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## **Fatal Integration**

**Organization of General Command and Al-Quds Brigade**



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### **Translated to English**

**By Omar al-Saadi**



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Yousif Faker AL Deen - Homam Al-Khateeb

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## Introduction

When we embarked on this study, our plan was to work on Al-Quds Brigade' alone, but we found in the course of the research that it has a characteristic that we did not notice in the non-Syrian military militias, including those that existed before the revolution, and then were transferred to Syria to participate in the suppression of the protests. Whether those militias are Iranian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Afghan or other, or affiliated with Palestinian factions that do not have an active military militia in Syria, and if there is an activity for them, it does not go beyond the limits of training to carry out missions outside the country, such as the leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC); Al-Quds Brigade is similar to the Syrian militias that were established in the context of the current Syrian war in terms of its inception, while the non-Syrian militia, although it shared many commonalities with it, differed from it in the circumstances of its upbringing and march and the subsequent loyalties, affiliations, internal working mechanisms and a political understanding of reality and the self. The Shiite militia is like its loyalty to Iran, and it was established to remain tools of influence for those who established it, and the factional Palestinian militias in Syria were created in the context of the Palestinian cause. Whether it was for purely Palestinian national reasons or to serve the influence of the Syrian regime under the cover of the Palestinian cause, in both cases these factions realized that there are Palestinian determinants that they must respect, publicly at least, even if the practices on the ground undermine those determinants at every moment by supporting the Syrian rigime.

Through our follow-up to the circumstances of the emergence of the Al-Quds Brigade, whose formation was announced in October 2013, including the position of the residents of Neirab camp where the Brigade was established, and the position of the local leaders of the Palestinian factions is divided over the position

on the Syrian revolution, especially the division over the action that the Palestinian-Syrians should take in the face of the conflict. We concluded that we are in the process of a mechanism that was produced by a security decision to avoid Palestinian popular rejection, and the subsequent inclination of an influential section of the local Palestinian factions leaders to take a position of impartiality in the ongoing conflict. Thus, militia tools with neither political will nor history were formed, represented by the Al-Quds Brigade, complete submissive to the tasks entrusted to, no matter how bloody, and without concern for its impact on the Palestinians and their national cause; unlike the military and political militias that belonged to the strategic projects of the Syrian regime or the Iranian regime. And here is exactly the focus of the distinction that we realized during our work on the Al-Quds Brigade and put before us a series of questions, so our attention was on following up on the Brigade and its relations, in order to explore the answer.

One of the most important questions that we faced was the question about the justification for the existence of the Al-Quds Brigade, its military function that was established to accomplish, and the reason for its establishment under a Palestinian title, while there are pre-made Palestinian factions accused of being completely subordinate to the Syrian regime, such as PFLP-GC, which moved from the first moment to defend the regime militarily. In short, the question about the military and political function of the Al-Quds Brigade in a special reality and time. Another question is what is the scale and nature of the violations committed by the "Al-Quds Brigade" and how the hierarchy of responsibility is determined within it.

During our search for answers to these questions, new questions arose that led us to a hypothesis that required us to study the policy pursued by The PFLP-GC. With the qualitative support of the PFLP-GC leadership, to be a tool under a Palestinian

name for killing, besieging and terrorizing the rebellious Syrian people, allowing the leaders of the PFLP-GC and the leaders of the factions they follow, an opportunity to evade the political and organizational responsibility for this job; by political responsibility, we mean observing the regulations of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) that outline its relationship with the Arab countries, and taking into account the popular pressure that expressed itself through various means, including the Yarmouk Camp uprising that took place on June 6, 2011, while by organizational responsibility we mean the ability to absorb many elements of non-Palestinians exceed the number of Palestinians, including those who have an impact on the Palestinian label, which is held by the PFLP-GC as a guarantee of its strategic role in the Palestinian community to serve the Syrian and Iranian regimes. Knowing that we have adopted in our study the axiom that the leadership of the PFLP-GC merged throughout its course with the Syrian regime, and from this position it moved on the eve of the revolution overlapping with the other regime agencies, especially the security ones.

In order to answer these questions, to confirm the validity of the hypothesis, and to clarify the legal responsibility for the crimes of the "brigade", we relied in this study on the documentation technique by studying documents and records (articles, written letters, television interviews, reports and press investigations, news, Pictures...), in-depth interviews with witnesses, recording, collecting and organizing the data resulting from our observation and our direct and continuous monitoring of the facts since the protests erupted in Syria in March 2011. Throughout the time, we relied on analyzing data and information in group thinking sessions for the working group to reach the results. In addition to our reliance on our previous works published in the Center for Democratic Republic Studies, including:

The book *Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Ordeal*<sup>1</sup> and the book *Syria: The Era of Warlords and the Return of Protections and Guardianships (ʿ) Shiite Militia*<sup>2</sup>. We relied on our previous studies, *The Palestine Liberation Army In The Syrian War*<sup>3</sup>, issued by the Syrian Center for Research and Legal Studies and the Center for Democratic Republic Studies. We have reviewed, treated and built all of the above according to the analytical descriptive approach adopted by the study as its method.

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<sup>1</sup> Youssef Fakhr El-Din, Youssef Zeidan, "Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Ordeal" (book), Center for Democratic Republic Studies, October 2013 <http://www.drsc-sy.org/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A6%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1/>

<sup>2</sup> Authors group, *The Era of Warlords and The Return of Protections and Guardianships (ʿ) Shiite Militia* (book), Center for Democratic Republic Studies, July 2015 (last visit on July 17, 2021). <https://sl-center.org/?p=457>

<sup>3</sup> Youssef Fakhr El-Din and Homam al-Khatib, *The Palestinian Liberation Army in the Syrian War*, The Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, November 2018 (last visit on July 17, 2021). <https://sl-center.org/?p=828>

## Chapter one: The Popular Front - General Command and the policy of gradual assimilation and involvement

### Identification Card

#### The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC)

The Flag:



**Origin:** A Palestinian organization that is a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), represented in the PLO's Executive Committee, the Central Council, and the Palestinian National Council. When it was first established, it presented itself as the Palestine Liberation Front as a left-wing nationalist organization on April 11, 1965, about four and a half months after the establishment of the Fatah Movement. As a result of the June 1967 defeat, three Palestinian factions met ,The Revenge Youth, which was the Palestinian military organization of the Arab Nationalist Movement led by Dr. George Habash, the

Organization of Heroes of Return, and the Palestine Liberation Front- to form the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, with George Habash becoming its leader, and Ahmed Jibril taking responsibility for the military action. However, the march of this coalition stumbled as a result of organizational and political disagreements, so Jibril withdrew with his group on October 10, 1968, but he stuck to the name, adding to it the General Command to become the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command. The General Command Organization had since its inception a strong relationship with the Syrian regime, which it expressed on the political, military and security levels, including the support of Ahmed Jibril and Talal Naj the military intervention of the Syrian regime in Lebanon in 1976, which caused a political and armed uprising within the organization, when the national movement sided with the PLO, which this intervention came to strike. The leaders of this movement were Talaat Yaqoub, Muhammad Abbas (Abu al-Abbas), Ali Issac, and Abdel Fattah Ghanem. Knowing that this movement regained the name "Palestine Liberation Front" in April 1977, and has operated independently since then. Among this strong relationship, which turned into the integration of the organization with the Syrian regime, the organization supported the division in the Fatah movement sponsored by the Syrian regime in 1983, and its participation in the siege of the PLO and Fatah movement in the Lebanese city of Tripoli in 1983, which led to another split in its ranks led by the two members of the Central Committee of the General Command, Muhammad Jaber Sheta (Abu Jaber), and Omar Abu Rashid. The General Command Organization also contributed to the establishment of an alliance of Palestinian factions in the face of the PLO under the name of the Palestinian National Salvation Front, and was practically affiliated with the Syrian regime, on March 25, 1985.

**Organizational Structure:** The Fourth General Conference set the basic system that defines the front's organizational frameworks and the relationships between

them. The first article of the Basic Law emphasized the principle of central democracy in the organization as a basic condition for enabling the front to perform its missions, and for it to protect itself from the delinquency of the individual and the fluidity of democracy.

The second article talked about the Front's general conference, deciding that it is the supreme legislative authority that is in charge of drawing up the Front's intellectual, political, military, organizational, media, financial and other strategies, and that its decisions are mandatory. It consists of democratically elected elements in the preparatory and subsidiary conferences (the conference element has been a member of the organization for five years, or a combatant element, or from the organization of the occupied territory for three years). The number of members of the conference is no less than 45 and no more than 51 members. The conference includes observers whose number ranges from 1 to 12 members. A special preparatory committee is formed for the general conference, to be formed by the central committee, at the invitation of the Secretary-General, or at the invitation of two-thirds of the members of the central committee. This preparatory committee determines the time and place of the conference, supervises the preparatory and subsidiary conferences, directs personal invitations and the agenda for the conference, and receives appeals about the membership of candidates for the general conference, and its work ends when the first session of the conference is held. As for the general conference itself, it meets periodically every two years, or exceptionally according to its bylaws. It may not be postponed for more than three years. It sets its internal system in its first session.

The third article is devoted to leadership, stating that it is all the elements that assume the task of leadership at various levels. It is characterized by the ability of its elements to assume full responsibility in handling matters and drawing

plans. This means the unit of command that manages the work of the front and implements its policies.

As for the Central Committee, Article 4 states that it is the authority that implements and monitors the implementation of the decisions of the General Conference. It has the right to enact legislation that does not contradict the decisions of the General Conference. The committee has an internal system, and at its first meeting, it elects the general secretariat and members of the political bureau. The number of members of the Central Committee must not be less than one third of the members of the General Conference and not more than half.

**From the Leaders:**

- **Ahmed Jibril:**



The Secretary-General of the PFLP-GC, born in the town of Yazur near Jaffa in 1935, he grew up in Jaffa and received his education there before he had to leave it as a boy. After the catastrophe of 1948, he sought refuge in Syria and obtained Syrian nationality, then joined the Syrian army and rose through its ranks until he obtained the rank of major. He led the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Front in the early 1960s, and led the division from the The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the formation of the PFLP-GC in 1968 to remain its Secretary-General since then.

- **Talal Nagy:**



Assistant Secretary-General of the PFLP-GC, member of the Political Bureau. He defected with Ahmad Jibril from the PFLP, to form with others the PFLP-GC. Dr. Talal Naji was born in April 1946 in the city of Nazareth, the capital of Galilee in Palestine. Then he fled with his father and brother in 1948 to Lebanon and from there to Syria. He lived in Damascus and studied in its schools. He joined the Palestine Liberation Front after its founding in the early 1960s, and was the one who led the division from the PFLP and the formation of the PFLP-GC in 1968, and in 1973 he became Secretary-General Assistant to the PFLP-GC and still. In 1974, he became a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and head of the Department of Education and High Education in it.

- **Khaled Jibril (Abu Al-Omarin):**



Member of the Political Bureau - responsible for the military and security departments, head of the central council of the Palestinian Progressive Youth Organization affiliated to PFLP-GC.

- **Anwar Raja:**



Member of the Political Bureau, and Head of the Central Information and Guidance Department.

- Rafea Al-Saed: Member of the Political Bureau.
- Ghazi Dabour: Head of the PFLP-GC in Lebanon.
- Ramez Mustafa: Member of the Political Bureau - Social Affairs Officer - Central Organization Department.
- Ismael Makhlati: Member of the Central Committee - Deputy Assistant Secretary-General.
- Bader Ahmed Jibril: Member of the Central Committee
- Fawzi Shehadeh: Head of the Dannoun Brigade
- Abu Ali Mahmoud: Official of the Hama Asnad Brigade

**Armed groups:**

- Jihad Jibril Brigades
- Popular Committees

**Armament:** Light, medium, and heavy weapons, and the only traditional Palestinian faction that owns a heavy weapon outside the camps.

**Headquarters:** the organization has headquarters in all the Palestinian camps in Syria and Lebanon, and has many offices and camps in both countries.

**Allies:**

- The Shiite militia in its diversity
- The Syrian army
- Palestinian Factions Loyal to the Syrian Regime (Damascus Factions)
- Palestine Liberation Army
- 

**Current funding:** Iran

**Participation in the Syrian war:**

- Participation in the suppression of demonstrations
- Participation in the siege of Yarmouk camp since July 2013
- The military operation on the Lebanese-Syrian border in 2014
- Participation in military actions for the benefit of the Assad regime in various regions of Syria.

**Violations:**

- Suppression of demonstrations
- Killing the protesters
- Bombing civilian areas
- Terrorizing the population
- Siege of civilians
- Participation in forced displacement

**The number of dead in the Syrian war:** Talal Naji revealed in an interview with radio Sputnik on October 24 2018, that the number of PFLP-GC fighters who died since the beginning of the protests in Syria in 2011 reached 420 and 800 wounded.

## Circumstances surrounding

*In the first months of the Syrian revolution and until the end of 2011, more than 40 Palestinian-Syrian victims were killed by the Syrian security forces and army, bringing the number at the end of 2012 to 645, and about 1,456 victims in the mid of september 2013, including 160 women, and 114 children. Several statements of solidarity with the Palestinians were issued by the Syrian revolution bodies, including a statement Local Coordination Committees in Syria, in which it denounced “the regime’s criminal actions against the Palestinians in Syria,” and asserted that “the regime’s miserable attempts will not undermine the bonds of the fraternal relationship and the common pains and hopes between the two peoples”*

*From the book **Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Ordeal**, Center for Democratic Republic Studies.*

At the time when the formation of the Al-Quds Brigade was announced at the end of 2013, the majority of Syrian Palestinians were still expressing their decision to take impartiality towards the ongoing conflict in Syria, especially the military one, while at the same time emphasizing their excellent relationship with the Syrian people.

This trend has been evident since the Yarmouk camp uprising on June 6, 2011, during the funerals of the martyrs of the March of Return, which intersects with testimonies that “it occurred to prevent the regime’s security services from using Palestinian blood to cover the Syrian blood that was shed.” Also, that uprising revealed the vision of the demonstrators, estimated to number in the tens of thousands, and who expressed the opinion of the majority of Palestinians in Syria, through the slogan chanted by the demonstrators' throats, "The Palestinian and the Syrian are one." Which indicates that the clash that took place between the young people, who proudly call themselves “Syrian Palestinians”, and the

Palestinian forces, clearly revealed the transformation that was taking place silently on the two sides and their relationship with each other during the past two decades. It took the form of a generational struggle that we think intensifies the three main contradictions within the Palestinian political situation in Syria, as it is subordinate to the Syrian regime, and the Palestinian society in Syria: obstruction of political participation, reservation of political development compatible with the emerging self-awareness of the young generation, and people's subjugation to the interests of the ruling oligarchy.<sup>4</sup>

The "Yarmouk Intifada" faced the PFLP-GC as well, to discourage it from its attempt to plunge the Yarmouk camp into a clash with revolting surroundings through its participation in suppressing the first peaceful demonstrations there.

One of those participations led to casualties, one third of whom were peaceful demonstrators in the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, which is adjacent to Yarmouk camp, and which overlaps with it on the social, economic, cultural and political levels. Where matters would have led to a disaster had it not been for the follow-up of Sheikh Adnan Ibrahim on April 22 2011- Ibrahim is the father of one of the victims called Yaman, and the sheikh of Al-Rahman musc in Al-Hajar al-Aswad, from which the demonstrations were launched- when he confirmed in a sermon to mourners, before the funeral of his son and his two companions, that the killer is from the security forces, and he also rejected rumors that members of Hamas movement participated in shooting at the demonstrators while they were wearing sweaters with the name of their movement written on it, explaining that they are security forces who want sedition between the Syrian and the Palestinian

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<sup>4</sup> Fakhr El-Din, Youssef, "Yarmouk Camp: The Conflict of Generations and the Destruction of the Rebel Society," Journal of Palestine Studies, in the file Yarmouk: A Disaster Greater Than a Camp, June 2015 (last visited on March 7, 2019) <https://www.palestine-studies.org/ar/mdf/abstract/191251>

people<sup>5</sup>; Sheikh Adnan Ibb Ibrahim repeated his request to the revolution's audience to distinguish between the PFLP-GC and the Palestinian people.

The Yarmouk uprising reached its climax when Ahmed Jibril, with the participation of his bodyguard, leaders and cadres of his organization, fired at the demonstrators heading from the martyrs cemetery in Yarmouk camp after the burial of the victims of the return march, to the Khalsa building, which is central to the PFLP-GC, to protest against its role in killing them. There were several casualties among the demonstrators, the estimated number ranged from nine to fourteen victims, and more than twenty-five were injured. PFLP-GC has been relatively successful in concealing the names of the victims in cooperation with the Palestine Red Crescent Branch in Syria, and by putting pressure on the victims' families who were met by members of PFLP-GC. While three members of PFLP-GC were killed, Abu Salman al-Rayyan were mistakenly shot by his comrades, Nasser Mubarak Ali and Abu Arfat Qassem were killed by the most angry of the rebellious demonstrators as a result of being shot at and casualties among them.

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<sup>5</sup> We were in the area of the event that day, and we were able to access an excerpt from what Sheikh Adnan Ibrahim said, who delivered a sermon at the funeral prayer, as in the street, and whenever he found a need to direct the demonstrators to emphasize peace, the Palestinian-Syrian brotherhood, the refutation of the accusation against the Palestinians, and the demand By distinguishing between the general leadership and the Palestinian people, a small part of the speech can be found at this link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUIToGBhOOA>



The General Command's Martyrs' Facebook page mourns those killed in the Khalsa events from the organization

Following the uprising of the Yarmouk camp, located south of Damascus, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization expressed its insistence on the impartiality of the Palestinians, and also condemned the targeting of the demonstrators by the PFLP-GC elements, describing what happened as “a cowardly criminal act that deviates from the simplest Palestinian national traditions.” and rises to the level of an indiscriminate mass murder<sup>6</sup>. Salim al-Za`noun, Speaker of the Palestinian National Council, condemned the bias of Ahmad Jibril's front with the Syrian regime<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Quds Al-Arabi, the Palestinian leadership condemns the shooting of mourners in Yarmouk camp, June 2011 (last visit to the website on March 8)

<https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B9/>

<sup>7</sup> Atiq, Munir, Al-Arabiya.net, Salim al-Zanoun, President of the Palestinian National Council: We reject the bias of Ahmad Jibril's front to the Syrian regime, September 16, 2012

In response to Assad's army's bombing and invasion of Al-Raml camp in Latakia, Chris Gunness, spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), stated on August 15, 2011, that "more than half of the camp's population has fled and we must enter there and find out what is happening". UNRWA declared that it was deeply concerned about reports of heavy gunfire by the Syrian security authorities inside Al-Raml camp and the surrounding areas in Latakia, including heavy gunfire from naval boats. UNRWA condemned the use of force against civilians, and called on the Syrian authorities to order its security forces to exercise the utmost restraint, based on international law to ensure the security of all civilians, including Palestinian refugees. In turn, Yasser Abed Rabbo denounced these events, which he called a "crime against humanity", saying: "We consider this act to constitute a crime against humanity against the Palestinian people and their Syrian brothers who are subjected to this ongoing bloody campaign," and demanded "all relevant international bodies to immediately intervene to stop this massacre, which led to the fall of a large number of martyrs and wounded."<sup>8</sup>

In response to the bombing of Yarmouk Camp, the spread of snipers in some parts of it, and the armament of PFLP-GC, the Civil Relief Committees in Yarmouk Camp issued a statement on July 21, 2012, which stated:

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(Last visit to the website on March 8, 2019).

<https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012%2F09%2F16%2F238411>

<sup>8</sup> Arabs 48, the PLO strongly condemns the storming of the Raml camp in Latakia and the expulsion of its residents, August 2011 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019).

<https://www.arab48.com/%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/2011/08/15/%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%85%D9%84-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B0%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87->

“To our people in Yarmouk camp and the Palestinian camps

Our people in Yarmouk camp are currently sheltering the displaced from the neighboring areas of the camp, and the camp’s residents have made a tremendous effort to provide relief and humanitarian support to these displaced people and are still using all available means to continue this noble and humanitarian mission at the same time. The neighborhoods adjacent to the camp are still being bombed and abused, and the camp is still receiving more displaced people.

The people of the camp have formed civil relief committees to organize support and relief operations, and civil committees to protect the camp residents and the displaced from any possible targeting, especially after the spread of news of the shabiha’s intention to target Yarmouk camp because of its support for the Syrian people in this difficult crisis.

Shells have been falling on different areas in the camp for several days, the last of which was the one that fell on the Al-Sagha market yesterday, and resulted in Palestinian casualties. It was also noticed that a large group of snipers spread throughout the camp, and all of these factors limit our people’s ability to practice their lives and the continuation of relief support for the displaced, especially since many of the camp’s youth have fallen as martyrs while helping the displaced from the camp’s vicinity to reach the sheltering areas for the displaced.

In the last two days, the news spread that the PFLP-GC has armed hundreds of young men under the pretext of protecting the camp, and we all know that Ahmed Jibril has stated more than once that the Yarmouk camp contains elements of the Mossad and foreign parties, and this campaign in itself is a prelude to justify a fierce attack may be waged against our people in Yarmouk camp, and therefore we reject these armed manifestations, and we reject any incitement by some suspicious symbols such as Yasser Qashlak and others who want to drag the camp led to confrontations with its Syrian neighbors.

Any possible attack by the shabiha against the residents of Yarmouk camp or its displaced persons, will face complete popular resistance from the camp’s residents. Its civil committees, and the free people from the Palestinian factions who bow to thier conscience and loyal to their people, they can deter and stop the attack on their own.

If Ahmad Jibril or other Palestinian factions in Damascus want to protect the camp, then let them take their hands off it and let the civil committees exercise their relief and humanitarian role, and ask the Syrian government to withdraw snipers and tanks from the camp, and stop targeting it with indiscriminate shells that cause casualties among the safe civilians.”

