

Treasury Sanctions Two Syria–Based Militias Responsible for Serious Human Rights Abuses in Northern Syria

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WASHINGTON —Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is designating two Syria-based armed militias and three members of the groups’ leadership structures in connection with serious human rights abuses against those residing in the Afrin region of northern Syria. An auto sales company owned by the leader of one of the armed groups is also being designated.

The Afrin region of Syria is largely controlled by a patchwork of armed groups, many of which use violence to control the movement of goods and people in their respective territories. These armed groups have exacerbated the suffering caused by years of civil war in northern Syria and hindered the region’s recovery by engaging in serious human rights abuses against vulnerable populations.

“Today’s action demonstrates our continued dedication to promoting accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses, including in Syria,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “The United States is committed to supporting the Syrian people’s ability to live without fear of exploitation from armed groups and without fear of violent repression.”

This action is being taken pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13894, which authorizes sanctions on persons whose actions or policies further threaten the peace, security, stability,

or territorial integrity of Syria, or who, among other things, commit serious human rights abuses.

ARMED SYRIAN MILITIAS

The **Suleiman Shah Brigade** is a prominent element of the armed opposition to the Syrian government and a component of the Syrian National Army, a coalition of Syrian armed opposition groups. The Suleiman Shah Brigade operates in the Afrin region of northern Syria, where it exerts significant control over the civilian population. The brigade subjects the populace of this area to abductions and extortion. The brigade has targeted Afrin’s Kurdish residents, many of whom are subjected to harassment, abduction, and other abuses until they are forced to abandon their homes or pay large ransoms for return of their property or family members.

The Hamza Division, another armed opposition group operating in northern Syria, has been involved in abductions, theft of property, and torture. The division also operates detention facilities in which it houses those it has abducted for extended periods of time. During their imprisonment, victims are held for ransom, often suffering sexual abuse at the hands of Hamza Division fighters.

The Suleiman Shah Brigade and the Hamza Division are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, the commission of serious human rights abuses against the Syrian people.

MILITIA LEADERS

Mohammad Hussein al-Jasim (Abu Amsha) is the leader of the Suleiman Shah Brigade. Under Abu Amsha's leadership, members of the brigade have been directed to forcibly displace Kurdish residents and seize their property, providing vacated homes for Syrians from outside the region who are often related to fighters in the brigade. Abu Amsha also ordered the brigade to kidnap local residents, demanding ransom in return for their release and confiscating their property as part of an organized effort to maximize the brigade's revenue, likely generating tens of millions of dollars a year. Abu Amsha allegedly raped the wife of a member of the brigade and threatened her and her family with harm if she did not remain silent.

Al-Safir Oto is a car dealership owned by Abu Amsha that provides an outlet for Abu Amsha to invest his income. Al-Safir Oto is headquartered in Istanbul and operates multiple locations in southern Türkiye that are managed by commanders of the Suleiman Shah Brigade. Abu Amsha allegedly owns Al-Safir Oto in partnership with the leader of the Syrian armed group [Ahrar Alal-Sharqiya](#), [Ahmad Ihsan Fayyad al-Hayes](#), who was previously designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for having acted or purported to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, Ahrar al-Sharqiya .

Mohammad Hussein al-Jasim is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, the commission of serious human rights abuses in relation to Syria. Al-Safir Oto is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for being owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by Mohammad Hussein al-Jasim.

Walid Hussein al-Jasim is a younger brother of Abu Amsha who also holds a leadership role in the Suleiman Shah Brigade, including serving as the head of the brigade when Abu Amsha left Syria to fight in Libya. On multiple occasions, the Syrian Islamic Council leveled charges against Walid related to sexual assault against women. As part of the brigade, Walid Hussein al-Jasim

coordinated abductions, muggings, and ransoms. In addition, Walid reportedly killed a prisoner who was unable to pay ransom in 2020 following a month of abuse.

Walid Hussein al-Jasim is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Suleiman Shah Brigade.

Sayf Boulad Abu Bakr is the leader of the Hamza Division and its public face, appearing in numerous propaganda videos produced by the Hamza Division. While Abu Bakr has been commander, the Hamza Division has been accused of brutal repression of the local population, including kidnapping Kurdish women and severely abusing prisoners, at times leading to their death.

Sayf Boulad Abu Bakr is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13894 for acting or purporting to act for or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, the Hamza Division.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of these persons and entities that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and 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. OFAC regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within the United States (including transactions transiting the United States) that involve any property or interests in property of blocked or designated persons.

The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from OFAC's ability to designate and add persons to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN List), but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to OFAC's [Frequently Asked Question 897](#).

[Click here for identifying information on the individuals designated today.](#)

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