanctioned by the European Union in April 2021 for his role in the violent response to the November 2019 protests.

Soleimani is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Basij.

Leila Vaseghi (Vaseghi), the governor of Qods city, was responsible for issuing an order to the police and other armed forces during the November 2019 protests to shoot unarmed protestors, causing dozens of deaths or injuries. **Vaseghi** was also sanctioned by the EU in April 2021 for her role in the violent response to the November 2019 protests.

Vaseghi is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for being a person acting on behalf of the Government of Iran (including members of paramilitary organizations) who is responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against persons in Iran or Iranian citizens or residents, or the family members of the foregoing, on or after June 12, 2009, regardless of whether such abuses occurred in Iran.

IRGC interrogators **Ali Hemmatian (Hemmatian)** and **Masoud Safdari (Safdari)** have long records of physical abuse against Iranian political prisoners at IRGC detention facilities, including at Iran's Evin Prison. **Hemmatian** employed physical beatings and whippings during interrogation of prisoners, resulting in lasting damage, including cracked bones. He has physically beaten many student activists and women, and has also directed, and authored the text of, televised confessions. **Safdari** has similarly been involved in detainee abuse, to

include physical beatings and threatening the families of detainees. He has also managed the recording of televised confessions.

Hemmatian and **Safdari** are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13553 for being persons acting on behalf of the Government of Iran (including members of paramilitary organizations) responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against persons in Iran or Iranian citizens or residents, or the family members of the foregoing, on or after June 12, 2009, regardless of whether such abuses occurred in Iran. On March 9, 2021 the Department of State designated **Hemmatian** and **Safdari** pursuant to Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2021, for their involvement in gross violations of human rights.

Zahedan Prison, located in the Sistan and Baluchistan province in southeast Iran, reportedly holds several political prisoners who belong to the Baluch ethnic minority group. According to public reports, on January 3, 2021, Baluch prisoner Hassan Dehviri was executed in Zahedan Prison. Dehviri was sentenced to death for “armed rebellion against the Islamic Rule.” His sentence was escalated to execution after he engaged in several acts of peaceful protests, such as signing statements condemning executions of Sunni prisoners and condemning the mistreatment of fellow prisoners in Zahedan Prison. Dehviri addressed an open letter to UN experts protesting his death sentence and requesting help. According to Dehviri’s lawyer, his execution was carried out despite a request for retrial pending with the Supreme Court. Dehviri’s execution was likely in retaliation for seeking to exercise his right to freedom of expression. According to human rights groups, IRGC officers arrested another Baluch prisoner, Hamid Reza Koukhan, on August 27, 2020 for reportedly “writing slogans, disrupting national security, and insulting the leadership of Qassem Soleimani” during a protest and sent him to Zahedan Prison in October 2020. Zahedan Prison is responsible for the flagrant denial of the right to liberty of Koukhan for seeking to exercise his right to freedom of expression and his right of peaceful assembly.

Isfahan Central Prison, also known as “Dastgerd Prison,” located in Isfahan city, is where, according to media reports, Mostafa Salehi, an electrical generator repairman, was executed on August 5, 2020 after taking part in streets protests in December 2017 and January 2018. According to Human Rights Watch, the prosecutor in Salehi’s case accused him of having contacts with foreign intelligence and having “organized the riots.” Salehi was convicted of murder for the killing of an IRGC officer during these protests but maintained his innocence

and independent media reports suggest that the prosecution authorities failed to provide evidence of his guilt. Isfahan Central Prison is responsible for the flagrant denial of the right to life and liberty of Salehi for seeking to exercise his right to freedom of expression and his right of peaceful assembly.

Zahedan Prison and **Isfahan Central Prison** are being listed by the Department of State and designated by OFAC pursuant to Section 106 of CAATSA.

Soghra Khodadadi, the current director of Qarchak Women's Prison, was responsible for ordering and directly participating in a violent attack on December 13, 2020 against prisoners of conscience in Ward 8 along with at least 20 other guards. According to publicly available reports, prison guards beat these female prisoners of conscience with batons and stun guns. Khodadadi ordered this attack in retaliation for the prisoners exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Khodadadi is being listed by the Department of State and designated by OFAC pursuant to Section 106 of CAATSA. Qarchak Prison was publicly identified as responsible for certain gross violations of human rights under CAATSA in 2019 and designated in 2020.

Mohammad Karami is a Brigadier General and commands the IRGC South-East Quds Operational Base in Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. The Quds Base is officially tasked with ensuring security in Sistan-Baluchistan, including the Saravan border, between Sistan and Baluchistan and Pakistan. According to public reporting, Karami is responsible for the actions of IRGC officers stationed at the Shamsar Base, who according to Amnesty International on February 22, 2021 fired live ammunition at unarmed fuel porters who were seeking to exercise their freedom of expression.