The Civil Committees in Yarmouk Camp, 07/21/2012

Two statements were also issued calling for the protection of the "Yarmouk camp"; one is entitled "A Appeal from the Palestinian Refugees in Syria to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations - on November 14, 2012" (Document No. 2), and the second is entitled "A Appeal to Protect the Palestinian Camps – on November 12, 2012" (Document No. 3 )

Following the regime's bombing of Yarmouk camp with MiG missiles on December 16, 2012<sup>9</sup>, Yasser Abd Rabbo, Secretary of the PLO at the time, stated: "We firmly condemn the crime of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Yarmouk camp, and we call on all international bodies and authorities, including countries that still support this regime, call for immediate action to stop these massacres against the Palestinian and Syrian people." He added: "Bashar al-Assad bears full responsibility for the shedding of Palestinian blood in Syria, and we will not remain silent after this day on this murderous regime, which does not differentiate in its crimes between civilians and non-civilians"<sup>10</sup>. At the time, Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper reported that the Palestinian leadership, in a statement, condemned the armed groups affiliated with the PFLP-GC firing live bullets at the crowds of youth Palestinian demonstrators from Yarmouk camp, and stressed the rejection of "any justifications or pretexts for this cowardly criminal act that

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<sup>9</sup> It is known to the Palestinian refugees in Syria as the "Mig massacre" or the "Abdul Qader al-Husseini mosque massacre", and it took place following the raids launched by the Syrian warplanes on the Abdul Qader al-Husseini Mosque in the Yarmouk camp on December 16, 2012, which was A shelter for hundreds of families who fled to the camp to escape the bombing that targeted the neighborhoods surrounding Yarmouk. These raids resulted in dozens of victims and wounded, most of whom were children and women

<sup>10</sup> The London newspaper Al-Hayat, Yasser Abed Rabbo condemns the Syrian regime and accuses it of committing a massacre, August 15, 2011 (last visit to the site on March 7, 2019). Al-Hayat newspaper has ceased publication and its archive has been closed, and we have preferred to keep its links so that there is no difference between the study in Arabic and its translation, but the news can be found on other media platforms on the Internet.  
<http://www.alhayat.com/article/1543005>

deviates from the simplest Palestinian national traditions, and rises to the level of the crime of mass murder without discrimination, by the PFLP-GC”. Palestinian leadership declared its keenness to ensure that “the right of return remains a sacred national goal, and is not used for any political purposes.” It also said, "the enthusiasm of the Palestinian youth on the day of the setback, refusing to exploit their blood or subjugate it for private interests, represents an affirmation that the people of Palestine adhere to their national goals, foremost of which is the right of return, it rejects any attempt to distort this right or plunge it into side battles.” The leadership stressed that it "will investigate the details of this massacre that took place in Yarmouk camp and announce the results to our people.” It added, “The perpetrators, a group and individuals, will bear full responsibility for this crime”<sup>11</sup>.

And a statement by the Palestinian presidency, published by the official Wafa news agency, said, “Mahmoud Abbas made contacts with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil El-Araby, in order to spare our camps and our people in Syria the ongoing conflict there”<sup>12</sup>.

With a different position than that of the PFLP-GC leadership in Damascus, a member of the political bureau of the PFLP (the one it broke away from in 1968), Rabah Muhanna, according to what was reported in Al-Sharq newspaper in its issue (232) issued on July 23, 2012, “The Popular Front for the Liberation of

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Quds Al-Arabi, Palestinian leadership condemns the shooting of mourners in Yarmouk camp, June 2011 (last visit to the website on March 8)

<https://www.alquds.co.uk/القيادة-اللسطينية-تدين-إطلاق-النار-ع/>

<sup>12</sup> Al-Hayat newspaper, Al-Moallem: The international community bears the responsibility for the “frustration” and the Palestinians must expel the “terrorists”, December 2012 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019). Al-Hayat newspaper has ceased publication and its archive has been closed, and we have preferred to keep its links so that there is no difference between the study in Arabic and its translation, but the news can be found on other media platforms on the Internet.

<http://www.alhayat.com/article/380941-المعلم->

Palestine - General Command is trying to push Palestinian camps in the midst of the Syrian revolution and forcing the refugees to adopt a position in support of the Syrian regime.” Muhanna attacked The position of the PFLP-GC and its General Secretary, Ahmed Jibril, in support of the Syrian regime and participation in suppressing the Syrian revolution, accusing Jibril of trying to bring the Palestinian camps into the scene of events there, adding:

"There are those who have tried to drag the camps into taking positions that are not required at this time by supporting the Assad regime." Muhanna stressed that the PLO will study all measures against the PFLP-GC leadership After the situation calmed down in the Syrian territories, to ensure the protection of Palestinian refugees there. Noting that “all options remain open, including expulsion from PLO. And Muhanna explained that, “from the beginning, the Palestinian factions took a position on the side of the Syrian people and And the need to gain his freedom completely, but the PFLP-GC had a different position by supporting the regime and holding meetings with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad”<sup>13</sup>.

One hundred Palestinian intellectuals issued a statement directed against the Syrian regime, in February 2012, entitled “Not in our name, not in the name of Palestine, you commit crimes, O killers.” Since that date, Palestinian intellectuals and activists have issued many petitions and statements, some of which have been

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<sup>13</sup> Al-Sharq newspaper website, General Command kills Palestinians in Syria to force them to support Assad, July 2012 (last visited on March 8, 2019).

[https://alresalah.ws/post/56113/-القيادة-العامّة-تقتل-الفلستينيين-بِسوريا?\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_=pmd\\_a3edfad92c73961cf6ae89a2523832d495cd6b81-1627321877-0-gqNtZGzNAvijcnBszQei](https://alresalah.ws/post/56113/-القيادة-العامّة-تقتل-الفلستينيين-بِسوريا?_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=pmd_a3edfad92c73961cf6ae89a2523832d495cd6b81-1627321877-0-gqNtZGzNAvijcnBszQei)

signed by hundreds, calling for the camps to be neutralized and to prevent the organization of the General Command from arming them<sup>14</sup>.

And all of the above, from the public opinion of the people, which they expressed by their behavior and by their voice in their demonstrations, passing through the statements of the leadership of PLO, to the statements and petitions of activists and intellectuals, and that expressed the consensus of the majority Palestinians refrain from getting involved in the Syrian blood, and their solidarity with the Syrian people in their plight resulting from the bloody dealings of the Syrian authority with them.

We find the Palestinian bias towards the Syrian people in many instances, including the Palestinian popular anger in Yarmouk camp over the Tremseh massacre that took place on July 13, 2012, which resulted in the death of more than two hundred and fifty Syrian victims, including women and children. It was preceded on July 11, 2012 by the discovery of the bodies of 14 recruits from the Palestine Liberation Army from Neirab camp in Aleppo<sup>15</sup>. The people of Yarmouk camp went out in a large demonstration denouncing the two massacres, and the Syrian security soon confronted them with live bullets. Which resulted in five casualties and ten wounded. On the following day, a massive demonstration,

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<sup>14</sup> Nour Syria website, statement of 100 Palestinian intellectuals, Not in our name, not in the name of Palestine, you commit crimes, O killers (Last visit to the website on March 8, 2019).<https://syrianoor.net/article/10518>

<sup>15</sup> The statement of the Local Coordination Committees in Syria dated July 11, 2012 stated: "Sixteen young recruits of the Palestine Liberation Army in Syria were martyred today. They had been kidnapped about two weeks ago when they came from the Masyaf training camp, to spend their vacations in Neirab and Handarat refugee camps in the city of Aleppo. The regime that did not stop its attempts to ignite the strife between the Syrians and the Palestinians, and did not stop at working not only to neutralize the Palestinians of Syria from the revolution and the revolutionaries, but also tried to incite and intimidate them from the revolution and its consequences. Therefore, we consider the Assad regime to be the first suspect in this heinous crime. We in the Local Coordination Committees, as we extend our condolences to the families of the martyrs and to the Palestinian camps in Syria, we condemn this heinous crime among the regime's daily crimes that do not exclude anyone on Syrian soil. We affirm that these martyrs are the martyrs of Syria and Palestine, the martyrs of freedom and dignity. None of the regime's desperate attempts to sow discord between the two peoples will undermine the unity of the dream of freedom.

numbering in the thousands, went out to mourn the victims and denounce the regime, in which the demonstrators chanted for the martyr and the unity of Palestinian-Syrian blood.

*It is worth noting that the two officials in the PLO who broke this consensus at the time were Talal Naji and Anwar Abdul-Hadi, the director general of the political department of the organization, who is known to be one of the men of the Syrian regime in the PLO. However, with the change of circumstances, the positions of the leadership of the PLO changed, while crushing the will of the Palestinian popular majority in Syria, which we will come to in the context of our study.*

## **Rolling Policy From Clash to Assimilation and Gradual Involvement**

With a sharp clash with the Palestinian national consensus, the leadership of the PFLP-GC initially rushed into confrontation with everyone, starting with the Palestinian people in Syria, to the leadership of the PLO, to the Palestinian public opinion everywhere, reaching out to the Palestinian factions that traditionally follow the orders of the Syrian regime and whose leadership is located in Damascus, some of which showed some hesitation under the pressure of the leadership of the PLO and the Palestinian street.

Then came the Yarmouk uprising, which seriously damaged the image of the PFLP-GC, and made Jibril feel personal humiliation, as it constituted a wide popular confrontation against his organization. Although he remained silent about this fact, it madly pissed him off, so he began accusing tens of thousands of Palestinian demonstrators of working and receiving money from the leadership of the PLO in Ramallah, and from Saudi Arabia. The leadership of the organization established armed groups outside it, in cooperation with the Syrian security services, under the title of “popular committees” in several camps, including those that it established directly in Yarmouk camp in Damascus led by Khaled Jibril. The aim of these committees, which the organization claimed to have established to protect the camps, was to impose a *fait accompli* on the Palestinians, break their will, and arrest the opponents among them, so that it could enter the war of the Syrian regime, carrying out actions with the intent of provoking reactions from the camp surroundings, and showing them as actions directed against the camp and the Palestinians. Indeed, its committees in Yarmouk camp participated in the regime’s battles in the vicinity of the camp, and the committees in Neirab and Handarat camps in Aleppo participated in suppressing peaceful demonstrations in the city, and in some battles alongside the

regime forces on the borders of the two camps. But his plan failed in Yarmouk, while he succeeded in the two Aleppo camps, which we will discuss in detail later.

After the "People's Committees" plan failed miserably in Yarmouk camp, Jibril was solely responsible; He claimed, in an interview he gave to the media, Ghassan Ben Jeddo, on Al-Mayadeen TV, on April 26, 2013, that he had armed these groups on his own initiative, and without receiving weapons from the Syrian regime, to protect the camps, and blamed the Palestinian factions, accusing them of being complicit, frightened, or helpless. He also blamed Iran, without naming it, as usual when he asks for more money<sup>16</sup>.

Ahmed Jibril strongly rejected the calls of individual leaders of the organization - according to what one of them told us - to limit the organization's service to the Syrian regime at the political level (including influencing the opposition circles), and in turn ordered Jibril to participate with the regime in its fateful military war. The leadership of the PFLP-GC pressured its allies from the Palestinian factions to follow suit on the political and military levels, and found a disparity in response; while the marginal factions, which hardly numbered a few dozen at best, rallied, such as the Struggle Front led by Khaled Abdel Majid, the Liberation Front led by Youssef Al-Maqdah (Abu Nidal Al-Ashqar), the Revolutionary Communist Party, and Fatah Al-Intifada (all of which were groups that split from their organizations in PLO, and called themselves the names of the organizations that split from them), and certainly the Lightning Organization affiliated with the ruling Ba'ath Party in Syria. The large factions with a popular presence, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad, hesitated, despite the solidarity of members of their

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmed Jibril's interview with Ghassan Ben Jeddo on Al-Mayadeen TV, Part Two, April 26, 2013 (last seen on March 9, 2019). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rt\\_t7PBFGlw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rt_t7PBFGlw)

leadership with the PFLP-GC leadership. While the events curbed the leadership of the PFLP in Damascus, which is rushing to serve the Syrian regime, specifically after angry mobs attacked during the Yarmouk uprising, its second-in-command Maher al-Taher at that time, and after some of its members showed their solidarity with the Syrian revolution.

In response to what Chris Gunness said regarding the bombing of Al-Raml camp in Latakia, Ali Mustafa, Director of the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees, stated in a letter addressed to Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of UNRWA: "We would like to inform you: that what was stated in the statement of UNRWA spokesperson Chris Gunness is absolutely untrue, and the matter that is being addressed and corrected by the competent Syrian authorities is located in the vicinity of the camp", and added that "the Commission is ready to clarify any issue related to the Palestinian refugees and their camps in Syria". In the same direction that Mustafa went, the denial and justification came of the factions affiliated with the Syrian regime, including the statement of the official spokesman for the "Coalition of Palestinian Factions in Syria" in a statement that stated: "The coalition of Palestinian factions and the Palestinian national bodies and institutions deny what was stated in the statements of the UNRWA leadership about the bombing of the refugee camp in Latakia, and consider that this comes within the framework of the attempts that seek to offend the Syrian and Palestinian positions"<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Arab48, Palestinian factions in Syria denounce UNRWA's statements regarding Al-Raml camp, August 2011 (last visit to the website on March 9, 2019). <https://www.arab48.com/%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/2011/08/16/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%83%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%A3%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%85%D9%84>

The failure of the organization of the General Command to push Yarmouk camp into a military confrontation with its surroundings culminated, when it again failed to control the armed groups that it established there under the title “People’s Committees”, as wide splits occurred within them, expressed by Al-Akhbar newspaper, close to the Hezbollah militia, in a report issued by it on December 24, 2012, entitled "The splits reached Ahmed Jibril's den."<sup>18</sup> This coincided with the realization of this failure by Assad authority, so it bombed Yarmouk camp by MiG warplanes,, and pushed its agents in the opposition military groups in the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad to invade it, for reasons including: Its despair of turning its people into “Shabiha” in order to perpetuate the Syrian-Palestinian division and to exploit the qualitative weight of the Palestinian cause against the rebellious Syrian people; as a result of the geographical nature of the southern region of Damascus, which does not allow it to be completely besieged without the siege of Yarmouk camp; and with the aim of putting pressure on the Palestinians as well, whether this is by besieging those who remained in the camp, or through the horrors of those who were displaced. And all of this, to incite them against the opposition by holding it responsible for what happened to their situation<sup>19</sup>.

At this time, Talal Naji, the second man in the General Command Organization, was more astute and thoughtful than his first man, and the director of the Education Department in the Palestine Liberation Organization, in turn, was moving out of his conviction that defending the Syrian regime was a defense of

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<sup>18</sup> Sharara Nasser, The splits reached Ahmed Jibril's den, Al-Akhbar, December 24, 2012 (last visited the site on March 7, 2019). <https://al-akhbar.com/Arab/80742>

<sup>19</sup> The leadership of the PFLP-GC repeatedly spread, after its participation in the involvement of Yarmouk camp in the Syrian war, that “the armed groups present inside the Yarmouk camp have foreign agendas and receive support and instructions from Saudi Arabia and Qatar aimed primarily at displacing our Palestinian people from Syria.” See what Louay Al-Qaryati, the head of the organization in the Gaza Strip, said when he visited Syria in January 2013. <http://alnorasnews.com/news/?p=62>

its project. And that it is within the axis targeted by the Syrian revolution<sup>20</sup>, or what is called the "conspiracy". However, unlike Jibril, he quickly realized that international and regional circumstances, including the situation of the Syrian regime, would not allow his organization to disregard the source of its official legitimacy derived from being a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which affirmed in its National Charter, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Arab countries<sup>21</sup>, which made him go in a different direction from the confrontational stance of Ahmed Jibril and pushed the organization to go along with the pressures in terms of speech.

To gather supporters, organize the process of defending the Syrian regime among the Palestinians, and contribute to limiting its rapid collapse, Talal Naji sought to find out who remained faithful to the Syrian regime among its affiliated factions. For this purpose, he was communicating with Palestinian-Syrians from different levels, detailing his political vision of what was going on, which did not differ fundamentally from what the Assad authority was saying; However, because he was aware of the official and popular Palestinian desire for impartiality, he used it in his speech with those who would not hear him if he did not. And because the desire for impartiality represented the majority, he made it a pillar of his political and media discourse, while defending the Syrian regime as defiance and resistance for Palestine.

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<sup>20</sup> Talal Naji in an interview on Syrian TV, while talking about the beginning of the Syrian revolution, on April 4, 2018 (last seen on the website, March 7, 2019).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dllL6eVdo3c>

<sup>21</sup> Article 27 of the Palestinian National Charter states that "the Palestine Liberation Organization shall cooperate with all Arab countries, each according to its capabilities, and shall remain neutral among them in light of and on the basis of the requirements of the battle for liberation, and shall not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab country." <http://www.plo.ps/article/43678/الميثاق>

This keep up included ensuring that the General Command Organization takes into account the Palestinian limitations, including controlling its participation in the Syrian war at the political and security levels, and limiting its declared military participation, as long as official Palestinian pressures exist, within the borders of the Palestinian camps. While he will support, in partnership with the Syrian security services, the formation of committees and other militia officially separate from the Organization, to implement the Syrian regime's need to involve the Palestinians in its defense throughout Syrian lands, in order for the Organization to be freed from responsibility, and for its inability to open its membership broadly to the membership of the criminals it recruited and armed, or to open it to a large number of non-Palestinians, for fear of its organizational and political repercussions on it; Let us note that the non-Palestinians in Al-Quds Brigade constitute the majority in it.

Thus, the policy of PFLP-GC was superimposed in a way that it could fulfill the job required by the Assad authority as an executive body for its strategies, taking advantage of the deadly siege of Yarmouk camp, in which it participated, and from the various crises of the Palestinians in Syria that were caused by it, and also benefiting from the mistakes of the Syrian opposition. There are many aspects of this policy:

### **First - Coping With Official and Popular Palestinian Pressure on the Issue of Impartiality Until the Palestinian Popular Will is Broken**

The establishment of the Popular Armed Committees in Yarmouk camp was by the effort of PFLP-GC leadership to establish its grip on the camp, and then direct it in the service of the regime. These committees have actively participated in the campaign of the Assad army in the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, but they were affected by popular pressure over time; some of its staff showed a desire to limit

its role to protecting the Camp. In this context, these local leaders concluded agreements with local opposition groups during the stages of the ascension of their military power. In many cases, the leadership of PFLP-GC found itself obliged to go along with this desire with evasion. Trying to use it politically by claiming its own independent policy. In November 2012, the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, which is close to Hezbollah, reported, according to a person close to the General Command, that “there are implicit and moral commitments previously made by the Free Army not to approach the Palestinian camps”. While making sure to repeat the Organization discourse that “despite the accusation of the general leadership of being affiliated with the Syrian regime, it did not raise a Palestinian rifle except in defense of the camps”<sup>22</sup>.

Such behavior by local leaders was mentioned by the writer Sabr Darwish in an article entitled “Palestinian Weapons and Militants in Yarmouk Camp”, where he said, “On a tour that I took in the meantime, accompanied by military leaders affiliated with the Syrian opposition forces, I was allowed to visit one of the headquarters of the General Command, specifically The one in the square of Palestine Street, and as strange as it seems, there was, in fact, constant communication between leaders of the Syrian military opposition, and some of Ahmed Jibril's field leaders; during that meeting, many discussions were raised, including the reasons for the Ahmad Jibril group carrying weapons, and their involvement in the spread at the entrances to Yarmouk”. In this meeting, one of the field commanders of Jibril, said that his nickname is “Abu Samra”, and he said: "Our relationship with the men of the Free Army is good, and there is no dispute between us, and we are neutral in this conflict, our concern is to protect Yarmouk, and on the other hand, none of the opposition forces have any interest in entering the camp, as long as the camp constitutes the lung of the entire

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<sup>22</sup> Mashi, Marah, “Al-Rayhan Camp to the Free Army,” Al-Akhbar, November 2012 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://al-akhbar.com/Arab/79367>

southern region, and we did not, and it never happened, to close this lung to the forces of the opposition”<sup>23</sup>.

Then came the failure of General Command leadership to control the Armed Popular Committees it had created in Yarmouk Camp, and the subsequent decision of Assad authority’s decision to push the camp into the furnace of war, by emptying it of its residents through bombing it with MiG warplanes, at a time when it is being handed over to an armed party of the opposition, controlled by the security services. So they agreed to sign a memorandum with the rest of the factions addressed to the head of PLO, Mahmoud Abbas, on the condition that it does not include any reference to the bombing of the Mig warplanes, and does not hold the Syrian regime responsible for it. Among the many pieces of evidence of this deception, is the signing of the Ba'ath Party affiliated with the Assad regime, through the organization Vanguard of the People's Liberation War - the Thunderbolt Forces, which is only a branch of the party. The memorandum stated that “the situation in Yarmouk camp is deteriorating further, the martyrs are falling by the dozens, people are wandering on their faces not knowing where to go, a journey of Palestinian agony and a new displacement that affects thousands”. We call on you to intervene quickly with everyone concerned, and with everyone who can influence the parties in the Syrian crisis, in order to stop the bleeding of Palestinian blood, and to stay away from the camps, which have become a daily target of fire and destruction”<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Darwish, Sabr, “Palestinian Weapons and Armed Forces in Yarmouk Camp,” Journal of Palestine Studies, No. 048, File “Yarmouk: A disaster greater than a camp,” Summer 2015, p. 103 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019) / <https://oldwebsite.palestine-studies.org/ar/mdf/abstract/191252>

<sup>24</sup> Wafa Agency, the president makes contacts to spare our camps the conflict in Syria, December 2012 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019) [http://www.wafa.ps/ar\\_page.aspx?id=CUwK4ca613702707189aCUwK4c](http://www.wafa.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=CUwK4ca613702707189aCUwK4c)

The memorandum added: “Now your responsibility is great, now your steps are necessary. Immediately intervene to protect people and camps, consider this a first priority now”.

The memorandum was signed by:

Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah)

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

Palestinian People's Party

Palestinian Popular Struggle Front

Vanguards of the People's Liberation War - Thunderbolt Forces

Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine

Palestinian National Liberation Movement - Fatah Al-Intifada

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

Popular Front - General Command (PFLP-GC )

Palestinian Liberation Front

Palestinian Revolutionary Communist Party

Palestinian Liberation Front

Palestinian Popular Struggle Front

The Palestinian Democratic Union - Feda

In addition to seeking to absolve themselves of responsibility for what is happening, and at the same time in the service of controlling the reaction of the PLO and the Palestinian people, without the condemning the Syrian regime, the leadership of PFLP-GC used the rhetoric of “impartiality”, but its letter expressed its intentions, so it became calls for participation in the fighting under the pretext

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of neutralizing the camps, while it was engaged in a struggle with everyone who condemns the regime for its crimes against the Palestinian people, including some of its cadres. In response to a statement by Hussam Arafat, its organization's spokesman in Iramallah, in which it was stated: "The bombing by the Syrian regime's planes of the Abdul Qader Al-Husseini Mosque leaves no room for doubt as to the party behind this bombing, which is the Syrian Air Force," and that "the Popular Front demands the political leadership in Syria, led by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, to provide a detailed explanation of this crime, to hold the perpetrators accountable, and to publicly apologize for it", describing the bombing as "an unjustifiable crime that took the lives of dozens of our Palestinian people in Yarmouk camp, and a crime Strongly condemned and rejected attempt describing the bombing as "an unjustifiable crime that took the lives of dozens of our Palestinian people in Yarmouk camp, a crime condemned in the most severe terms and an unacceptable attempt to involve the Palestinian camps in the current Syrian crisis and a dangerous development that cannot be passed unnoticed". Anwar Raja, from Damascus, said in a telephone interview with AFP, "the Front confirms its firm stance towards the conspiracy and global war that Syria is being subjected to." He emphasized that "any positions that express the Front's point of view are issued by the Central Media Department in Damascus.<sup>25</sup>"

This is what the organization's leadership did in response to Shawkat Hammad's statements, and the statement issued in the name of the PFLP-GC regarding the Syrian crisis and the positions of Secretary-General Ahmed Jibril regarding it. In the details of the event, Shawkat Hammad, a member of the organization's central committee in the West Bank (according to the media definition), said: "The general leadership was established for the sake of Palestine, and what Ahmed

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<sup>25</sup> Al-Moallem: The international community bears the responsibility for the "frustration" and the Palestinians must expel the "terrorists," a previously mentioned source.

Jibril is doing reflects individual decisions away from returning to its leadership frameworks. And if Ahmed Jibril wants to withdraw from the Front, let him withdraw”. Hammad added: “We in Palestine demand the Central Committee of the Front, which has 55 members in Damascus, for the necessity of holding a meeting during which it takes decisions and recommendations in line with the Palestinian position, which is to neutralize our people from any conflicts within the Arab countries where the refugees are”. Hammad revealed that there are leaders in the Central Committee of the Front who resigned from the centralization due to the individual positions of Ahmed Jibril regarding the conflict in Syria. He said: “There are six members who resigned”. He pointed out that the Front held a meeting in the West Bank during which it issued a statement clarifying its position on what is happening in Syria, which is what happened; where a statement was issued in Ramallah in the West Bank on August 7, 2012 by the PFLP-GC in Palestine. In which its launchers threatened to split from its central leadership in Damascus, because of the positions of its Secretary-General Ahmed Jibril on what is happening in Syria, which they considered to be inconsistent with The general position of the front, which is - and always according to the statement “the defense of Palestine and non-interference in any internal conflicts that occur in the Arab countries”. Subsequently, the Martyr Jihad Jibril Brigades, the military wing of the PFLP-GC (the current official in charge of the military and security departments is Khaled Jibril, the son of Ahmad Jibril), issued a statement denouncing Shawkat Hammad's statement in which he Shawkat Hammad's statement, in which he accused the positions of Secretary-General Ahmed Jibril on the Syrian crisis as being “individual positions”. The statement stressed that “this statement will only express its owner”, and the statement praised Ahmed Jibril’s positions, describing them as “positions that express all the frontlines in the occupied country and abroad, which will remain steadfast in the face of the global conspiracy that it is being exposed to”. The statement concluded by accusing Hammad that his statements “coincided with

the attack of the followers of the approach of neglect and surrender (and he means the leadership of the PLO) against the person of the Secretary-General and the Popular Front-General Command is surprising. It puts a lot of question marks about its holder”.



The statement of the PFLP-GC in Palestine and the response of the organization military wing

**Second- Breaking the Will of the Palestinian People in Syria, and Insisting on the Policy of Implicating and Provoking National Hostility Between the Palestinians and the Syrians.**



Crowds of Yarmouk camp residents await the entry of aid

We find this in Assad's authority pushing opposition groups in the city of Hajar al-Aswad to enter Yarmouk camp, despite the previous consensus in opposition bodies not to do so, and the opposition's lack of interest in this step. We find it in the Assad authority's bombing of civilians in Yarmouk camp on July 16 2012, then its partial siege on July 17 of the same year, with its affiliated militias, including the General Command organization, which continued until the full siege was imposed on the camp on July 18, 2013, which remained until May 27, 2018<sup>26</sup>. We find it in the arrest and killing of the Assad regime's opponents among the Palestinian Syrians, and in the horrors of the displacement of those who were displaced, as we find it in similar incidents that took place in the Assad regime's siege and bombing of the Khan al-Sheih camp, and in its bombing of the Husseinieh, Sbeinah, and Daraa camps, and in its bombing and invasion of Al-Raml camp in Lattakia, and its involvement in the Neirab and Handarat camps in Aleppo in the Syrian war. From March 2011 to March 2019, about 3,920 Palestinian refugees were killed, most of them at the hands of the Syrian regime.

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<sup>26</sup> Social media is awash with evidence of the deadly siege of Yarmouk Camp, from which we choose videos in which the people themselves talk about their situation: (last seen on March 9, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu-vq3lSyKk>

The number of Palestinian detainees in the security and intelligence branches of the Syrian regime reached 1,732 Palestinian detainees, including (108) females<sup>27</sup>.

At a time when the besieged people in Yarmouk camp were starving, hundreds of children came out demanding to be rescued from siege and starvation<sup>28</sup>, and the elderly and sick were prevented from leaving the camp<sup>29</sup>, the news of the suffering of the besieged people spread throughout the world. Talal Naji formulated a new discourse to organize it in line with the policy of the Syrian regime, according to what he said in an interview with Al-Quds Radio, affiliated with the organization, on April 11, 2018: “Hope has not left us from the beginning, since the camp was occupied on July 16, 2012, hope has not left us, hope has not left us, with the return of the camp InShalah. You know that the camp was occupied by criminal takfiri terrorist gangs, that have nothing to do with the struggle and have nothing to do with the patriot and national discourse, and they are tools hired by their operators who are conspiring against Syria and Palestine. And if they were not conspiring against Palestine, they would not have targeted the Palestinian camps that were safe. Yarmouk itself has remained safe and secure since the conspiracy erupted against Syria in March 2011 to December 2012, that is a year and nine months, and it was safe and teeming with life and people. They sponsored and targeted Handarat camp in Aleppo, Al Raml camp in Latakia, and even Homs and Hama camps. They targeted them to destroy the camp, to destroy the right of return, to serve the Zionist entity, and to serve their Western and Zionist operators”.

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<sup>27</sup> We adopted the statistics of the Working Group for Palestine in Syria.

<https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/>

<sup>28</sup> The last call from the children of Yarmouk camp, Ajas al-Awda website (last seen on March 9, 2019).<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljrOxcOpRwM>

<sup>29</sup> Preventing severe health cases from leaving the Yarmouk camp, and entering only 20 food rations in a humiliating manner, Ajas al-Awda website, January 21, 2014 (last viewed on March 7, 2019).<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAEpP0-Vjss>

We find euphoria by succeeding in turning the facts and investing in breaking the will of the Palestinian people, in what Khaled Abdel Majeed, Secretary General of the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces, said: “ Yarmouk camp will be restored sooner or later, and its situation is linked to the area south of Damascus, and what will happen there whether peace or fighting. The Palestinian factions stationed at the Yarmouk entrance is continuing its mission with the Syrian Arab Army to restore the camp, and the Palestinian and Syrian people will be returned to the camp and its vicinity. And the displaced from the camp, who disbelieved in all the Palestinian authorities, who did not fulfill their duty towards them and consider them responsible for their suffering, as a result of the policy of involvement and complicity pursued by the influential leaders in the Palestinian situation<sup>30</sup>”.

While the facts belie this picture; calls to neutralize the camp preceded the entry of armed groups into it, and this is what we documented above. The first agreement to neutralize it was between the Syrian regime and Fatah movement, according to a statement (which we will present below) on December 20, 2012, and the Syrian regime did not implement it. Then, an initiative was formed by the civil institutions operating in the camp in October 2013, and elected Khalil Khalil, the principal of Damask School, as its official spokesman, to form a delegation to negotiate with the regime after formulating the terms of the initiative, which are the terms of negotiation, provided that the initiative would be presented to the armed groups in the camp. This is what happened, and the initiative received support from Khalil Zaghmout, the leader of Al-Ahed Al-Omari, and the leader of the Ababeel Hawaran Army and the rest of the armed groups, according to one of our witnesses. The delegation expanded and represented all civil institutions

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<sup>30</sup> A special seminar on: Yarmouk camp between hope and despair, website of the Palestinian Resistance Forces Alliance, June 2016 (last visited the website on March 8, 2019). <http://www.tahaaluf.com/?p=16226>

and military groups, in the presence of the Fatah Movement, which received the delegation and changed the text of the initiative's paper, claiming that it would not be suitable for the regime. It was signed on December 29, 2013.



A meeting of representatives of relief organizations in Yarmouk camp to discuss their initiative

but the Syrian regime did not implement it, except some of the gains of its militia, whose members advanced inside the camp without completing the terms of the agreement, and when the besieged people reached the conviction that, the Syrian regime would not implement the agreement, according to one of our witnesses, armed opposition groups expelled the members of this militia to the boundaries it was in before the agreement.



The text of the agreement signed on December 29, 2013, and the mechanism for its implementation

The agreement entitled “Basic Principles for Agreement on the Initiative to Solve the Yarmouk Camp Crisis and Neutralize it” stipulated:

***1- Exit the foreign militants from the camp permanently and ensure that they do not return.***

***2- The Palestinian armed men and the Palestinian factions who agreed to the initiative positioned themselves in the vicinity of Yarmouk camp to prevent the entry of weapons and militants.***

***3-The formation of an expanded popular committee that includes dignitaries and dignitaries (Palestinians and Syrians) and the Palestinian factions to approve this initiative to lead the temporary phase until the return of the state’s entities and institutions, and a group of specialized sub-committees emerge from this body.***

***4-After making sure that the camp is free of weapons and armed men and closing all the main and secondary roads between the camp and its vicinity, the concerned and official authorities (municipality - governorate) will clean the camp, remove internal barriers as well as existing rubble, and start maintenance, restoration and restoration of the infrastructure (water - electricity - telephone .. etc)***

***5-The return of the camp's people to their homes and possessions, and the opening of roads to supply them with food and basic materials.***

***6-Settling the status of armed men who wish, and organizing lists of names and weapons.***

***7-Each office of the Palestinian factions present in the camp has the right to possess 3-5 rifles to guard the offices.***

The mechanism for implementing the terms of the agreement and the initiative to neutralize the Yarmouk camp was signed<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> The text of the agreement and the mechanism for its implementation in the two pictures entitled "The text of the agreement signed on December 29, 2013, and the mechanism for its implementation"

After returning to the zero point, the civil institutions returned to pressure to save the civilians in the camp, and to reactivate their initiative, so they launched an appeal that read<sup>32</sup>:

Call call call

A distress call issued by the organizations and institutions operating in the Yarmouk camp for Palestinian refugees in Syria, where we call on: the Syrian government, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian factions, the General Authority for Palestinian Refugees, the Palestinian and Syrian Red Crescent Society, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, the Red Cross International, and UNICEF. We ask them to:

First, the immediate entry of food supplies to save the remaining civilians from an imminent disaster.

Second, to spare civilians political and military quarrels

Third, provide medical care for the critical cases.

And if we used to warn of a shortage of foodstuffs necessary for the continuation of human life, today we announce the complete depletion of these foodstuffs, which threatens life in Yarmouk camp.

Yarmouk camp 12-5-2013



Representatives of NGOs in Yarmouk camp launch their appeal on December 5, 2013

<sup>32</sup> A distress call from the organizations and institutions operating in Yarmouk camp, December 5, 2013 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbolzBRm8rQ>

Subsequently, the civil and military actors in the camp established a gathering called “the Sons of Yarmouk Gathering”, in response to a request from the organization of the General Command, to be a representative of the besieged in negotiations with those who surround them. The gathering reached an agreement with the Syrian regime on June 21, 2014. Also the Syrian regime did not implement the agreement, despite the fact that the armed groups inside the camp implemented their own obligations, according to the testimony of the delegation of the Palestinian factions who entered the camp<sup>33</sup>. Its text:

***“1-Establishing focal points around the administrative camp borders to ensure that no armed militants from outside enter the camp.***

***2-Formation of an agreed joint military committee.***

***3-Forming a security force to maintain security inside the camp.***

***4-Preventing the entry of any person accused of murder into the camp for the time being until the completion of civil reconciliation.***

***5-Anyone who wants to return to the camp and was armed enters as a civilian.***

***6-Ensure that there are no heavy weapons inside the camp at all.***

***7-Ensure that the camp is not exposed to any military action.***

***8-Opening the main entrances to the Yarmouk and Palestine camps and preparing the infrastructure.***

***9-A pledge to prevent any armed person from near the camp from entering the camp once and for all.***

***10-The only guarantor of all of the foregoing is the state represented by Brigadier General Staff Head of the Palestine Branch only, and all security matters.***

***11-Settlement of detainees conditions, and an immediate ceasefire. (Note from the researchers: Clause 11 of the agreement is handwritten).***

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<sup>33</sup> A video in which the delegation of the factions declares that the camp is free of those called “foreign militants” (last seen on March 7, 2019).[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp67of-w\\_vc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp67of-w_vc)

- At the same time, all the camp's problems will be resolved by the return of the people and everything related to basic services.
- We did not take up arms except to protect the camp from the neighbourhood, and this was done by removing all the strangers from the camp”<sup>34</sup>.



Text of the Agreement of June 21, 2014

Assad authority and the leadership of PFLP-GC, used the insistence of Yarmouk camp on impartiality (which we found many evidences of, including statements that preceded the siege we have already referred to, including meetings between delegations from the factions with the residents in the camp at times and armed men in Other times<sup>35</sup>, including the besieged people demonstrated, shouting at the top of their voice, “Yarmouk rest on impartiality”<sup>36</sup>) to serve: pressure on the southern region in Damascus to sign reconciliation agreements; And raising sensitivity between the camp and its neighborhood, including setting clauses to neutralize the camp, are hostile towards the neighboring areas and falsifying the facts, such the inclusion of the second agreement mentioned above on the lips of

<sup>34</sup> The text of the agreement is in the image entitled "Text of the Agreement of June 21, 2014".

<sup>35</sup> The meeting of the Palestinian Ambassador, Anwar Abdel Hadi, the reconciliation delegation from inside and outside, and the UNRWA delegation on February 19, 2014, “Yarmouk camp, tomorrow is better” (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EL8qUJJPm7t8>

<sup>36</sup> The Yarmouk demonstration against the siege on January 10, 2014, Ajras al-Awda website (last seen on March 7, 2019). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv\\_xyeMOu\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv_xyeMOu_w)

the militants in the camp, which reads: “We carried weapons only to protect the camp from the neighborhood, and this was done by removing the strangers from the camp”. It used too, to push the besieged groups to fight among themselves and to liquidate their leaders, including Al-Nusra Front’s liquidation of Khalil Zaghmout (Abu Hashem), the leader of the Al-Ahed Al-Omari Brigade, and one of the most prominent armed leaders who pushed for negotiations for impartiality. The facts proved that Assad authority was not about to neutralize the camp, which it had implicated from a previous plan, as it procrastinated in the negotiations, suspended even what its delegates had signed, used the siege for political blackmail, and proceeded from the beginning towards the destruction of the Yarmouk camp”<sup>37</sup>.



The destruction of the Russian and Assad air forces of the Yarmouk camp

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<sup>37</sup> You can refer to the report “Yarmouk Camp Under Fire” to learn about the destruction of the Yarmouk camp, Center for Democratic Republic Studies, April 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <http://www.drsc-sy.org/مخيم-اليرموك-تحت-النار/>

### **Third - Contribute to Restoring the Legitimacy of the Regime and Building its Unequal Assimilation Mechanisms.**

In an interview with Talal Naji on the Syrian satellite channel “political talk” in an episode entitled “The Culture of Victory” on April 4, 2018<sup>38</sup>, we can look at an aspect of his political understanding, where he says: “Politics does not have emotions and feelings, and love And hate, politics frankly is about interests. It is not permanent friendship, nor permanent enmity, but permanent interests”. It is the foundation upon which Hafez al-Assad established his regime, to which Talal Naji belongs and gained his experience.

In the same interview, Naji explains his understanding of the process of assimilation that the Assad regime must undertake as an indispensable condition for its success in rebuilding an authoritarian regime; He talks about absorbing those he called "misguided" and "deceived", referring to the masses of opposition from the Syrian people. Naji’s speech in the interview indicates that he knows that one of the conditions for rebuilding an authoritarian political system that has no legitimacy but prevail, is his ability to reproduce the mechanisms of assimilation of the defeated, provided that it legitimizes their inequality with the victors; When the announcer responds to him by focusing on "victory", i.e. precisely oppression and arrogance, Naji explains to him how the policy of assimilation he proposes, is based on the distinction between the vanquished and the victor, in deceptive language instead of the interviewer's dry language, by saying “You are right, we must conclude with the saying the following: Whoever stood by the state, the army, and the leader is not equal to those who deceived them or traitors...But the leader, the father, the mother, and the state are responsible for all its children, including those who have been misguided,

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<sup>38</sup> “To some extent? On April 4, 2018 | Culture of Victory | Dr. Talal Naji | Syrian TV.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dllL6eVdo3c>

including those who are deceived, including those who strayed during a period of time and then reconsidered”<sup>39</sup>.

In the context of working to restore the legitimacy of the Assad regime, the leadership of the General Command, especially Talal Naji, focused its attention on ensuring full adherence to the curricula of the Syrian state education as an essential part of its defense of the legitimacy of the Syrian regime, and preventing the formation of an alternative to its “State”. We find this, for example, in Talal Naji’s interview with Al-Mayadeen channel, within The Hour’s Dialogue program on January 16, 2018, when the announcer asked Naji about the “education file” (and we understand from the question that the file was presented to the announcer by Talal Naji himself during the preparation for this meeting), by saying: “I want to refer to the humanitarian file in Yarmouk camp, doctor, and I looked at the education file yesterday, and you are responsible for this file, and that during this year you were able to introduce the Syrian state’s school curricula to Yarmouk camp. Teaching the curriculum (the curriculum of the Syrian state) inside the camp despite the control of some armed factions.” Naji, while listening to the question, repeats “yes, yes” to confirm what was stated. Then he answers “We succeeded, of course with the effort of all the honorable brothers, in securing education, ISIS wanted to impose their curriculum on education, our people refused... Today there is a big school in Yalda. This is Yalda, Yes, the gunmen wanted to impose their own curricula. Thanks to God, those in charge of education from our Palestinian brothers, succeeded in imposing the curriculum of the Syrian state. And now our students are learning the curriculum of the Syrian state..the Syrian government sponsors this education and delivering it with assistance from the Ministry of Education, UNRWA, and other Palestinian

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<sup>39</sup> previous source

authorities"<sup>40</sup>. Of course, it goes without saying that the "UNRWA" and "other Palestinian parties" are not from the "State" he is talking about. The first is from the United Nations bodies, and the second is Palestinian. But what interests us here, is that Naji's discourse, which is full of lies, proves the elements of the politics we are explaining.

**The leadership of the General Command Managed its Contribution to Restoring the Legitimacy of the Assad authority and Building Mechanisms for its absorption with a theoretical axis. We find a typical example of some of its elements in the interview with Naji on the aforementioned Syrian satellite channel, with practical steps, including:**

### **1-Formation of a Palestinian factional alliance under the name Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces**

Despite the hastening of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to show solidarity with the General Command after the Yarmouk camp uprising, and the organization's killing and wounding of peaceful Palestinian demonstrators, the alliance was shattered by popular and official Palestinian pressures, and the disagreement over the positions about the events in the region, and the refusal of its parties to subjugate to an axis facing popular revolts. This alliance included PFLP-GC, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (Khaled Abdel Majid's wing), the Vanguard of the Popular Liberation War - the Thunderbolt (affiliated with the Ba'ath Party), Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party, Fatah Al-Intifada Movement, Palestinian Liberation Front, (the wing of Youssef Al-Maqdah, known as Abu Nidal Al-Ashqar). The "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" and the "Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine" left the alliance in 1998.