Karami is being listed by the Department of State and designated by OFAC pursuant to Section 106 of CAATSA.

REPRESSION IN SYRIA: DESIGNATIONS OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN DEADLY CHEMICAL WEAPONS ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS, AND DESIGNATIONS OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF SYRIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY ENTITIES

OFAC is also designating two senior Syrian Air Force officers responsible for chemical weapons attacks on civilians and three senior officers in Syria's repressive security and intelligence

apparatus. These senior officials and the organizations they are associated with have imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Syrians who peacefully called for change. Moreover, at least 14,000 prisoners in Syria have allegedly died as a result of torture. Today's designations are another critical step in promoting accountability for the Assad regime's abuses against Syrians.

Tawfiq Muhammad Khadour (Khadour) is a Major General in the Syrian Air Force (SAF), currently in command of the 22nd Air Division. On February 25, 2018, while **Khadour** commanded the 30th Brigade of the SAF at Dumayr Airbase, airstrikes from the airbase against Eastern Ghouta dropped chemical barrel bombs throughout the area, killing civilians. On April 7, 2018, an attack on Eastern Ghouta launched from Dumayr Airbase, still under the command of **Khadour**, included at least two chlorine barrel bombs and a guided missile attack on a humanitarian facility, rendering it inoperable and killing dozens of civilians.

Khadour is being designated under E.O. 13572 for being responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or having participated in, the commission of human rights abuses in Syria, including those related to repression.

Muhammad Youssef Al-Hasouri (Al-Hasouri) is a Major General in the SAF in command of the 70th Brigade at T-4 Military Airbase. **Al-Hasouri** previously served as the deputy commander of the 50th Brigade of the Syrian Air Force at al-Shayrat Airbase. **Al-Hasouri** personally carried out numerous airstrikes killing Syrian civilians, including chemical weapons attacks. This includes the notorious April 4, 2017 sarin attack at Khan Shaykhun, which killed at least 87 people and for which the European Union sanctioned him.

Al-Hasouri is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13572 for being responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or having participated in, the commission of human rights abuses in Syria, including those related to repression.

Adeeb Namer Salameh (Salameh) is the Assistant Director of Syrian Air Force Intelligence (SAFI), an integral component of the Assad regime's repressive security apparatus. Treasury previously designated SAFI on May 18, 2011, for its role in the Assad regime's violent response to civil society protests, including the use of live ammunition against protesters by SAFI forces. Salameh was previously head of SAFI's Aleppo Branch, wherein he was described as one of the most extreme officers and prominent symbols of the Syrian regime's crimes. **Salameh** was the first to transform a "Shabiha," a term for local criminal gangs, into an irregular militia force under regime control. The militia that **Salameh** commanded was reportedly responsible for torture, killings, and kidnapping for ransom in the countryside

surrounding Salamiyeh, Syria. **Salameh** gained the nickname “Aleppo’s president” after imposing his influence on all the security branches, authorities, and merchants of Aleppo. **Salameh** has been implicated in major corruption cases for having received large sums of money in exchange for protecting factories and appointing himself as a partner to major investors in Aleppo.

Salameh is being designated for being a senior official of SAFI, an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13572.

Qahtan Khalil (Khalil) is a senior SAFI official and is the head of the Security Committee in the South of Syria. He is one of the SAFI officers accused of direct responsibility for the notorious Daraya massacre, which left hundreds dead in the suburbs of Damascus in 2012.

Khalil is being designated for being a senior official of SAFI, an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13572.

Kamal al-Hassan (al-Hassan) is the commander of SMI Branch 227 and previously commanded SMI Branch 235, the SMI branch responsible for joint operations with Hizballah. Branch 227 was one of the SMI branches specifically highlighted in images provided by Caesar, a Syrian regime defector — in whose name the Caesar Act was passed into law — who worked as an official forensic photographer for the Syrian military and who courageously revealed thousands of images of detainees who were reportedly tortured and killed.

Al-Hassan is being designated for being a senior official of SMI, an entity whose property and interests in property are blocked pursuant to E.O. 13572.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of the persons designated above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more, by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or otherwise exempt, 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 are prohibited. The prohibitions include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any blocked person or the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

GLOBAL MAGNITSKY

Building upon the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, E.O. 13818 was issued on December 20, 2017, in recognition that the prevalence of human rights abuse and corruption that have their source, in whole or in substantial part, outside the United States, had reached such scope and gravity as to 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.

[View more information on today's designations.](#)

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