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<sup>40</sup> Al-Mayadeen TV, "The Hour's Dialogue" program, interview with Talal Naji - Assistant Secretary-General of the Front, January 16, 2018 (last seen on March 7, 2019).<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7J5Jiwi390>



Ahmed Jibril in the middle, Musa Abu Marzouk and Ziad Nakhaleh

The alliance first met on June 8, 2011<sup>41</sup>, two days after the killing of demonstrators in the Yarmouk uprising, at the invitation of the General Command and took a hard stance announced at the end of its meeting with the media, in which it condemned what he called “the crime of assault” on the Khalsa complex in Yarmouk camp, affiliated with PFLP-GC. Describing what happened in the camp as “falling within the framework of the scheme targeting Syria and the resistance forces and serving the American Zionist enemy and their tools in the region.” During this press statement, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Islamic Jihad Movement, Ziyad Nakhaleh, appeared, sitting to the right of Jibril, while the deputy head of the Hamas political bureau, Musa Abu Marzouk, was sitting to his left, in order to legitimize the “resistance” on the outcomes of this meeting. Abu Marzouk’s statements were in line with the policy of Jibril and the Syrian regime, including his regret for the release of the PLO statement, where he said

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<sup>41</sup> All the information that we used about this meeting was obtained from the Al-Jazeera website, except for what is indicated to the contrary, including a photo of the meeting with the media, on the following link (last visit to the site on March 7, 2019):

<https://www.aljazeera.net/amp/news/arabic/2011/6/9/فصائل-فلسطينية-تدين-أحداث-اليرموك>

at the conclusion of the faction meeting on June 8, 2011: “The statement spoke about the factions in isolation from the Palestinian people, especially since the factions fought in the name of the people, they did not fail their people. The expression is supposed to be another expression, to burn and chant against the resistance factions, this was not a Palestinian custom”<sup>42</sup>.

In this meeting, Jibril distributed his accusations of being responsible for a popular uprising, describing it as a "conspiracy," drawing on the strength of the alliance and the presence of leaders from the Islamic Jihad and Hamas movements; He accused Saudi parties of financing the group that fabricated these events that took place in Yarmouk camp in Damascus during the funerals of the martyrs of the March of Return on the anniversary of the Setback. He declared that “we will call for a press conference, and bring before you the detainees who were arrested, and how they confess to you how they brought the money, it was sent to them from Ramallah, and from other parties from Saudi Arabia, for this sedition that took place”<sup>43</sup>. And the press conference that never took place. Jibril also accused Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan, a leader in the Fatah Movement, of standing behind these events and of "conspiring with America and the Zionist enemy." Jibril denounced the statement of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was issued in Ramallah, saying: “It claimed that armed groups affiliated with the PFLP-GC fired live bullets at the crowds of Palestinian youth demonstrators from Yarmouk camp”. He also absolved himself of participating in transporting the young men to the occupied Syrian Golan, and blamed a close associate of Air Force Intelligence, Yasser Qashlaq, by saying: “There is one suspicious, suspicious wealthy Palestinian, His name is Yasser Qashlaq, suspicious. He says

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<sup>42</sup> A report on Al-Jadeed channel about the press conference at the end of the faction alliance meeting, June 2011 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ1JJLYgaM>

<sup>43</sup> previous source

he is the leader of the Free Palestine Movement. He rented these buses and directed them towards Quneitra, and we had no knowledge of the matter. Then he arrived with a girl whose name I no longer remembered, and they fled”<sup>44</sup>.

Later on, this alliance broke up, as the head of the political bureau of Hamas, Khaled Mashal, resolved the discussion in the political bureau in the interest of supporting the Syrian revolution, then did not give the Syrian regime the statement of support that the Republican Palace was insisting on, and demanded a meeting between the factions and Bashar al-Assad to announce it. In his stance, Meshaal benefited from the Palestinian popular pressure, and the support of most of his organization's elements for the Arab Spring, including the Syrian revolution, and the victory of the revolution in Egypt, then he left with the rest of his leadership from Syria. This is what the Secretary-General of the Islamic Jihad Movement, Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, tried to match by placing his movement in the “silent impartiality” zone without hurting his relations with Iran, taking advantage of its need for him, in return for his need for it. In other words, Shalah took into account the hopes of "Sunni political Islam" to which he belongs intellectually and emotionally, despite his pessimism in this regard, taking advantage of any success in this path. At the same time making sure not to do or say anything, he or his organization, which provokes his Iranian supporters, who fight these hopes in reality.

If this analysis suffices us in the station we are talking about, it is worth noting that Shalah's policy was gradually defeated by the Iranians, in line with the gradual defeat of the Arab Spring in its unfolding phase. After the success of the military coup in Egypt, and after the Russian military intervention in Syria, which altered the balance of power in it, Iran sharply reduced its financial support for

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<sup>44</sup> previous source



helpless," then added: "Some of them were able to buy, by Qatari and Saudi dollars - do you understand - and we stayed alone - do you understand - and we cried. And I do not want to enter into sad and painful details for us at the front, but I tell you to this day, the number of martyrs in the battles that took place and which are happening now, exceeded 150 martyrs and not less than 400 wounded. By God, no one - did you understand - stood and told us, how do you want to deal with this martyr, this is his family, how will they live - did you understand - even though we are allied with very important forces in this region, these wounded - do you understand - how are they treated, we are patient. So, I said in the beginning we are the owners of principles, all this shortcoming in our rights will not deter us from our political position, which we are about, for now we are in this mission to defend the camps. We prevented these armed men from entering Homs camp, this is right before you, Hama camp, Neirab camp, Handarat camp facing these gunmen until today, Khan Dannoun, Sitt Zainab camp - did you understand - and this is thanks to our will and I hope that this position will be the position of the rest of the Palestinian factions. And that they understand that their moral duty, their duty on the question of Palestine and the defense of the Palestinian people, is to take a firm stand and not to let us stand alone"<sup>46</sup>.

While Jibril was lamenting his luck for failing to rally the Palestinian-Syrians behind him to lead them in defending the Syrian regime, Talal Naji led an existential struggle with the young forces of change in Palestinian-Syrian society<sup>47</sup>, and by inviting those seeking wealth and power to lead and benefit, which is Naji's habit. What he did, with Iranian support by putting pressure on the Palestinian factions that financed them, established a meager alliance in which there were two nominal main parties, without a real role (until Mashal and Shalah

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<sup>46</sup> Ahmed Jibril's interview with Ghassan bin Jeddo on Al-Mayadeen channel, part two, a previously mentioned source

<sup>47</sup> Yarmouk: The Conflict of Generations and the Destruction of the Rebel Society, a previous source.

were removed) in the name of the Alliance of the Palestinian Resistance Forces, through which it was able to claim to speak on behalf of the "Palestinian resistance" and to establish contacts with Palestinian components in Palestine and the diaspora.

The Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces, was included, according to the Alliance's website, in the order below:

The Islamic Jihad Movement, Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (Khaled Abdel Majid's wing), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement - Fatah al-Intifada And the Vanguard of the People's War of Liberation - the Thunderbolt Forces", the Palestinian Communist Party - the Revolutionary, and the Palestinian Liberation Front (Yusuf al-Maquadah wing).



The central command of the coalition appears in the center, Talal Naji, and to his right, in charge of administrative work, Khaled Abdel Majid

What made it easy for those of these factions who wanted to establish armed militias under the title of protecting the camps, as they participated in the war against the Syrian people, and at the same time spoke of impartiality. While factions affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization cooperated with this Alliance, some with the aim of defending Assad's authority, and others with the

aim of arranging its affairs (such as securing security approvals) and gaining gains, since the Alliance has become the official framework adopted by Assad's authority. The secretariat of the alliance is Khaled Abdel Majid, while the decision-maker is the founder of this alliance, Talal Naji.

The first note on the list of participants is to put the name of the Islamic Jihad Movement at its head, despite the fact that the movement took a position of silence as a result of the support of Shallah, its Secretary-General of the revolution, while his deputy, Ziad Nakhaleh, was a supporter of Iran and thus the Syrian regime, at a time when Iran was pressing hard on the movement because it is the only money source. The situation remained this way throughout Shallah's presence in its general secretariat, and before he was removed through a "medical error" during an open-heart operation at the Great Rasoul Hospital affiliated with Hezbollah and Iran in Lebanon.

The second observation is the absence of the Hamas movement, while its armed wing attended the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades without reference to it. What shows the fact that the political organization in Hamas supported the Syrian revolution as long as Khaled Mashal was the head of its political bureau, and Iran held the movement's military wing as the main funder, source of weapons, and trainer; specifically, after the military coup, on July 3, 2013, against the rule of President Mohamed Morsi (the first ruler of Egypt through democratic elections in its history), and the re-imposition of the siege on Gaza more severely than it was during the era of ousted President Hosni Mubarak.

This alliance defended the abuse of Assad's authority in the Palestinian camps, including its condemnation of the statements of the UNRWA, which condemned the Syrian army's bombing of the Raml camp for Palestinian refugees in Latakia. The cover of these factions to abuse the Palestinian refugees in Syria was their call not to involve the Palestinians in the current events in Syria, and not to

employ and exploit this for the benefit of hostile parties! The alliance of the factions began to repeat the discourse of the policy of keeping pace with the Palestinian national will by not interfering, while the alliance was supporting Assad's authority through all the means it could; from this, its Secretary General Khaled Abdel Majid said: "The Palestinians are part of the fabric of society surrounding Yarmouk camp, and therefore the events and the crisis were reflected in the camp, and there was an international and regional plan to target the capital of the right of return, which is Yarmouk camp, within the framework of the plan to displace and disperse the camp's residents, with the aim of dropping the right of return. It pushed the Palestinian people to frustration and despair, and liquidated the right of return for refugees within the framework of plans aimed at imposing Israeli solutions on the Palestinian people. There were ambiguous positions for some factions, some of them colluded and some of them got involved in the situation and work, thus happened what happened in the control of the camp. Where some influential people in the Palestinian situation were betting on the fall of the regime within months, so they made wrong choices that first harmed the Palestinian people before they harm the Syrian people and the state. And for the contemporary Palestinian revolution, and he defined a correct position on the side of the Syrian people, their leadership and their state against the conspiracy that targeted Syria, because we considered that targeting Syria is a prelude to the liquidation of rights. and the Palestinian cause"<sup>48</sup>.

## **2- Political Support for the Participation of the Palestinian Liberation Army in the Syrian war**

From a legal point of view and term of legitimacy, the Palestine Liberation Army emerged from a decision of the PLO, which was established by the organization in its charter, the minutes of its successive sessions, and its financial decisions,

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<sup>48</sup> A special symposium on: Yarmouk camp between hope and despair, a previously mentioned source

which was approved by the Arab League at the second and third Arab summit meetings, and after assigned Ahmed Al-Shukairi at the first summit conference to consult with the Palestinian people and the Arab member states to form a Palestinian entity. However, the Syrian regime seized the decision of the Liberation Army, and had used it, contrary to its nature, in battles against the LPO, so it tried to use it in the face of the Syrian people, which was obstructed by the official and popular pressure of the Palestinians, and the bias of recruits in the Liberation Army to the Syrian people, which was admitted by the commander of the army major general Tariq al-Khadra.

Insisting on the involvement of the Liberation Army, Assad authority developed a strategy, including securing the alliance led by the General Command Organization, political support for this involvement, and securing the support of institutions affiliated with Palestinian civil society; such as the demand of the alliance in Damascus for the Liberation Army to intervene in the camps of Khan al-Sheeh and Yarmouk, and all the camps, as well as the call of the Jafra Foundation, in partnership with the Free Palestine militia, for a tribute festival held in Jaramana camp, on November 17, 2017, to honor the victims of the army in the Syrian war, on the occasion of the fifty-third anniversary of the founding of the Palestine Liberation Army, and the seventy-second anniversary of the founding of the Syrian army. Under the slogan “one homeland - one blood - one trench”<sup>49</sup>.



Honor invitation text

<sup>49</sup> Youssef Fakhr El-Din and Homam al-Khatib, The Palestinian Liberation Army in the Syrian War, a previous source

### 3-Continuing to Form Military Militias With Palestinian Names

The goal behind the establishment of this militia outside the official factional framework, albeit with the practical support and honor of the alliance factions, is the ability to claim impartiality and the continued response of these factions to the Palestinian people's desire to be neutral from war. Indeed, this militia has the advantage that it is not shy about publicly participating in the battles of Assad's authority, but rather boasts of it on every platform. By following the map of the efforts of the leadership of the General Command organization in this regard, we note that the results were sharp between humiliating failure and resounding success, and that they were related to the good or bad relationship of the Palestinian residents in this camp or that with their Syrian surroundings, which overlaps with it in some cases, and constitutes a state of estrangement in other cases.



Flag and photos of the dead of the Al-Quds Brigade at a festival organized by the General Command in Yarmouk camp on January 11, 2019

While the failure was dire in Yarmouk camp before the opposition gunmen entered it, as we mentioned above in the testimony of Ahmed Jibril himself, the success was great in the Neirab and Handarat camps in Aleppo governorate. While Yarmouk camp had completed its integration with the Syrian people, to the extent that the Syrian conditions allowed for integration<sup>50</sup>. The two Aleppo camps were sensitive to their surroundings, especially Neirab camp.

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<sup>50</sup> Yarmouk: The Conflict of Generations and the Destruction of the Rebel Society, a previous source.

There, in the Neirab camp in Aleppo, with the support of the organization of the General Command, the Air Force Intelligence established the Al-Quds Brigade led by the Palestinian engineer Muhammad Al-Saeed on October 6, 2013, to include Palestinian refugees from Neirab, Handarat and Al-Raml camps. And fighters from the city of Aleppo and its western and northern countryside.

#### **4- Satisfying the PLO Leadership and Fatah Movement Leadership**

Although this file is the domain of the Syrian regime, Talal Naji's contribution to it was clearly visible. This was done by rehabilitating the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, after prolonged suspicion and accusations, including the employment of Israel. Among that was the aforementioned memorandum sent to Mahmoud Abbas, which emphasized his reference and that of the PLO, to be able to curb its condemnation of the Syrian regime's crime by bombing Yarmouk camp and forcing its residents to flee and besiege it from July 2013 until its control in May 2018, the starvation of the remaining inhabitants until they died as a result of malnutrition and the loss of medicines, more than 200 victims.

One of the ways to satisfy the Fatah movement and the leadership of the PLO and to maneuver against them, at the same time, is to make two agreements with the movement to neutralize the Yarmouk camp. Even if Assad authority did not implement them, their path was satisfactory for a PLO's leadership that was busy restoring the recognition of the Assad authority to its legitimacy, and by restoring its property in Syria, which was confiscated in the eighties of the last century. And to allow it to work politically in the Palestinian center in Syria, and to guarantee the exclusive representation of it, after it was convinced that the United States does not prefer, until an unspecified time, the continuation of Assad's

authority, after it ensured the collapse of the old Syrian regime, and after witnessing the opposition's mismanagement of its affairs.

We find the first agreement in a statement issued by the "Syria Region" of the Fatah movement on December 19, 2012, in which it was stated that their movement and the PLO factions had reached a "draft agreement under the auspices of the PLO factions, aiming at the return of the Palestinian residents of Yarmouk camp to their homes and their property that they were forced to leave," and that "the agreement expected to be made public in the next few hours aims to spare our people the conflict and its scourge and make the camp a safe area, provided that the PLO factions and the committees gathered in the camp work to achieve this." Which did not happen, and it turned out to be the maneuvers of the Syrian regime and the leadership of the General Command Organization to absorb the reaction of the Palestinian people and the PLO.

The fact that Fatah has deleted the statement on its Facebook page, has affixed its text here, which we previously included in the documents of the book *Palestinian Refugees in the Syrian Ordeal*, without modifying or even correcting the spelling errors contained in it:

"The Palestinian National Liberation Movement - Fatah - Syria Region December 20, 2012

After several meetings at the Palestinian embassy in Syria and the great efforts made by the Fatah movement and the PLO factions, and the round-the-clock contact with the Palestinian leadership, which in turn and in the person of President Abu Mazen, contacted all decision-making capitals in the world, with the United Nations, and the parties involved in the conflict in Syria, Those efforts culminated in a draft agreement sponsored by the PLO factions, aiming at the return of the Palestinian residents of Yarmouk camp to their homes and properties that they were forced to leave.

The agreement, which is expected to be made public in the next few hours, aims to spare our people the conflict and its scourge and make the camp a safe area, provided that the PLO factions and the committees gathered in the camp work to achieve this.

We are in the process of building groups (relief, medical, security, environmental) in coordination with some factions and civil forces, to maintain a dignified and safe life in our dear, dear camp, and to remain a base for launching and returning to our beloved homeland, Palestine.

Long live Palestine, long live Syria

Glory and eternity to our martyrs, and healing to the wounded

Long live our camps, the castle of steadfastness and unity

It is a revolution until victory

Palestinian National Liberation Movement Fatah

Syria region

12/19/2012, 23:00 Occupied Jerusalem Time”

Indeed, the Fatah movement established the relief, medical, and security groups that it talked about in its statement; However, we could not be sure that they established "environmental committees". Which can be considered an organizational gain for the movement, which was barely allowed to have some activity in Syria before the revolution, since it was prevented from working in it since 1984. However, the Syrian regime imposed a siege on Yarmouk camp and prevented entry and exit from it after the Fatah movement spoke about the above agreement!

The second agreement, in which the Fatah movement and the PLO had a central role, is the one whose text we affirmed above, and we indicated that the regime did not abide by it. The movement and the organization were involved in the third agreement held on June 21, 2014, the text of which we confirmed above and indicated that the regime did not comply with it either.

Among the limited gratifications, is allowing the PLO to clean up the rubble in the public streets of Yarmouk camp, which was destroyed by the Assad army and the Russian warplanes, after it was completely and systematically looted by the Syrian army, while the camp residents continue to be prevented from returning to their camp. It was remarkable that the Fatah movement was praising Assad's authority, so that sheikh Muhammad al-Omari, a member of the so-called "National Reconciliation Committee in Yarmouk camp and the southern region" (he is known for his strong loyalty) sent a letter to the head of the Syrian regime, asking him to intervene to stop looting the homes of Yarmouk camp residents (the looting phenomenon).



A post by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Omari about the looting of the Yarmouk camp by the army

We find the explanation for this rashness in the bribery obtained by the leadership of the Liberation Organization / Fatah movement by returning Fatah offices and properties that had been confiscated after the split sponsored by the Syrian regime in the Fatah movement in 1983, and officially allowing Fatah to operate on Syrian

soil. However, we find other reasons among their supporters that do not negate the above, including: the poor performance of the opposition, whether political or military; focusing the attention of the PLO's and Fatah leadership on perpetuating the dispute that occurred between Assad regime and Hamas as a result of the latter's stance on the Syrian revolution; trying to limit the negative effects of the results of conflicts in the region on the Palestinian cause; and easing the pressure on the Palestinians in Syria.

The decline of the PLO and Fatah discourse appeared in the statements of its leaders praising the authority of al-Assad and its apparatus, through its delegates coming from Ramallah in the West Bank<sup>51</sup>, and its leaders residing in Damascus<sup>52</sup>, or through its response to the mechanisms of assimilation established by the organization of the Popular Front-General Command.

## **5- Formation of Civilian Assimilation Networks**

Among the most prominent actions in this regard is the establishment of a body to assimilate the actors in Yarmouk camp in the name of the Palestinian National Authority, following the entry of armed opposition groups; Talal Naji, through activists who were present inside the camp, quickly set up a committee that brought together local political and civil actors with representatives of the Palestinian factions in Yarmouk camp. The goal of establishing this body was to rearrange the Palestinian actors and connect them to the Syrian regime through

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<sup>51</sup> Ahmed Al-Majdalani was the head of one of the Fatah delegations that supported the Syrian regime and justified its siege of Yarmouk camp, which caused an angry Palestinian reaction, including criticism from Birzeit University students, an example of which we find on the link (last seen on March 7 / March 2019): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Mzsndp0cuk>

<sup>52</sup> It is possible to return to the repetition of the official of the Fatah movement in Syria, Dr. Samir Rifai, on Palestine TV, the speech of Assad authority about the conspiracy and what happened in Yarmouk camp (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYGjFx5FS5g>

its traditional channel, in which the organization of the General Command stands at its head, and on its edges are distributed factions, institutions, and public figures.

In addition to the working groups affiliated with the General Command, and those belonging to its allies in the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces, there are groups in the name of “civil society institutions”, play a pivotal role in restoring the legitimacy of the regime and its conflict with the opposition, including making settlements with opposition activists, and handing over those who refuse; Among the most prominent of these groups are Nour Association for Relief and Development, and Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development, whose director, Muhammed Jalbout and Wissam El Seba'na, handed over Khaled Bakraoui and Niraz Saeed, according to witnesses.

The Nour Association for Relief and Development, in partnership with the Jafra Foundation, through a network that includes their employees and their collaborators, lured the activists to make settlements with the regime, then they detained some of them in their office located in Al-Mazraa neighborhood in Damascus, sorted them according to the file of each of them, interrogated them, they were beaten, and their documents and hardwares were kept. One of these activists was photographer Niraz Saeed, who was beaten in this Mezzeh office, then handed over to the security services, who later informed his family that he had died in September 2016. This is considered a violation, the second principle of the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of all persons under any form of detention or imprisonment, which was adopted and made public by United Nations General Assembly Resolution (43/173), dated December 9 (1988), which states: That “Arrest, detention or imprisonment shall only be

carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of the law and by competent officials or persons authorized for that purpose”<sup>53</sup>.



Muhammed Jalbout with Talal Nagy

In May 2017, the Nour Association for Relief and Development honored Talal Naji. In the association’s speech, its director, Muhammed Jalbout, explained: “The aim of the event is to emphasize the continuation of defending the land and holy sites in Palestine and Syria,” noting that “the honoring of Dr. Talal Naji, who is one of the association’s supporters, not only because he represents a Palestinian faction, but because he represents a legacy of the Palestinian cause”<sup>54</sup>.



A picture showing Muhammed Jalbout honoring Talal Naji

<sup>53</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations (last visited on March 7, 2019). <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/DetentionOrImprisonment.aspx>

<sup>54</sup> Pen Breaths, From Earth to Heaven... Coral Golan on the 41st Anniversary of Eternal Earth Day, May 2017 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019). <http://pen-sy.com/19623/>



A picture of the honoring ceremony held by the Nour Association for Relief and Development, Talal Naji, in the presence of Khaled Abdel Majid

In May 2017, the PFLP-GC, during a speech festival held at the Opera House in Damascus on the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of its founding, presented a appreciation shield to the Nour Association for Relief and Development, which was handed over to Muhammed Jalbout<sup>55</sup>.



A photo of Asma al-Assad with the administrative staff of the Nour Association for Relief and Development

At this time, the Jafra Foundation was cooperating with the Palestinian militia, as happened on November 16, 2017; Where the "Palestinian People's Committee Against the Aggression against Syria", in cooperation with the "Free Palestine Movement" militia and the Jafra Foundation, held a festival honoring about 100 families of the victims of the Syrian Arab Army and the victims of the Palestinian

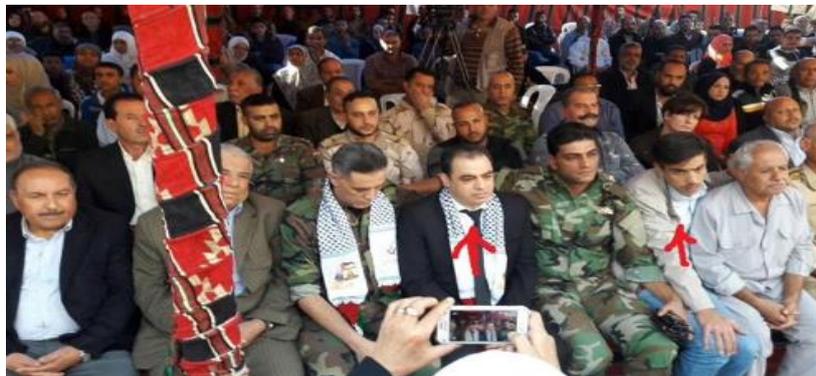
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<sup>55</sup> Nafhat al-Qalam, Dar al-Assad for Culture and Arts hosts the 52nd Anniversary Festival of the founding of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, May 2017 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019). <http://pen-sy.com/20160/>

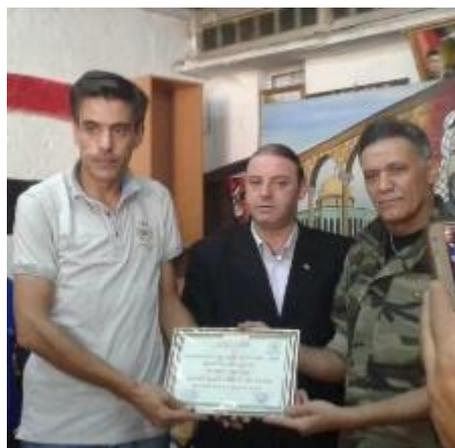
Liberation Army, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Corrective Movement and the October 1973 war, and the fifty-third anniversary of its founding. The Palestinian Liberation Army, and the seventy-second anniversary of the founding of the Syrian Arab Army.



The call made by the Palestinian People's Committee Against the Aggression against Syria in cooperation with Jafra Foundation and the Free Palestine Movement militia



Yasser Qashlaq and Saed Abdel Aal, leader of the Free Palestine Movement militia, with Hazem Mansour, Deputy Director of the Jafra Foundation, at the Army honor festival



Saed Abdel Aal presents a certificate of honor to the Jafra Foundation

The relationship between the Jafra Foundation and the Palestinian militia was not limited to one faction. Rather, it attempted to network with the alliance of Palestinian factions that committed multiple violations in the Syrian war, through several means, including its meeting with Khaled Abdel Majid, the Secretary of the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces. Where it was reported on the alliance's website that Abdel Majid, met a delegation from the Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development, and they discussed the conditions of Yarmouk camp and the Palestinian camps, the role of civil institutions and organizations in addressing the issues of the Palestinian people, and the reconstruction in Yarmouk camp and other camps, and that the delegation presented "the readiness of the institution to play its role in the camp alongside the factions and organizations that bear the responsibility of addressing the conditions of our people in the camp". At the end of the meeting, the delegation presented the Foundation's shield and a map of Palestine to comrade Khaled Abdel Majid<sup>56</sup>.



Feryal Ali, representative of the Jafra Foundation delegation, presents a shield to Khaled Abdel Majid

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<sup>56</sup> - Nidal al-Shaab, Abdel Majid meets a delegation from the Jafra Foundation for Relief and Youth Development, June 24, 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <http://nedalalshab.com/?p=16679>



Wissam El Seba'na, director of the Jafra Foundation, and his deputy Hazem Mansour, and a member of its board of directors, Feryal Ali, with Omar Murad, head of the General Commend in Syria and supervisor of Jafra

Talal Naji, in partnership with the director of the Palestinian Arab Refugee Commission, Ali Mustafa, also facilitated the work of local civil institutions, including those affiliated with the Fatah movement and Palestinian institutions operating outside Syria, and always intertwined with the rest of the institutions of the Syrian regime as part of them specialized in the Palestinian situation. Perhaps the testimony of Mamdouh Badawi, director of the “International Relief Organization” (which is a very exaggerated name for an institution made up of one person) that we found on his Facebook page, in the introduction of which he recorded that it was published for the first time on March 5, 2015, confirms what we have said. It is useful in approaching the roles of the parties, with the need to beware of the man's obvious exaggerations; where we find in the text how Talal Naji and Ahmed Jibril are part of the remaining dynamism of the collapsed regime, which is moving to restore its legitimacy and build mechanisms for its assimilation. In the testimony, we find Talal Naji meeting with relief institutions, encouraging them to work in Syria, securing escorts and vehicles for relief convoys, coordinating their affairs and the local authorities that will cooperate with them (and we know from the photos on Mamdouh Badawi’s page that this happened in the presence of Ali Mustafa, director of the Refugee Institution affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs And work), where it was stated in the text of the testimony that “the European Loyalty Relief Convoys continued in

coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the security authorities and Dr. Talal Naji. Dr. Talal Naji provided facilities and vehicles to transport the members of the European Loyalty Convoy delegation, and we found from his office all kinds of support and assistance to facilitate the completion of our mission to the fullest”.

According to the testimony, Talal Naji’s role was not only limited to coordinating and facilitating the work of the relief convoy and securing its requirements, but also providing protection to it, ensuring the security of its officials, and preventing the transgressions of a man who was appointed as a coordinator of its work in Syria and Lebanon because he is a man of the security services. Where Badawi says: “Brother Abu Abdo (from Talal Naji's office) sympathized with me and called Dr. Talal Naji in front of me and told him what happened to me. He told me that Dr. Talal Naji pledged to guarantee your safety and not to allow Ahmed Farhat to interfere in the distribution of aid. Dr. Talal Naji asked me to return to Damascus to work inside Syria. Brother Abu Abdo told me, after Dr. Talal Naji pledged to you, that any attack on you by Brother Ahmed Farhat (Abu Subhi) would be considered an attack on Dr. Talal Naji himself. Brother Abu Abdo told me that Ahmed Farhat will not be able to pass Dr. Talal Naji. I felt safe and comfortable”. We understand from the context that when the situation became complicated as a result of Ahmed Jibril’s intervention, Talal Naji pushed the person who supported him to the Republican Palace (i.e. to the center of Assad’s authority), to obtain his protection, even though the writer concealed the name of the person who brought him to the palace.

At the Republican Palace, Badawi meets with whom he calls officials, including officials in the "Syrian Trust Foundation for Development", which is run by Asma al-Akhras, Bashar al-Assad's wife, knowing that Talal Naji is her aunt's husband. This is the text of the testimony in relation to this detail: “One day the convoy

was distributing aid in the Yarmouk camp, and an argument occurred between brother Amin Abu Rashid and Mr. Juma'a Al-Abdullah. So Amin Abu Rashid contacted Abu Abdo to tell him about the quarrel that occurred between him and Juma'a Al-Abdullah, In turn, contacted brother Ahmed Jibril, and the matter inflated, and we were expelled from Yarmouk camp following this dispute (...) God Almighty mocked someone who told him about my problem and promised me that he would help, by taking me to a destination that is the only one who can help me and solve the problem. He - may God reward him - booked an appointment for me, so I went to the appointment at the presidential palace official's office, knowing that I did not know in advance who I would meet and who would help me solve the problem. I went with the intention of filing a complaint and grievance to solve the problem, so a group of officials there met me, and I explained to them what happened and that I had evidence that most of the aid was provided by me personally. Is it fair to treat me in this way?! The officials sympathized with me greatly and were the highest in morals, humility and kindness... I told them that I was confronting people who have power, authority and influence to carry out all their threats. They told me not to worry about confronting them and that they fulfilled my promise and that I am now at the highest authority in the state". In the text it is clear that the authorities overlap Inside the rest of the Syrian regime, including the authority of Jibril/Naji.

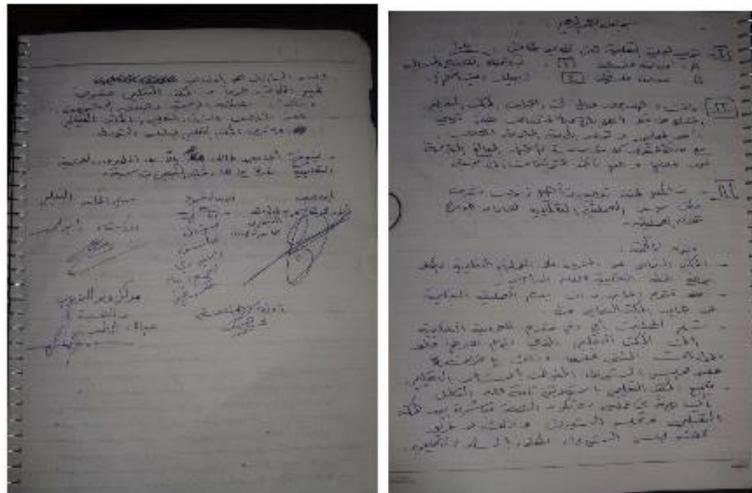
## **6- Assimilation of Opposition Activities and Figures**

Reconnecting with activities and figures who joined the opposition, and working to assimilate them for the benefit of the regime, by taking advantage of the long siege and its deadly effects, and the opposition's mismanagement of its affairs and its relationship with the people. Within this framework is the work of several working groups called civil society institutions, most notably the Nour Relief

Association and its director, Muhammed Jalbout, who is close to Talal Naji, and is accused of handing over several activists (including Yazan Aresha, Samir Abdel Fattah, and Niraz Saeed, who was rumored to have been killed under torture), and who worked Conciliation between many activists and security services in cooperation with the director of the Jafra Foundation, Wissam El Seba'na.

Perhaps the most prominent example of this is Ismail Shammout (Abu Hani Shammout), who moved his military group (Al-Ahed Al-Omari) to serve the regime through the “National Army” militia. Before that, Shammout had contributed to the establishment of the aforementioned Sons of Yarmouk Gathering, which broke away when it became clear that the Assad authority had used it and was not about to neutralize the Yarmouk camp. After the Islamic State ISIS invaded the opposition-controlled areas in the camp. Shamout returned, when the most of the military and civil forces left the camp and went to the southern region of Damascus, to the establishment of a new grouping called “The Sons of Palestine Gathering” in partnership with Abdallah Al-Khatib, director of the Watad Center, in the town of Yalda, adjacent to the camp, at the request of Talal Naji. In this regard, we find testimony from Abu Salma Khalil, which we have confirmed as document No. (4), in which he says that the gathering was established at the request of Muhammed Jalbout, and he is one of the tools of Talal Naji and the security services, which we consider as proof of the testimony of our witnesses. The gathering included military and civilian bodies, most notably Al-Ahed Al-Omari, Basma Foundation, Wetad Training Center, and Aknaf Beit Al-Maqdis (which participated, then withdrew later under pressure from the popular demand that raised the slogan “The gathering does not represent us”, According to our witnesses).

The goal of the new gathering was to manage the "surrender file" under the title "de-escalation", whether this was about moving Shammout and his group to the trench of Assad regime, or in settling the situation or the exit of civilians, soldiers, and activists wishing to travel. But until this goal was achieved, the gathering took authoritarian measures after imposing its founding statement that it was “the sole and official representative of the Palestinians in southern Damascus”. Among these authoritarian behaviors is the closure of the Yarmouk camp entrance towards Yalda, and the prevention of any activity (relief, educational, or social...) that concerns Palestinians in the areas under their control except through them. They issued an official statement announcing their decision, and stifled those who acted contrary to their decision, leading to the move to close the Damascene school for its refusal to engage in an “educational office” they had set up in their gathering, and they kidnapped three of its staff and interrogated them. (Photos below are documents that prove authoritarian behaviour.)



Authoritarian decisions taken by the Sons of Palestine Gathering

#### Fourth - Participation in the Regime's Battles Directly Where Necessary and Declaring Victory

This is done with a minimum of publicity, and often discreetly until after the collapse of the Palestinian popular pressure in Syria as a result of the destruction of most of their camps by the Assad regime and its allies, besieging, starving, displacing, and pushing nearly half of them out of Syria, as a result of the declining pressure from the leadership of the PLO, which began to search for political gains in the relationship with the weakened Assad's authority, and organizational gains among the Palestinians in Syria, whose wills were broken for a while, and they became bound by necessity.

Regarding this participation, Khaled Ahmed Jibril stated in October 2014, that “the war is still in the beginning, and the enemy will use all arenas, but we will win”. And he talked about “the development of the methods of work of the fighters of the General Command, and the increase of their prowess in guerrilla warfare in Yarmouk, Quneitra, Daraa and other places in Syria”<sup>57</sup>.

In an interview with Radio Sputnik, within the Panorama program, on October 24, 2018, Talal Naji revealed that “the number of fighters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command since the beginning of the events in Syria in 2011 has reached 420 members and 800 wounded”<sup>58</sup>. By his statement that these people were killed in the Palestinian camps, in addition to his saying that they were members of PFLP-GC, and some of its Palestinian allies “liberated a third of the camp”, we are faced with a clear recognition of their responsibility for the siege of Yarmouk camp and for participating in its destruction, and for participating in the abuse of other camps. However, according to our monitoring, the number of those killed from the PFLP-GC in the battles of the Palestinian camps in Syria does not exceed dozens, and this gives irrefutable evidence of the extent of the participation of the General Command in the Syrian war and the lie policy pursued by its leadership, claiming that it did not participate outside the camps. Naji certainly turns out to be the source of the stringency in his insistence on this claim. While the fiery nature, mixed with a love of bragging, that characterizes Ahmed Jibril and his son Khaled Jibril, causes them to declare the participation of their militias outside the camps.

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<sup>57</sup> Al-Shoufi, Firas, Palestinians of Qusaya: One of Our Duties... Protecting Zahle!, Al-Akhbar, October 2014 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://al-akhbar.com/Politics/39810>

<sup>58</sup> Sputnik Radio, Panorama program, radio recording entitled “Talal Naji speaks to Sputnik about developments in the Palestinian arena,” October 24, 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). [https://arabic.sputniknews.com/radio\\_panorama/201810241036287042--تحدث-لسبوتنك-حول-التطورات-على-الساحة-ال فلسطينية/](https://arabic.sputniknews.com/radio_panorama/201810241036287042--تحدث-لسبوتنك-حول-التطورات-على-الساحة-ال فلسطينية/)

It also exposes the fall of fighters of the organization in various areas of the Syrian territory, and it had to mourn them and mention the place of their killing, and its participation in some battles; The same is true of military participations that have led to political repercussions, such as his participation in the battles on the Lebanese-Syrian border. Including what happened when the organization participated in October 2014 in direct military action on the Lebanese-Syrian border, alongside the Lebanese army and Hezbollah fighters. Where there were Lebanese political interactions, the result of which was directed the media to leaders in the organization, and found two different responses: the first was expressed by the statement of the leader Hamza Al-Bishtawi, told Al Jazeera Net that “Any attack or targeting of the military General Command sites by the Syrian militants will be met with a direct response, without paying attention to any considerations”. He justified this by saying, “We have the right to defend ourselves against any aggression”. Regarding the General Command departure from the Palestinian consensus through its armed action, he said, "We are with civil peace and the stability of Lebanon, and we will not interfere in the internal affairs, and our military action stems from the principle of self-defense only”. And he said: “No one asked us to participate in any military effort anywhere, we have held our positions for 30 years and have been working to protect them from attacks”<sup>59</sup>; while We find another answer for the organization, in which it brags about its military participation in a journalistic investigation published by Al-Akhbar newspaper by journalist Firas Al-Shoufi, who toured the organization’s sites in Qusaya, Sultan Yaqoub and Halwa, on the Lebanese-Syrian border, which is that the organization took on “the burden of protecting the villages of East of Zahle and Beirut-Damascus road from the penetrations of the obsessed with the

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<sup>59</sup> Abu El-Eis, Jihad, Military participation of the General Command on the borders of Lebanon, Al-Jazeera, October 25, 2014 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).

<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/reportsandinterviews/2014/10/25/مشاركة-عسكرية-للقياادة-العامة-على-حدود>

slaughter and displacement of Christians, along with the Lebanese and Syrian armies and Hezbollah”<sup>60</sup>.

At the end of 2014, the organization participated in the military actions in the city of Zabadani in the western countryside of Damascus. At that time, identical information was received stating that the fighters of the General Command in Lebanon were involved in the fighting in Syria alongside the regular forces and the Hezbollah militia. Especially those who are stationed in the Qusaya camp on the Lebanese-Syrian border; Where the fighters of Qusaya camp, at many times, assumed the task of fire support with heavy artillery and launchers for the Syrian forces during their fight against the armed opposition factions in the Zabadani Plain, and they also took over the logistical operations of supplying some Syrian military units with food, water and fuels that arrive from Lebanese territory.



A member of the General Command using heavy weapons in the hills of Qusaya overlooking the Zabadani Plain



A statement from the organization of the General Command documenting its participation in battles in the southwest of As-Suwayda Governorate under the title of defending its radio

<sup>60</sup>Palestinians of Qusay, source previously mentioned

The General Command also participated in the battles that erupted east of the city of Salamiyah in Hama governorate in July 2017, and the organization suffered a number of deaths there. And in April 2017, Colonel Abdel Rahim Ahmed Ateeq, a prominent leader in the General Command, was killed in an Israeli air strike on a National Defense site in Quneitra Governorate, which reinforces what was reported about the organization's participation in the fighting there. Ateeq is attributed the responsibility for what is known as the Glider Operation, that the General Command adopted in 1987 against Israel.



Abdel Rahim Ahmed Ateeq was killed in Quneitra Governorate

The organization also supported the regime forces and allied militias in the military campaign in Eastern Ghouta in February 2018, and incurred losses there. On February 28, 2018, the Palestinian Murad Nimr Sharifa, a member of the General Command, died while participating in the fighting alongside the Syrian regime forces in the battles taking place in Eastern Ghouta in the Damascus countryside.



Murad Nimr Sharifa was killed in the battles of Eastern Ghouta in the Damascus countryside.

In April 2018, a Palestinian member of the General Command organization, Muhammad Nidal Fora, was killed while fighting alongside the Syrian regime forces in the ongoing battles in the city of Douma in Eastern Ghouta in the Damascus countryside.



Muhammad Nidal Fora was killed in the battles for the city of Douma.



Ahmed Jibril personally supervises the development of military plans

The organization of the General Command participated in the military operation in southern Damascus, which began on April 19, 2018, and destroyed most of the Yarmouk camp and the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad, along with the regime forces and allied militias, on more than one axis in the Yarmouk camp, the Tadamon neighborhood, and the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad. In May 2018, the “Men of Dannoun Camp - General Command” page reported that “the leader, Abu Jalal Nader, was martyred as a result of the fall of a shell fired by ISIS from Yarmouk

camp on the Watermelon roundabout”. The page indicated that prominent leaders of the forces of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command were injured, as a result of the fall of shells launched by the Islamic State in Yarmouk camp, and they are: (Badr Ahmed Jibril, member of the Central Committee, Nidal Al-Ajouri, member of the Central Committee, Abu Armi Odeh, the official in charge of political guidance in Lebanon, Mustafa Abu Hassan, Abd Kezzi, who follows up on the file of the wounded in the military and security department, Fawzi Shehadeh Abu Al-Nar, head of the Dannoun Brigade, Abu Ali Mahmoud, official of the Hama Isnad, Ammar Al-Ahmad, Muhammad Mi’ad Abu Khalil, Ahmed Abu Hassan, Abu Ghadb, Muhammad Al-Mohammed, Nader Al-Ahmad, Abu Saleh Shabiba).

Then, after Talal Naji was convinced that the will of the Palestinian people in Syria had been broken by impartiality, he declared the victory of the Syrian regime, and clearly announced its integration into it by saying: “We [the General Command], the Palestine Liberation Army and Al-Quds Brigade in Aleppo, who are also fighting in Eastern Ghouta, it fought in Deer Al Zour and in Al-Bukamal. This is our country, our homeland”. He declared that “war is a deception” and that “Media has a dangerous role in the battle” and insisted that “We must not be complacent or negligent in pursuing the battle, victory is great in Ghouta, but we must not keep any pocket”<sup>61</sup>.

#### **Fifth- Threatening Arab neighboring countries, either directly or through allies in the "axis of resistance"**

Repeatedly, the organization of the general leadership insists that it is part of a Russian-Iranian axis with the Syrian regime and Hezbollah, in the face of an Arab axis called “the axis of moderation”. It also insists, at all times, that it is in one

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<sup>61</sup> An interview with Talal Naji on the Syrian satellite channel, a previously mentioned source

trench with Iran and Hezbollah, who threaten Arabic countries. And when the threats from Iran and Hezbollah intensified, Ahmad Jibril from Tehran in an interview with Al-Mayadeen channel in February 2017, attacked those who referred to them as “several Arab countries”, blaming them for the consequences of the Palestinian cause, he said: “We will enter Jordan with the aim of liberating Palestine, whether it agrees or refuses”<sup>62</sup>.

In the same context, a statement issued by the PFLP-GC in September 2013, during the reception of Alaeddin Projouri, head of the National Security Committee in the Iranian Shura Council, to Ahmad Jibril, that Jibril stressed during the meeting that “The aggression against Syria is A direct attack on the axis of resistance, the aim of which is to undermine its political will in the service of the American Zionist project in the region”. Jibril was not satisfied with declaring his support for the threats of his allies, but rather exceeded them to threatening directly, saying: “Targeting Syria would open the comprehensive battle with America and the Zionist enemy and their tools in the Arab region,” adding that he would resist the American aggression against Syria “in a martyrdom spirit” and would strike :The interests of all parties to the aggression in their painful and sensitive positions<sup>63</sup>”.

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<sup>62</sup>Ahmad Jibril’s interview with Al-Mayadeen TV from Tehran, February 2017 (last seen on March 8, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRBINdBPL0s&t=763s>

<sup>63</sup> Al-Quds Al-Arabi, Jibril: We will strike the interests of all parties to the aggression against Syria, September 2013 (last visit to the site on March 7, 2019). <https://qudsnet.com/post/252098/-جبريل-يلتضر-ب-مصالح-كل-أطراف-العنوان-على-سوريا>

## Chapter Two

### Al-Quds Brigade and its Many Patrons

#### Identification card

Al-Quds Brigade /Guerrillas of the Syrian Arab Army

Al-Quds Brigade Flag:



A military militia that included Palestinian Syrians, most of whom were from the northern countryside of Aleppo (Hayyan and Raytan) and tribesmen. It was established with the support of the Air Force Intelligence and Iran, relying on the recruitment and mobilization of the people of Neirab and Handarat camps in Aleppo and Al-Raml camp in Latakia, then gradually implicating them in the Syrian war.

#### **Foundation:**

- Tashbih groups (the nucleus of a militia) since 2011, whose mission is to suppress protests in the city of Aleppo, implicate Palestinians in the two Aleppo camps, and damage their relationship with the neighborhood.
- An organized militia formed in October 2013 under the name Al-Quds Brigade. This militia participated in the war throughout the Syrian arena.

#### **Structural:**

- It consists of Palestinian-Syrians from the camps (mainly the camps of: Neirab, Handarat and Al-Raml, and from Syrians, especially from the city of Aleppo and its western and northern countryside, and Syrian Armenians).

## **Leadership:**

### **Commander of the Al-Quds Brigade: Muhammad Al-Saeed**



A Palestinian resident of Aleppo and a civil engineer, known for his strong ties with influential officers in the security services before the outbreak of protests in Syria, who facilitated his work in obtaining projects announced by state institutions, and he was known for his corruption and bribery to obtain those projects.

### **Deputy Commander of the Al-Quds Brigade: Adnan Al-Sayed**



A Palestinian resident of the Neirab camp, he worked as a wholesaler before the outbreak of the protests. According to one of the witnesses, Al-Sayed was financially bankrupt before he moved to work under security directives as the leader of a shabiha group in Al-Nairab camp, and then gradually rose after the establishment of the Al-Quds Brigade, to become in this position.

### **First Military Operations Commander: Muhammed Mahmoud Rafea (The Godfather)**



A Palestinian from the Neirab camp, he used to work as a thug in a nightclub in Aleppo, and he has a strong physique that enabled him to gain favor and prestige with the camp's thugs, which the security services benefited from and invested in to apprehend these thugs and then recruit them for its benefit. Rafea was killed on November 27, 2016, in the battles that took place in the Masaken Hanano neighborhood in the city of Aleppo.

### **Operations Commander II: Samer Rafea**



A Palestinian from the Neirab camp. He is the brother of Muhammed Rafea, who took over his duties after his death. He worked as a barber before the outbreak of protests in Syria before moving to work in the shabiha groups, most of which were formed by the Al-Quds Brigade militia. He was subsequently arrested by the security services in the Assad regime in June 2018.

**Current Operations Commander: Iyad Abdel Rahim**



A Palestinian resident of the Neirab camp, he assumed his duties as an operations commander in the Al-Quds Brigade, after the arrest of Samer Rafea. He was working as a day laborer before the protests erupted.

**Military Commander: Lt. Colonel Jamil Abu Hawash**



A Palestinian resident of the Neirab camp, he belonged to the Democratic Front, and participated with it in the military operations in southern Lebanon with the rank of captain, before he was dismissed from it due to his relationship with the Al-Quds Brigade. He worked as a taxi driver on Al- Nairab -Aleppo line Before the outbreak of protests in Syria, and his transition to work as a commander in Al-Quds Brigade.

**Media reporter in Al-Quds Brigade: Muhammad Abu Al-Layl**



A Palestinian from the Neirab camp

**Political wing official: Adel Abdel Haq (Abu Yamen)**



A Palestinian resident of the Neirab camp, he worked as a teacher, and he is responsible for a party group affiliated with the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Division (Taysir al-Halabi Division for the party's Palestinian affiliates).

**Mufti of the Al-Quds Brigade: Hussein Junaid**



A Syrian by nationality, and the imam of Ali bin Abi Talib mosque, and he had appeared among Islamists during the war on Iraq as a caller to mobilize young people for jihad there. According to cross information, he was working with the Syrian Abu al-Qaqa group and linked to the Syrian security services. The proof

of this connection is his occupation of the position of Mufti of the Al-Quds Brigade.

**The official of the security police in Al-Quds Brigade and his assistant:  
Hisham Daoud Derbas and Muhammed Daoud**



**Latakia Brigade official: Shadi Al-Agha**



A Palestinian resident of Al-Raml camp in Lattakia

**Hama Brigade official: Abdul Qader Juma**



A Palestinian from the Al-Aydoun Camp in Hama

**The components of the armed brigade, including:**

- Black Shirt Battalion
- Black Ghost Battalion
- Lions of Al-Shahba Battalion
- Lions of Al-Quds Battalion
- Lions of Homs Battalion
- Deterrence Battalion

**Armament:** light, medium and heavy weapons

**Headquarters:** It has two headquarters in Neirab camp and Al-Hamdaniya neighborhood in Aleppo.

**Allies:**

- Shiite militia in its diversity
- Syrian army
- Palestinian factions loyal to Syrian regime (Damascus Factions)

**Financing:** Iran

**Number of affiliates:** 3,500 fighters, according to the commander of Al-Quds Brigade, in a statement to the Dam Press website in February 2017. Al-Quds Brigade is one of the most numerous auxiliary forces.

**Participation in the Syrian war:**

- The suppression of demonstrations in the city of Aleppo in 2011/2012
- The siege of Yarmouk camp since July 2013
- The battles of Aleppo starting in late 2013
- Jobar battles in Damascus in 2015

- The battles of the countryside of Homs and the desert of Palmyra in 2017
- The battles of Deir Ezzor in September 2017
- Battles of Eastern Ghouta in 2017
- Harasta battles in Damascus countryside at the beginning of 2018
- Battles in southern Damascus in March 2018

**Violations:**

- Arrest
- Child recruitment
- Civilian theft and confiscation of their property
- Kidnapping of civilians and ransom demand
- Suppression of peaceful demonstrations
- Bombing civilian areas
- Terrorizing the population
- Siege of civilians
- Participation in forced displacement

**The number of dead in the Syrian war:** The death toll of the Al-Quds Brigade militia in the Syrian war, since its establishment, has reached 1,012 fighters, and 3,400 were wounded, according to a statement by the commander of the Al-Quds Brigade, Muhammad Al-Saeed, to Dam Press website in February 2017.

**The surrounding circumstances**

During the current conflict, the general mood in the two Palestinian camps of Aleppo (Neirab and Handarat) changed several times, although the constant for the majority remained the insistence on impartiality, as it was from the beginning. And the desire to be neutral actually meant different things, and perhaps it was often the result of the interaction of these differences, with a deep sense of anxiety as a result of feeling alienated from the event, which is the result of a severe

weakness of integration in the Syrian north, in particular in the province of Aleppo. In addition, the camp residents have been preoccupied with Palestinian political interests for decades.

However, we are not talking about absolute disparities. Everywhere there are university students with vague hopes for a better life, and fears about their future in a country where job opportunities have declined to the point that a stable job, albeit with little pay, has become a distant dream. Among these are students from the two camps who studied at the University of Aleppo. They interacted with the revolution in the university and the neighborhoods, in which they demonstrated and knew that it carried their hopes and obsessions. These students conveyed their observations and ideas to their families in the two camps, so the supporters of the Assad regime in the two camps called them “the fifth column”.

Because politics has its own awareness that sails above the disparities, local leaders have appeared in the two Aleppo camps, in the face of the shabiha and those who defend arms and armament. The demand of these local leaders was impartiality; Some of them were in favor of the revolution, rejecting weapons, and some of them were in favor of the regime, but they refused to be drawn into the military conflict and demanded the defense of the regime through opinion and social action, and some of them were opposing the two parties.

## **1- Ain al-Tal Camp (Handarat)**

### **A- Definition of Ain al-Tal Camp (Handarat)**

Ain al-Tal camp, which is known as Handarat after a neighboring village, is located on a hill 13 kilometers to the north-east of the city of Aleppo, and its total area, with the new project, is 360,717 square meters. Most of its residents are refugees who fled from northern Palestine. Most of the refugees work there as day laborers or as teachers in local schools. There were more than 7,000 people

in the camp (distributed among 1,500 families), including a small number of Syrians residing in the old camp at the edge of the mountain, and 1,500 residents of the new project coming from Neirab camp. The camp has three schools, one of which operates on a double-shift system, one food distribution center, and one health center. According to UNRWA, the most prominent problems faced by the Palestinian refugees in the camp before the war are the housing needs for rehabilitation, the lack of water, the lack of facilities for the single-shift school, and the lack of allocating offices for social workers. The camp has a military importance due to its high geography, which made it a sensitive point, and its proximity to the Castello Road and the Gondola Roundabout, which is the node of access to the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo. The camp has very important military fortifications. Whoever controls it controls by fire the Al-Kindi Hospital, the Gondola Roundabout, Al-Shaqif factories, and the Infantry School. The majority of its population supports the Fatah al-Intifada Movement. because of the presence of historical leaders of the movement in the camp, including Saleh Qaniri, the former secretary of Fatah al-Intifada in Syria, who died of cancer years after leaving the movement at the head of an opposition movement, that included most of Syria Region, knowing that he was a supporter of the revolution and Syrian civil democracy. While the rest of the existing Palestinian factions had a symbolic presence.

The Russian and Syrian air forces destroyed the camp's infrastructure and buildings almost completely, with the aim of removing the armed opposition forces from it. The camp's population is now estimated, according to activists from the camp, about 100 families, including Syrian families who used to live on its outskirts. Its residents are now suffering from severe service and living crises (a crisis of water, electricity, bread and fuel...), as water comes to them by tankers, and electricity through generators whose owners take advantage of the residents' need and exploit them. The camp is now taking on a military character, where

there are checkpoints, and military training courses are held. UNRWA is now working to secure water for the camp.

According to UNRWA, the number of Palestinians in Aleppo governorate is now about 7,065 families, while estimates before 2011 indicated the presence of 8000 Palestinian families in Aleppo governorate. Accordingly, Aleppo has bled out about 935 families of its Palestinian residents, most of which left toward Lebanon, Turkey and European countries, especially Germany, and specifically the city of Berlin.



Ain al-Tal camp (Handarat) before it was destroyed

### **B- Ain al-Tal Camp (Handarat) Until the Emergence of Al-Quds Brigade**

Based on our observations, follow-up and monitoring of the file of Palestinians in Syria, and after reviewing and verifying the testimonies in our possession, without neglecting our observations of the chronology of the context of events and how to deal with them in each Palestinian gathering separately. After we compared what happened to the Palestinian-Syrians in the two governorates of Damascus and Aleppo, which are the largest two Palestinian gatherings, we found evidence of a systematic policy pursued by the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces led by the General Command organization towards all the Palestinians in Syria. The formation and arming of Popular Committees and shabiha began in Handarat camp, since the protests began in the city of Aleppo. These committees were formed ostensibly under the title of protecting the camp, but they were

actually used to suppress protests in the city of Aleppo, which suggested that the camp was hostile to its neighborhood. The formation of these armed groups came in the context of the policy of activating the clash with the actors protesting against Assad's authority in society, and the involvement of the Palestinians in the Syrian war. Which alliance pursued at the center as an implementation policy of the general strategy of Assad's authority over the entire Syrian geography, which worked to fuel the war of all against all. Dismantling society and managing chaos and brutality. According to one of our witnesses, "The most prominent group that was formed in Handarat camp is the Fahd al-Tayeh group, which was participating in the suppression of demonstrations and protests in the city of Aleppo, and that group became known to the opposition circles to the extent that the armed opposition factions were demanding the camp residents to hand over the leader of that group. Al-Taya fled the camp when the opposition forces entered it".

In December 2012, the armed opposition factions tried to storm Handarat camp for the first time, in order to control it because of its military importance; it has very important military fortifications due to its geographical location and its presence in a high area, and control of Handarat camp means fire control of the important road complex in Aleppo, the most important of which is the Castello Road, and over some important military pieces such as the Infantry School, the Central Prison and the Al-Kindi Hospital. However, the camp's residents and the opposition al-Tawhid Brigade in the city of Aleppo, the largest faction in Aleppo at the time, reached an agreement after negotiating with a checkpoint for the opposition forces at al-Kindi Hospital on the opposite side of the camp. Without being concentrated in it for fear of being bombed by the regime forces. The most important point in this agreement was to discuss the fate of the weapons in the camp, and it was agreed to keep the factions' weapons in the camp, with the

handing over of the rifles that were distributed to the Popular Committees, of which only seven were handed over, according to one of our witnesses.

The coordinators of the agreement that sought to neutralize the camp were: Marwan Abu Hashem, the Hamas official in Handarat camp, Ibrahim Abu Hashem, Atallah Rafea, a merchant, and Khaled Qwaismi. The leadership of the General Command, and the Assad authority, turned a blind eye at the time, as they were in their weakest conditions, in the face of the opposition's progress, and what they could hope for was that the armed opposition would not enter the camp and use its strategic position in the face of the Assad army and militia. However, the Assad authority and its allies took revenge on those who made the agreement, when they returned to advance at the expense of the armed opposition, considering their impartiality as a clear tendency towards the opposition, which prompted some families affiliated with Hamas specifically to leave the camp for Hanano, fearing the oppression of the Assad authority after the latter had taken control. It regained its breath after the horrific nightmare of the opposition's progress had passed.

What affected the trends of opinion in Handarat camp and contributed to the mobilization of its residents against the armed opposition factions, the occurrence of two main events: the first, the bombing of the housing project located in the vicinity of Handarat from the opposition-controlled areas, which UNRWA had set up to house the families coming from Neirab camp, after emptying parts of it, in order to expand it and establish gardens and service centers, the victims of this bombing were a number of dead and wounded, which Assad authority invested in mobilizing against the armed opposition forces. The second event was the expulsion of the camp residents in a way that our witnesses described as

“humiliating”<sup>64</sup>, due to the insults and bad treatment they were subjected to by the armed opposition factions when they entered the camp in April 2013, and about this event our witness tells us that “when people left the camp, Young men were separated from women in some neighborhoods and taken to opposition prisons for interrogation, some of them left quickly and others stayed longer in prison”.



Pictures from the video in margin 64 documenting the expulsion of the residents of Handarat camp by the opposition

The expelled from Handarat camp gathered in the courtyard of Aleppo University, and from there some of them headed to Neirab camp, either to live with their relatives, or for rent in Aleppo. Those who did not own any of these options went to two shelters, one in the ninth unit in the university city, where 300 families lived, and the second, the Industrial School in the Jamiliya area, in which 60 families resided. UNRWA mainly secured their needs, with aid for the displaced by NGOs (the Palestinian Charitable Society, the Palestinian Charitable Organization) and the Syrian Red Crescent. UNRWA provided periodic financial aid, food baskets, cleaning materials, blankets and mattresses. Because of the interruption of the road between Aleppo and Damascus, UNRWA was unable to bring these items from Damascus, so it held local tenders in Aleppo to buy them. The head of the “Martyr Taysir Al-Halabi” division specialized in the Palestinian-

<sup>64</sup> Sham Network, Sham Network reporter's tour of Handarat camp, April 2013 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fru7eiecmzA>

Syrians in Aleppo, Ali Harb, was quick to place his hand on these tenders, with the support of the security services, and he imposed that they be awarded permanently on his mediator named Abu al-Abd al-Tayeh. In addition, Ali Harb appointed two people to supervise the shelters, but they were in fact thugs working for him; where they were threatening those who complain, or raise their voice in protest, with expulsion from these centers or transferring them to a place worse than the one they live”. This was what used to reach UNRWA - according to our witnesses - but it preferred to remain silent than to have Ali Harb disrupt its projects and harm its employees.



Ali Harb and Anwar Raja

The armed opposition forces remained in control of the camp until the Al-Quds Brigade entered it in September 2016, after a 48-hour bombardment by Russian warplanes, which included shelling with concussive missiles and left extensive destruction in the camp, which witnesses estimated at 80% of the buildings. A report by Al-Mayadeen TV described it as “Unprecedented bombing in the Syrian war”<sup>65</sup> led to the withdrawal of the opposition forces and the entry of Al-Quds Brigade.

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<sup>65</sup> “What indications do the operation to seize Handarat camp from the armed groups have?” Al-Mayadeen TV (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019).  
<https://www.facebook.com/almayadeen/videos/1624482417577301/>



Part of the destruction in Handarat camp

## 2- Neirab camp (Handarat)

### A- Definition of Neirab camp



Neirab camp for Palestinian refugees is located southeast of the city of Aleppo, and is considered the largest Palestinian camp in Syria after the Yarmouk camp in Damascus. This camp was established after the Palestinians were expelled from their lands in 1948. According to estimates by our witnesses, there are about 21,000 Palestinian refugees, eight schools operating on double shifts, one food distribution center, and one health center in the camp.

The camp is of military importance to the regime, because it is adjacent to the airport from the south. There are almost all Palestinian factions in the camp, but the most present among them are the Fatah and the Popular Front movements, especially after the departure of Hamas and its supporters from the camp, and the decline in the activity of the Islamic Jihad movement.

Neirab camp was subjected to minor damage during the war in Syria, when compared to the massive destruction that affected Handarat camp; The damage was limited to hitting some houses as a result of the fall of rockets and missiles during the outbreak of clashes in its vicinity. The biggest event that occurred in it was when the opposition forces targeted a military helicopter loaded with ammunition that was destined to bombard civilians in opposition-controlled areas. It fell on a floor building in the camp, which led to its complete destruction.

During the war years in Syria, families from the surrounding area in Aleppo fled to the camp and lived in two UNRWA schools, and a committee was formed from the camp's residents in coordination with the Red Crescent to meet their needs. After the residents of Handarat left their camp after the opposition forces took control, some families entered Neirab and rented houses there, and later some families entered the camp after the shelters were closed in the city of Aleppo (the ninth unit of the university housing, which was inhabited by 300 families, and the industry school was in the Al Jamiliya area, and it contained approximately 60 families), according to one of our witnesses from the area. Many of its people left during the war years, most of them immigrated to Lebanon, Turkey and European countries, especially Germany, and specifically the city of Berlin. The camp residents suffer from major problems: drug addiction, unemployment, in addition to the stifling service and living crises, and the emigration of young people. from the camp.



The misery of Neirab camp

## **B - The Conflict of Opinion Trends**

The conflict between opinion trends in the Neirab camp began with the outbreak of protests in Syria in March 2011. As happened in Yarmouk camp in Damascus, in addition to the armed shabiha in Neirab camp, local leaders appeared in support of the regime calling for arms, and others insistently calling for impartiality. Another type is divided into two trends, one supporting the revolution, and one supporting the regime, but refuse to be drawn into the military struggle and demand the defense of the regime through opinion and social action only.

The trend sympathetic to the revolution manifested itself in three groups, each with its own motives, although they were combined in their conviction of the falsity of the Syrian regime and their hopes for political change that would open new horizons for them. They are: The students, a group of Islamists from the Sunni sect, whose relative integration was through religious belief, enters through the pores of walls in conservative environments that reassure Islamists. (It is a sub-national integration, in which each person maintains the implicit national identity, while the common doctrine suffices for solidarity, and perhaps trade and intermarriage...) The third group was made up of left-wing and democratic intellectuals, who were few in number but had a symbolic position in their society as a result of their personal heritage.

According to one of the testimonies that we have, “A number of the camp’s students participated in the peaceful demonstrations, especially the movement that took place at the University of Aleppo. The echo of this movement in the camp appeared through two student demonstrations that were suppressed by the security forces and the shabiha. People from the camp also participated With the armed opposition, such as Youssef, and Omar Shalabi, Imran Ghadban and Obada Dahoudi, some of them reached leadership positions in opposition circles, such as Younes Desouki and Youssef Dahoudi. Others participated in relief work in opposition areas, including Bilal Shalabi and Zakaria Qassem”.

In the face of the students, the democratic leftists and the Islamists who were integrated into the social environment, there was their classic opponents, which confronted their demands fiercely, represented by: the criminal class; the elements of the factions integrated into the Syrian regime are the gateway to their role as a political tool in the Palestinian cause; members of Ba'ath Party in the Taysir al-Halabi Division; public figures in the camp were known for their fierce hostility to the revolutionary movement in Syria since it was civil and peaceful. Among the most prominent representatives of the latter group are three brothers affiliated with the leadership of the General Command organization, namely, Riyadh, Mahmoud and Mustafa al-Khatib, since Mahmoud al-Khatib is the official in charge of the General Command in Neirab camp. We found that Riyadh al-Khatib is the most influential and was known before the revolution for his call for religious renewal and rid it of backwardness. This fiftieth intellectual was also known for his relationship with Abd al-Saheb al-Moussawi, who was the head of the Revolutionary Guards in Lebanon before he moved to the city of Aleppo, to establish a huge complex in the Kafr Hamra area, similar to the Iranian Consulate in Damascus. Based on these relations, and others with the Syrian security

services, Riyadh al-Khatib became the center of decision-making in the camp, according to witness.



Riyad Al-Khatib

Riyad Al-Khatib had cooperated with the Islamic Jihad movement during the time of its first secretary general, Fathi Shaqaqi, and he was close at the time to his deputy, Abu Ahmed Essam. And both of them distanced themselves from the movement after the assassination of Shaqaqi, and took a hostile stance from their allies, which complemented their hostile stance toward Hamas, to the extent that Al-Khatib accused Hamas more than once of having issued a fatwa to kill and liquidate him, according to witness. Likewise, Al-Khatib was close to the Iranians and Hezbollah, as a reflection of an Islamism hostile to the Muslim Brotherhood and its offshoots, which finds its “reformism” in opening up to the opposition movement against what it considers “Sunni” and “Wahhabi” extremism. One of our witnesses says that “Al-Khatib had a special relationship with the Iranians, and later, after the outbreak of the war in Syria, he went publicly to Iran and followed courses there, and this thing does not happen unless the person has an organizational connection with the Iranians”. This trend, with a confused reformist tendency, took a soft advocacy path before the revolution, but after that it took a minorist path, terrified of a popular movement considering it allied with

its enemies. So it began to incite against it and those who might show sympathy with it, and tried to win over the population through medical and relief aid.

Riyad al-Khatib formed an armed group, made up of some educated people in the camp, including teachers Mahmoud Ayoub and Ahmed al-Rifi, to embellish the image of the Popular Committees, which were called the “Camp Protection Committees” and objected to other labels, marketing them as guarantors and protectors of the camp's security. In this work, and his other works, he relied on his relationship, through his brother Mahmoud al-Khatib, the official in charge of organizing the General Commend leadership in the camp, with Talal Naji, and his integration with Muhammad Mustafa, Secretary of the Taysir al-Halabi Division of the former Ba'ath Party, who later became the deputy head of the “civil committees” in the camp.

Riyadh Al-Khatib was at the forefront of Assad regime supporters, who intimidated their opponents of opinion, and among them were those who were subjected to abuse, repression, arrest and murder from Assad regime; where the security forces arrested Adel Awad, who was later killed under torture, the son of Saleh Awad, Hamas official in the camp, from which he subsequently left for Turkey. They also arrested one of Hamas leaders in the camp, Abdel-Jabbar Shalabi. In addition to the arrest of the person responsible for the Service Committees, Khaled Mahmoud Azzam (Abu Walid), and his son Walid, who subsequently left Neirab camp. Many residents of the camp were also liquidated in Assad regime prisons, and none of them carried weapons, such as: Osama Abu Hashem, Mustafa Miari, Ahmed Khairat, Adel Awad, Ibrahim Al-Hajj, Rajab and his brother Mahmoud Al-Aswad, Iyad Hanino, and others.

It is noticeable that voices appeared within the Palestinian factions loyal to the Syrian regime in the camp that did not abide by the directions and discourse of

their leaders in Damascus and demanded impartiality. Some of them were arrested; the security services arrested Nizar al-Qadi, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the camp, and Azhar Hawash, the leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Aleppo, and later released them after mediation. The security services' assessment of these people they arrested was consistent with the assessment of the leadership positions of the factions to which they belong, as "persons who cause them problems", as one of the witnesses said.

The Alliance of Palestinian Forces, led by the General Command in the center, sought to clash, and then gradually implicate the Palestinians as an implementation policy of Assad's general strategy in the fragmentation and dispersal of the Syrian people, through its participation in the Syrian security services in the formation of Popular Committees and Shabiha groups. In all the camps, including the two Aleppo camps from mid-2011, It worked to cover them politically by exporting them to the public as a "protector of the camps", and then gradually implicate the camp's residents in the Syrian war; those armed groups were participating in suppressing the protests in the city of Aleppo, and some villages surrounding the camp.

According to one of our witnesses, the Air Force Intelligence was the first to contact Adnan al-Sayed and a person named Zuhair Shuraih, through a lieutenant-colonel of the Air Force Intelligence named Fadi Abbas who works at the Nayrab Military Airport, to form armed groups in the camp and they gave them funding to recruit and arm the camp's youth to suppress the protests, mostly in the University of Aleppo and the areas of Suleiman Al-Halabi and Hanano. There was a general state of dissatisfaction in Neirab camp with the behavior of these groups, which raised the level of tension in their relationship with their surroundings, and involved them in a conflict that they tried hard to be outside. And about this popular rejection, one of our witnesses told us that "the people in

the camp used to say: Why do we go out and beat people? what is our position tomorrow when people say, for example, that the Palestinians participate in our oppression and beating”. Among the manifestations of this refusal, is the choice of some camp families, especially Hamas families, to flee the camp towards the Hanano area, in order to preserve their security as a result of threats directed at them for their pro-revolutionary stance, and their rejection of the shabiha behaviors.

Adnan al-Sayed’s group was not the only shabiha group in the camp at the time, but there were several groups, including the Hussein al-Masry group, who “was the first to establish shabiha groups”, according to one of our witnesses, and he supervised the Popular Committees in security coordination, and someone called Mahmoud Hajeer cooperated with him in this. Hajeer, who “later became working with the Al-Quds Brigade, in the so-called electronic army and still”, according to the same witness. And from this group, Osama Abdel Rahman, who was initially assigned to social service work, then the security men commissioned him to arm the youth in the camp, in addition to the aforementioned group formed by Riyadh Al-Khatib. But most of these groups ended their role later and most of them joined Al-Quds Brigade militia after it became the striking force in the camp, according to what a witness from Neirab Camp told us.



Hussein al-Masry the first to establish shabiha groups

These groups, with the participation of the security services, carried out raid campaigns in Neirab camp, in which they arbitrarily arrested a number of the

camp residents, including Youssef Waheed Qaddoura, who explained the details of his arrest in his testimony that he posted on his Facebook page, in which Qaddoura says: “On January 28, 2012 I was surprised by a group of thug shabiha and some members of the security detachments attacking me with gunfire inside the house in the presence of my children, and the smell of alcohol was wafting from them, and they were reeling from severe drunkenness, so I refused to go out with them and it was an unequal battle, I grabbed the neck of one of them and they beat me and attacked my son and my wife. Zakiah and Ali were wearing their mother's clothes in a state of panic, but I ended the battle after I heard them calling for pulling Ahmad, So I calmed down, and they pulled me with a torn sweater and bare feet, and threw me in a yellow taxi. I headed to the Military Security detachment, and from there, at the speed of lightning, to the airport”.

These committees claimed that they exist only to protect the camp, “and that they do not fight outside its borders, and that their weapons are for this purpose; Even Hussein al-Masry, who was supervising the Popular Committees, did not dare to say that he was fighting outside the camp’s borders, and he always said that the committees’ job is to protect the camp”, according to one of our witnesses.

While the surroundings of Neirab camp found in the presence of shabiha groups in the camp, and the work of the Palestinian factions hostile to the civil movement, hostile indicators against it, that increased the intensity of repression inside the camp toward opposing voices, and forced many opponents to leave it with their families. The public opinion in the camp was affected by news and events (either fabricated from Assad’s authority, or an act took place and invested in it), the first of which occurred on June 24, 2012, when “a group affiliated with Air Security, led by Adnan al-Sayid and Fadi Freij, clashed among themselves, in conjunction with the students leaving one of the examination centers for middle school in Neirab camp. The scene was described by most of the camp’s residents

as artificial, tidy and surprising, which led to the deaths of three victims from the camp and two victims from the Neirab village. Then Muhammed Rafea killed a farmer from the Neirab village while he was in his field, according to what was stated by one of our witnesses, which was dealt with in the camp differently according to political orientations and awareness. While public and factional figures tended to meet and establish a local committee to remedy the events and communicate with influential figures in the village of Neirab, to stop the clashes and make reconciliations. Weapons appeared in the camp, and merchants began selling them at low prices under security directives.

In the same period, unknown armed groups kidnapped sixteen recruits from the ranks of the Palestine Liberation Army on their way back from their military base in Masyaf to the Neirab camp, before they were liquidated a month after their kidnapping. At the time, the Syrian regime accused the Syrian armed opposition groups of the act, and the Syrian security and members of the Palestinian factions loyal to it promoted this and mobilized the residents of Neirab camp to fight the Syrian opposition. But the armed opposition denied responsibility for the massacre. After armed opposition groups stormed and took control of the Criminal Security Branch in the city of Idlib in early 2015, they found pictures that they said were of a group of detainees who were liquidated under torture at the hands of Syrian security forces. Among the photographs of the detainees, pictures of the bodies of the Palestinian soldiers, Muhammad Mahmoud Abu Al-Layl and Anas Karim, showing signs of torture. Which the opposition considered evidence of the responsibility of the Syrian security in Idlib for the massacre that claimed the lives of members of the Palestinian Liberation Army. Another version says that these members were killed in the city of Halfaya in Hama governorate by order of Omar Rahmon, founder of the "Ahrar al-Sufiyya" movement, who later turned out to be working for Assad authority when he

represented it in the agreement signed on December 13, 2016 for the exit of the opposition forces from Aleppo.

### **C - Siege and the Struggle for Impartiality**

In late July 2012, the opposition forces advanced in the areas surrounding Neirab camp, as part of an operation aimed at reaching Al-Nayrab Military Airport. The camp residents began to suffer from the horrors of war. This doubled from the first month of 2013 to March 2013, when the opposition imposed a siege on the airport with both the area of the camp and the village of Neirab, as it was impossible to besiege the airport without seizing or besieging both areas. Including the opposition forces targeting a helicopter gunship that was dropping barrel bombs on their areas, and it fell on a building in the camp, which led to its collapse on the heads of its residents. Shells and missiles resulting from the hostilities between the armed opposition forces and the regime forces also fell on Neirab camp. This reflected a hostile mood towards the armed opposition forces.

Civilians in the camp have suffered from the opposition's "moody" behavior, according to the description of a witness who said: "Sometimes the passengers pass easily, and sometimes the bus carrying the camp's residents being stopped, and sometimes the food is prevented from leaving the camp, and sometimes it is allowed." One of our witnesses. The camp's residents also suffered during the siege, "from the scarcity of medicines and food and their exorbitant prices, if any, and they depended for their food on agricultural products from village of Neirab, which is adjacent to the camp and is besieged likewise, according to the same witness. As in all the regions that witnessed war actions, the popular classes suffered more impoverishment, and need and want prevailed, and this was visible on the scrawny bodies, according to a witness.

This siege was characterized as being subject to disparity in treatment by the besieged parties; while Liwa al-Tawhid, the largest opposition faction in Aleppo at the time, was sending messages of reassurance to civilians in the camp that Liwa al-Tawhid does not target them. Threatening messages were sent to the camp on behalf of other opposition factions, some of which came from the security services of Assad authority, and some of them from actual opposition sources. There are behaviors carried out by some groups affiliated with the opposition targeting the security of civilians in the camp, including a group that was affiliated with Liwa al-Tawhid and led by a person known as Hassan Mukheiber; this group had two checkpoints, one in the west of the camp, and the other in the south, and through his checkpoints, the residents of the camp were arrested, and they also received threatening messages.

In response to the emerging needs, the work of the committee, which was formed locally on July 24, 2012, developed to deal with the problem of conflict between the camp and the Neirab village. It now manages many aspects of the camp's residents lives, and has established five sub-committees according to needs, namely: the bakery committee, which supplied flour from all sources, even from Jabhat al-Nusra, which controlled the mills in the town of Dahbiya near the camp; the medical committee that provides medicine, and deals with the issue of health, includes doctors from the camp; the security committee that communicates with the security services affiliated with Assad regime; the relief committee entrusted with distributing aid and relief materials in the camp; and the neighborhood communication committee, whose mission was to achieve civil peace between the camp and its neighborhood, improve relations, and constantly call for impartiality and the non-involvement of the Palestinians in the war.

About these committees and their structure, one of our witnesses told us the following: "The meetings of these committees moved between several

headquarters until they settled in the Al-Quds Cultural Center, which is the office of the Islamic Jihad Movement, and took it as its headquarters. The process, which is: the security committee, numbering five people, the relief committee, numbering ten people, the medical committee, numbering seven people, and the neighborhood communication committee, numbering between ten and twelve people, while the number of members of the bakeries committee reached about one hundred people due to the spread of bread distributors in all of the camp neighborhoods”.

The advance of the armed opposition and its control over the roads to the camp, and the preoccupation of the security forces (and their operatives in the camp) at the time to protect themselves as a result of the advance of the armed opposition factions, prompted the Alliance of Palestinian Forces to keep pace with the civil pressure that demands impartiality by keeping silent about the civil committees discourse in this regard, and its efforts to improve relations with the camp neighborhood. A witness tells us about the state of the security services and military officers during the siege of Al-Nayrab Military Airport, by saying: “The security services, airport leaders and the shabiha were, throughout the siege, unable to get out of their positions, even aid and ammunition were delivered to them by planes that landed at the airport in late hours at night for fear of being targeted, and at this time the security services were terrified from within and busy protecting themselves, and contented themselves with monitoring the committees through their eyes in the camp.”

However, the loyal Palestinian leaders did not stop their efforts to make the civil committees objectively complement the armed committees and their role in protecting the airport. In their speech, they emphasized that these weapons are to protect the camp, and they criminalized the critics for terrorizing the neutrals in the civil committees, and preventing them from declaring their refusal of weapons

in the camp, although it was mainly used to protect the military airport. Among these violations is the arrest of those who object to the behavior of the loyal gunmen. The security services arrested Youssef Qaddoura and Khaled Mahmoud Azem (Abu Al-Waleed) when they objected to being arrested by the group of Adnan al-Sayed; three Syrian civilians entered the camp in the presence of Adnan himself.

This conditional policy of assimilation remained active in dealing with the Civil Committees; which represented the first local attempt in Neirab camp to break out of the security dominance of Assad regime, to produce a local will that could develop, and be independent in conjunction with the opposition advancement. However, the security services did not stop monitoring and recording the opinions of its members and chiefs, through loyalist factions and report writers, or by pushing security collaborators to attend committee meetings, until the security services became comfortable and in a condition that allowed them to open the accountability file.

At the same time, the shabiha groups and the Popular Committees continued their approach to strike civil peace in implementation of the desire of their operators in the authority of Assad in order to implicate the Palestinians and isolate them from their surroundings, and thus implement the policy of the “factional alliance” led by the General Command organization, which contributed to its establishment, support and political coverage, in implicating the Palestinians in the Syrian blood as part of Assad’s public authority strategy, to strike everyone with everyone and atomize the efforts of Syrian society actors, and manage chaos and brutality. As a result of this, a confusion occurred in the minds of the people of the villages surrounding the camp, between the behavior of the camp’s shabiha on the one hand, and the behavior of the camp’s residents on the other hand; where an idea circulated among the Aleppo community about the camp’s

residents, that they are all shabiha and deal with the security services, which was confirmed by the former detainee Youssef Kaddoura in a post on his Facebook page, about what happened to him during his detention, where he said: “Three young young men were brought from Bab al-Neirab working in Dahabiya, and while they were passing through the camp's checkpoint, they were stopped and their mobile phones were searched. One of them had revolutionary songs on his mobile. The three arrived, exhausted from beatings and blood pouring from their heads. When they were asked about the perpetrator, they said they were Palestinian. We explained to them that these are shabiha, and here we are Palestinians, and look what they did to us, and after we explained the matter to them, they began to distinguish between shabiha and Palestinian”.

#### **D- Lifting the Siege and Returning Tyranny and Revenge**

In March 2013, a column of tanks entered the village of Tal Shaghib to lift the siege on the airport and the camp. Indeed, the siege was lifted. However, when the army entered, it looted this village. The army gave way to some of the Neirab camp residents, who had come out of the partial siege, to steal what they had left behind of supplies. However, the thieves in the camp exceeded the need resulting from the war, which prompted some civilians to steal food supplies from the homes of displaced people, to loot everything that the army left behind, and they established a loot market in the camp to sell them, which deepened the rift between the camp and its surroundings, although it was a behavior that was rejected by most of the camp’s residents, and Sheikh Ahmad al-Khatib, who is the most prominent in the camp and is relative of Riyadh al-Khatib, issued a ban on buying stolen goods.

According to a witness, as a result of these incidents, “a conviction was established among the people of Aleppo that the Palestinians of the camp cooperated with the army in looting the villages it entered. Knowing that it was

the army officers who took valuable things such as money, jewelry and livestock and left water tanks, pipes, and cheap furniture, for the weak-minded persons in the camp, they are few”.

With the lifting of the siege on the camp and the airport, the stage of accountability came. Where the security services, wishing to implicate the Palestinians in the Syrian war and get them out of impartiality, pushed towards dismantling the aforementioned civil and service committees. Then, it cast the advocates of impartiality from its officials, one by one, to punish them for their dealings with the opposition and for seeing in it an authority parallel to that of Assad; including the arrest of Khaled Mahmoud Azzam and his son Walid, who subsequently left Neiab camp. This was confirmed to us by one of our witnesses, who said: “The accountability of the civil committees by the security services came after the siege was lifted from the camp, because those agencies were busy protecting themselves during the siege, and the accountability affected in particular the members of the bakeries and communication committees with the neighborhood, because their members communicated with parties present in opposition areas to secure flour for the former, and to solve problems for the latter”. From which we conclude that Assad’s authority was not satisfied with eliminating the authority of the opposition that had formed, but rather it held accountable those who sought to create civil structures capable of cooperating with this authority because of the danger that this would create the nuclei of a new “political order”.

The security services also arrested, at different times, everyone they felt was inclined to impartiality and not involve the Palestinians in the Syrian war, and led to the arrest of some leaders and members of the Palestinian factions affiliated with them; Hazem Tamari, one of the leaders of the Aleppo region in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was arrested, and he was tortured very

violently, and he died of his illnesses in Sweden following his arrest in the prisons of Assad regime. Youssef Kaddoura, one of the “historical figures in the Popular Front,” according to the description of our witnesses, was subjected to severe torture, which caused the amputation of two of his fingers after leaving the prison. The official of the Popular Front in the camp, Nizar al-Qadi, was also arrested, who was later released.

## **The Establishment of Al-Quds Brigade**

### **A-To be a Pawn Because You're Corrupt**

With the emergence of Al-Quds Brigade, and its participation in the Syrian war on many fronts, and its participation in the looting, the tension escalated between the residents of the two Aleppo camps and their surroundings. What explains the reason for the celebration and the hospitality accorded to Al-Quds Brigade by Talal Naji and the leaders of the Palestinian factions conferred on his order. The context of the emergence of the Brigade shows how it implemented what the Palestinian factions affiliated with Assad's authority could not do, whether due to their severe decline in popularity, or because of the pressures they were subjected to from the people and the leadership of the LPO, even if the matter was not without local competition that may sometimes take place. The central observation in this regard is found in a testimony from the returnee camp in Hama stating that “the brigade inside Hama is a completely separate entity from the Front’s framework, so what applies to the Front does not apply to the Brigade. There is harmony, joint activities, and what is identical, although there is competition in some service files, but most of Al-Quds Brigade members are former members of the General Command or volunteers in the Air Force Intelligence,” and they explain the integration between the two parties job through a narrative that the General Command official alerted its members, if it had to send them to participate outside the camp, to pay attention and not expose themselves at risk, because the General Command organization cannot take responsibility for them fighting outside the camp, while the witness confirmed that the fighters of the Al-Quds Brigade company in Hama, go to fight all over Syria without warning.

Muhammad al-Saeed and his deputy, Adnan Al-Sayed, established a group of shabiha fringe elements (unemployed and criminals...) in Neirab camp when

protests broke out in the city of Aleppo in late 2011, and then they took control of the peaceful movement there, especially the student movement at the University of Aleppo<sup>66</sup>, before their violations spread to the entire Syrian geography. This is confirmed by one of the witnesses we interviewed, saying: “Since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in Aleppo, people began to demonstrate peacefully from mosques in the neighborhoods of Sukkari, Seif al-Dawla, Salah al-Din and other areas. The regime feared that Aleppo would join the Syrian revolution, which had begun with demonstrations raising the slogans of overthrowing the regime in Daraa, Homs, Hama, Damascus countryside, Deir Ezzor and others. The security services instructed all their agents in Aleppo, and Adnan al-Sayed was among them, to form shabiha groups to suppress the movement. According to the instructions, the master gathered around him some beneficiaries, gathered the unemployed, and started with those around him in his hall and cafe, and the person’s wages per day was 500 Syrian pounds. Which brought him 20 shabiha members in the early days, and they used to go to Aleppo and come to talk about their adventures in suppressing the demonstrations. Thus, Adnan al-Sayed gathered the shabiha and the unemployed in the camp and engaged them in suppressing the peaceful civil movement at the time. Those recruited by Adnan until a short period before the crisis were an essential part of the camp's problems due to their frequent harassment and aggression against the people. In addition to their use and trafficking of cannabis and drugs. Overnight, they turned the commanding officer in the camp after displacing most of the camp’s intellectuals and silencing the mouths of those who remained”.

Al-Sayed benefited from several events, either fabricated by Assad’s authority, or took place for local reasons and invested in them (and we have mentioned them

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<sup>66</sup> The Action Group for the Palestinians of Syria, “85% of the Al-Quds Brigade loyal to the Syrian regime are not Palestinians,” August 12, 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/7906/مجموعة>

in detail above), in mobilizing the people of the camps (Neirab, Handarat, and Al-Raml) against the armed opposition factions, so he called the young men to join his group. Adnan al-Sayed was distributing weapons licensed by the Air Force Intelligence Directorate. In addition to these incidents, the situation of Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian camps, especially Neirab camp, during its siege; Where the unemployed youth found what was lost in the salaries offered by Al-Quds Brigade, which prompted them to participate in it. According to the documentary report of the Action Group for the Palestinians of Syria, published in February 2018, “since the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011, chaos has prevailed, unemployment has spread and poverty has increased among young people, who were forced to accept any job opportunity that secures a living”. For them and their families, many young men joined to participate in the Popular Committees and Al-Quds Brigade, which is loyal to the Syrian regime”.

The formation of Al-Quds Brigade militia was officially announced in October 2013, and that militia allied itself with other shabihas from the city of Aleppo, led by Al-Bari shabihas, who were known for their brutality and bloodshed against the protesters against Assad’s authority in the city of Aleppo<sup>67</sup> and some tribesmen.

Al-Quds Brigade, and its founders, Muhammad al-Saeed , Adnan al-Sayed and Muhammed Rafea (The Godfather), were known to be associated with air security in Aleppo. The same witness adds: “In a short period of time, Adnan al-Sayed was able to gather more than 50 profiteers to thrust them into the Aleppo repression, and they were armed with the support of the Air Force Security.

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<sup>67</sup> Speech, Adnan al-Sayed, deputy commander of the Al-Quds Brigade, at the memorial service for the Al-Bari martyrs, June 2, 2018 (last seen on March 9, 2019).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8m4rAp07eE>

Adnan al-Sayed became the first authorized representative of the security forces in the camp, directly under the orders of the Air Force Intelligence”.

Muhammed Rafea (who was killed by a sniper in the countryside of Aleppo in 2016) and Adnan al-Sayed are considered the two arms of the commander of the Al-Quds Brigade militia, in the practice of the act of slander, killing civilians and looting their private property. A witness from Neirab camp told us about the presence of many Shiite elements from the Iraqis, Iranians and Lebanese in the headquarters of the Brigade in Neirab camp, without knowing precisely whether this was just cooperation between them, or whether they became officially affiliated with the Brigade. What we could rely on, from documented information through witnesses and the media, is a volunteer office established by the Abu al-Fadl al-Abbas Brigade in the camp, in cooperation with Al-Quds Brigade.

### **B-Name, Logo, Flag and Structure**



Flag of Al-Quds Brigade

The full name is Al-Quds Brigade - Guerrillas of the Syrian Arab Army, and its motto is "A homeland you do not protect, you do not deserve to live in", and its flag is a drawing of the flag of the Syrian Arab Republic in a circular motion in a white space. All of them mean re-appointing the “homeland” for the Palestinians who belong to the Brigade. It contradicts the main political principle of the Palestinian national liberation movement with all its factions, which is based on the idea of the Palestinian Homeland, as it seeks to fit in with Bashar al-Assad’s determinants scattered in his speeches, including his saying that “The homeland

is not for those who live in it, and not for those who hold its passport or citizenship, the homeland is for those who defend and protect it. And the people who do not defend their homeland have no homeland, and they do not deserve to have a homeland”. And his declaration of a “Homogeneous society” in the face of sub-identities<sup>68</sup>.

And the use of Palestine and Al-Quds, which is the Arabic name for Jerusalem, in its speeches and its name, does not mitigate this fundamental modification in defining the Palestinian Homeland, as all the foreign militias fighting in Syria on the side of the regime use them in their discourse, and sometimes their names, without being Palestinian. ; A good example is the Iranian Quds Force.

Regarding the structure of Al-Quds Brigade, Muhammad Al-Saeed, the militia commander, told Dam Press, claiming: “The Brigade includes many wings at all levels, namely: a political wing, and its mission is to issue political statements, and the electronic army wing: its mission is to hack the sites of the militants and hack their pages and websites. And a media wing: where the Qasioun satellite channel was launched, in addition to the presence of many websites and social media pages, and a cultural wing: where a complete archive on the history of the city of Aleppo was documented, in addition to the establishment of several cultural forums, including Al-Quds Brigade Cultural Forum, located in Neirab camp in Aleppo countryside, theaters, brass bands, and a social and service wing: concerned with serving and rehabilitating the infrastructure in Neirab camp (streets - sewage) and providing everything needed for the people, in addition to the Martyr Foundation: which includes the Office of Martyrs and Wounded of Al-Quds Brigade, and the presence of permanent medical cadres in the University and Al-Razi hospitals, a field hospital in the industrial city, the presence of the

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<sup>68</sup> “President Bashar al-Assad’s speech, 26-7-2015,” United Syria News Networks (last seen on March 9, 2019). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsUzNk1FMhM>

latest (25) ambulances, and a military wing: which is specific to military operations and to support the Syrian Arab Army and its allies in all its battles, and our forces are present in all regions. On the fronts and writing the most wonderful epics of victories, and we are proud of the mixing of the blood of our martyrs with the martyrs of the Syrian Arab Army to irrigate this pure land while we are always ready”<sup>69</sup>.

Al-Quds Brigade consists of several battalions, the most famous of which are the Black Ghost Brigade, the Black Shirts Brigade, the Lions of Al-Quds Brigade, that fights in Neirab Camp and its surroundings, the southern and eastern countryside of Aleppo, and the Deterrence Brigade active in the northern countryside near the towns of Nubl and al-Zahraa, and the Lions of a Al-Shahba Brigade that fought inside the city of Aleppo. Al-Quds Brigade is the largest auxiliary irregular loyalist force operating in Aleppo Governorate, where the number of its fighters is estimated at more than 3,500 members; 85 percent of its members are not Palestinians<sup>70</sup>. According to the commander of Al-Quds Brigade, in a statement to Dam Press website, the number of members of the Al-Quds Brigade is currently (the statement in February 2017) more than 3,500 fighters, and the number of deaths of the militia since its establishment has reached 1012 fighters, and 3,400 wounded.

### **C-Support the Alliance of Palestinian Forces**

Since the beginning of its establishment, the Alliance has dealt with Al-Quds Brigade as a creative solution commensurate with its policy. The Brigade carried

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<sup>69</sup> Dam Press, Commander of the Al-Quds Brigade, to Dam Press: Our goal is to cleanse all Syrian territory of the abomination of terrorists, and our compass is Jerusalem, February 2017 (last visit to the website on March 9,

2019).[https://www.dampress.net/mobile/?page=show\\_det&category\\_id=6&id=77095](https://www.dampress.net/mobile/?page=show_det&category_id=6&id=77095)

<sup>70</sup> Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, 85% of the pro-Syrian regime’s Al-Quds Brigade are not Palestinians, August 2017 (last visit to the website on March 9, 2019).

<https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/7906/مجموعة>

tasks that the Alliance would prefer not to undertake publicly. The publicity of the Brigade's work is part of its job. Otherwise, what does it mean for its multiple fathers to gather a number of criminals with thousands of Syrians and an unspecified number of Shiite militia members, under the name and leadership of Palestinians, if not for the Palestinian title to be used in the political propaganda of Assad regime.

The Alliance of Palestinian Forces presented Al-Quds Brigade under its political cover, and sponsorship, and from that, it included its name in the invitations to cultural and political activities.



يوم الأرض في  
شعبة الشهيد تيسير الحلبي لحزب البعث العربي الاشتراكي  
فصائل المقاومة الفلسطينية في حلب  
لواء القدس  
تدعوكم  
 للمشاركة في المسيرة الجماهيرية  
 في ذكرى يوم الأرض الخالد  
 وذلك في تمام الساعة ١٢ ظهرا  
 من يوم الخميس ٢٩ | ٣ | ٢٠١٨  
 من أمام ثانوية الشهيد محمود أبو الحسن

Involving Al-Quds Brigade in the activities of the Alliance under the auspices of the General Command Organization

The factional sponsorship of the Al-Quds Brigade, which was managed by Talal Naji, was also evident in its honoring by the factional Alliance collectively, and by each faction separately; Fatah Al-Intifada Movement honored the leaders of Al-Quds Brigade, and awarded the rank of captain to its informant, Muhammad Abu Al-Layl, in addition to the fact that its official in the Handarat Camp, Nader Younes, is the current official in the Brigade as well. We also find other factional members in the Brigade in the two camps. We also find that the leaders of the Syrian-affiliated Palestinian Liberation Front (Yusuf al-Maqdah) endowed leaders of Al-Quds Brigade militia with military designations that they do not

possess the qualifications of; Adnan al-Sayed held the rank of colonel, Abdullah Sahtot the rank of captain, and Majd Abd Rabbo the rank of lieutenant. One of the military commanders in the Brigade, Jamil Abu Hawash, also joined the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (Khaled Abdel Majid), and he held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel during his military work in Lebanon with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.



Muhammad Al-Saeed in the arms of Talal Naji at a festival for the General Command



A delegation from Al-Quds Brigade visited Talal Naji, in the presence of leaders from the General Command



## Fatal Integration - Organization of General Command and Al-Quds Brigade

Adnan al-Sayed and leaders from Al-Quds Brigade at Ali Aziz's office in Damascus



The visit of the Fatah Al-Intifada delegation to the Al-Quds Brigade in Handarat camp



From the left, Mahmoud Rafea, a Fatah official in Aleppo, and the father of Samer Rafea, on the right, with Mohammed Shaban, the official of the Liberation Front in Aleppo, and Muhammad al-Saeed in the middle.



Part of the meetings of the Palestinian factions with Muhammad Al-Saeed in his office in Aleppo

The participation of the General Command Organization's leadership with Al-Quds Brigade in its war actions, and the support for the Brigade relationship with the institutions of the Syrian regime, appeared to Talal Naji's interest in involving the largest number of his entourage in his meetings with Al-Quds Brigade, to

coordinate the military operations, including the meeting with the Governor of Aleppo Hussein Deeb, where the conduct of the military operations of the Brigade was followed up with the participation of Talal Naji, Muhammad Al-Saeed, Anwar Raja, Adnan Al-Sayed and Muhammad Jalbout.

Talal Naji was also keen to show his patronage of Al-Quds Brigade by honoring, and visiting Aleppo camps, accompanied by the leaders of the Brigade in the presence of his entourage, and always in the presence of Muhammad Jalbout, the director of the Noor Foundation.



Follow-up on the progress of operations by Muhammad Al-Saeed, Talal Naji, Muhammad Jalbout, Anwar Raja, Adnan Al-Sayed, and the Governor of Aleppo, Hussein Diab



Talal Naji honors Al-Quds Brigade.



Talal Naji, Muhammad Al-Saeed, Muhammad Jalbout and leaders from the Brigade and the General Command in Handarat camp

## **Corruption Networks and Numerous Violations**

Militias fighting alongside Assad's authority were formed with Iranian funding and support, but with the development and expansion of the war, the resources of Assad's authority and the size of Iran's support are no longer sufficient to meet the needs and ambitions of these militias. And if we add to the needs of the poor among them, the ambitions of the corrupt and criminals who form the leading segment in this militia, and we look at the widespread collapse of the state, which was a deterrent, even if it was corrupt in turn, and the exposure of society as weak and broken before these militias in their areas of control, we will realize how they organized their theft and looting. They created from these militia mafias<sup>71</sup>, that secure their sources of funding from suspicious and illegal activities in the context of the war economy.

What happened to these militias happened to Al-Quds Brigade. It is also formed by its main structure, specifically its leadership, of thugs, loafers, promoters of prostitution and drugs. It was easy for the Brigade to organize looting and commit many violations against civilians. Among them are the kidnapping of young men and asking for a large ransom from their families in exchange for their release, and the theft of furniture of civilians homes in the Aleppo neighborhoods under the control of the Assad regime whose residents abandoned them after they turned into a front line, such as the neighborhood of Jamiat Al Zahraa and the Rashideen Al Shamali, or in the neighboring villages of Neirab camp, such as The aforementioned incident of looting the village of Tal Shaghib. In addition to recruiting children among its ranks<sup>72</sup>; in April 2015, Al-Quds Brigade militia announced the opening of a military training course in Neirab camp for a period

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<sup>71</sup> Gharib Mirza, Hommam Al-Khatib, The Conflict in a Salamiyah City - A Model of Mafia Formation in Syria, Center for Democratic Republic Studies, October 2015 (last visited the website on March 7, 2019). <http://www.drsc-sy.org/الصراع-في-مدينة-سلمية-نموذج-لتشكل-الم>

<sup>72</sup> Syrian Vision Magazine, the official announcement of the recruitment of children to fight alongside Assad in Aleppo, April 2015 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019). <https://bof-sy.com/?p=24519>

of 30 days, starting from the age of 15 and above, and recommended that everyone who attended the commando course visit the militia headquarters in Neirab Camp. This is evidence of children's involvement in militarism and their exploitation to be fuel for war, which is a violation of international humanitarian law. In May 2000, the Optional Protocol raised the age of compulsory recruitment to 18 years and called on states to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment to more than 15 years. It stressed that armed groups should not use children under the age of 18 under any circumstances, and called on states to criminally punish such practices.



Children in military uniforms on a visit to Muhammad Al-Saeed.



Armed opposition factions in Aleppo capture a child belonging to Al-Quds Brigade

The violations of this militia did not stop at the limits of the recruitment of children, but went beyond to arresting them and concealing their fate; In March 2015, the Al-Quds Brigade militia arrested the two children Ahmed Zakaria Abu Rahma and Anas Ahmed Azzam (16 years), from Neirab camp in Aleppo, where

they were taken to an unknown destination before being released after a short time.

All this is in addition to the fact that the members of this Brigade set up checkpoints in Neirab camp, and arrested Palestinian youths, in addition to opening detention centers in the camp to detain some young men there. In March 2015, a group of Al-Quds Brigade arrested Palestinian refugee Ayman al-Dahudi from Neirab camp, because of his refusal to vacate his commercial store, which is located in the building of Youssef al-Dahudi, a leader in the armed opposition. This came in the context of a campaign launched by the Brigade's members to seize the homes of those who participated in the fighting alongside the armed forces affiliated with the Syrian opposition, and the homes of expatriates sympathetic to them as well. This prompted immigrants in Europe, from the Neirab camp to demand Adnan al-Sayed, the leader in Al-Quds Brigade, to provide an explanation of what he published on his personal page on the subject of the seizure of the expatriates homes inside the camp. This came after the decision to seize the homes of the expatriates and the threat of Al-Sayed, that he would not allow the expatriate residents of Neirab camp to return to their camp in the future, because of the messages of mercy and condolences from the expatriates, for the death of the son of their camp Ubadah Dahoudi, and others who they were fighting in the armed opposition, and openly opposed the regime. On his Facebook page, al-Sayed accused everyone who had mercy on al-Dahudi of treason<sup>73</sup>. According to one of our witnesses, “Al-Quds Brigade had taken control of some of the opposition houses in the camp, including the house of Youssef al-Dahoudi and the house of Abdul-Jabbar Shalabi”.

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<sup>73</sup> Action Group, Neirab camp residents in Europe demand the Al-Quds Brigade group clarify the decision to seize their homes in the camp, March 2015 (last visit to the website on March 8, 2019). <https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/1123>

This militia has also attacked civil and educational institutions. Since the beginning of the protests in Syria, it has participated in suppressing the demonstrations of Aleppo University students inside the university campus (it had not yet declared itself organizationally under the name of Al-Quds Brigade). In June 2017, members of Al-Quds Brigade broke into the university residence and opened fire. According to what was reported by activists on social media, the aforementioned militia members arrested the university guards and pushed them into the university's branch of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, justifying their attack on the university campus on the basis of "security necessities"<sup>74</sup>.

After the militia became notorious within the Aleppan society, it tried to cover its nakedness by vaccinating itself with educated cadres; since 2017, Al-Quds Brigade militia has sought to attract intellectuals and academics, including teachers, doctors, engineers and others, to volunteer in its ranks through temptations, the most important of which is exemption from compulsory service in the regular army, and thus avoiding joining the military fronts, in addition to attractive financial salaries. The tasks assigned to the militia's educators vary between preparing periodic reports on weekly activities and achievements, and office tasks that are very similar to what is known as "Administrative and fixed services" in the regime's army. Militia educators obtain a security card entitled "Al-Quds Brigade Intelligence Division", similar to military cards, and they are handed a piece of weapons<sup>75</sup>. In the process of recruiting academics and intellectuals into its ranks, the militia leadership seeks to improve the bad

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<sup>74</sup> Al-Ittihad Press, Shabiha storm the university dormitory in Aleppo after arresting its guards, June 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019 <https://aletihadpress.com/-الشبيحة-يقتحمون-السكن-الجامعي-بحلب-بمع>)

<sup>75</sup> Syrian reporter, exemption from compulsory service and high salaries.. Al-Quds Brigade attracts intellectuals to its ranks, 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://syrian-reporter.net/en/%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A/>

reputation that has accompanied it since its establishment; It is represented by the drug smuggling and managing a prostitution networks, and it is trying to intensify the appearance of this class in front of the media and in national celebrations and events.

However, such an effort could not beautify the work of a militia formed of criminal elements at its center with mafia nuclei, working to organize and steadily increase its thefts. And it came to the point that one of these intentions, run by Samer Rafea, the former commander of Al-Quds Brigade operations, to the point of taking over the management of a commercial company in partnership with Muhammad Suleiman, but it seems that he has exceeded his estimated quota, and he did not give the security services officials their sick share, so he was arrested In June 2018, accused with an armed clash with members of one of the regime's checkpoints in the city of Lattakia. However, everything that was leaked from the investigations indicates that his arrest came in the context of the process of holding him accountable for the money he collected and smuggled into the United Arab Emirates.

Samer Rafea is known to have a bad reputation. He was arrested at the beginning of the events on charges of armed robbery and theft of homes in the city of Aleppo. He appeared on the Syrian media at that time confessing to the charges against him, but he was released after one year<sup>76</sup>. One of our witnesses in Neirab camp told us about the amount of money owned by Rafea through his corruption and theft, and he said: "Samer Rafea inherited from his brother a lot of money that the latter had collected through his corruption, but Samer Rafea exceeded his brother with corruption, so he worked in the hashish and drug trade, Smuggling

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<sup>76</sup> Action Group for Palestinian-Syria, the regime arrests an official in the loyalist "Al-Quds Brigade", June 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019) <https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/10095>

people, looting, selling weapons to terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, and other suspicious activities. Samer transferred most of his money to the Emirates, where his sister lives, and bought farms, luxury homes, and luxury cars, in addition to being general manager of the Ataa Al-Malik Trading Company, with the participation of Muhammad Suleiman”.

Following the arrest of Samer Rafea, a large delegation from Al-Quds Brigade went to the governor of Aleppo to demand the immediate release of what he called the "great fighter", according to what was stated on Al-Quds Brigade Facebook page. Information was leaked to various media outlets that investigations revealed a complex network that included militia members and regime officers, which had collected large sums of money as a result of conducting large deals from selling weapons, home furniture, and huge electric generators, in addition to smuggling money to the United Arab Emirates<sup>77</sup>. In Rafea's case, one of our witnesses told us that the conversation is taking place in Neirab camp about the accusation that Samer Rafea was accused of selling weapons to ISIS in Deir Ezzor. As a result, Al-Sayed was arrested, as was Mahmoud Rafea, the Fatah official in Aleppo and the father of Samer Rafea, for covering up his son. Subsequently, Samer Junaid, the Mufti of the Al-Quds Brigade, was arrested on corruption charges, and he is close to Samer Rafea and has a partnership relationship with him, which makes it likely that his arrest is linked to the investigation with Rafea.

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<sup>77</sup> Arabi Post, from looting and arms trading with ISIS to smuggling money to the UAE... The story of an official recruited by the intelligence and arrested by the Syrian regime <https://arabicpost.net/أخبار/13/08/2018/من-التعفيش-وتجارة-السلح-مع-داعش-الى-ته/>



Hussein Junaid and Samer Rafea, former commander of the Brigade's operations, at an iftar for orphans on the occasion of the announcement of a commercial company

Samer Rafea arrest shed light on his responsibility for smuggling Turkish clothes and goods to the Brigade control areas, through merchants and leaders in the Levant Front (one of the Euphrates Shield factions in the northern countryside of Aleppo), which spread in dozens of shops owned by leaders of Al-Quds Brigade militia.

While loyalist circles in Aleppo tried to exploit the arrest in the interest of the Assad regime, where they circulated stories about the reasons for the arrest of Rafea, some of them pointed to the large number of accusations and complaints lodged against him on the background of the abuses he and his close members committed against the people, including kidnapping, murder, ransom demand and rape, in addition to theft operations at the checkpoints he runs on the outskirts of the city and near the industrial city in Sheikh Najjar. Many loyalists in Aleppo expressed their joy through social media for the arrest of Rafea, and demanded

that the regime arrest more militia leaders in the city<sup>78</sup>. However, what weakens the narrative that the arrest of Rafea came against the background of the prosecution of the corrupt, is that the structure of Assad's authority is based on corrupt executives at the top of the pyramid, in addition to the fact that we did not witness the arrest of the symbols of corruption and they are many, and that Rafea may be one of their tools. It is likely that the arrest came on the background of personal disputes within the militia or with security forces among its operators, which were caused by the quota on the proceeds of corruption or because of what was rumored about the arms sales to ISIS, especially if we know that Muhammad Al-Saeed himself built relations network with security officers since before the outbreak of protests in Syria, in the context of obtaining projects from military construction in Aleppo, by bribing these officers to award tenders for those projects to him.

In any case, and regardless of the widespread reasons for the arrest of Samer Rafea, what is consistent is everyone's acknowledgement that the members of Al-Quds Brigade are criminals who continue their criminal habits, not only against the opposition, but against the entire Syrian society. According to activists from the city of Aleppo, the promotion of prostitution, hashish and drugs trafficking are among the most prominent sources of funding for Al-Quds Brigade, and it dates back to before the outbreak of the revolution in Syria; Muhammad Rafea (The Godfather), who was killed in 2015 in the battles of Aleppo, was the godfather of these professions, along with others from the Al-Quds Brigade, due to his previous experience obtained from his work in a nightclub before the outbreak of the revolution in Syria. About this, one of our witnesses from Neirab camp tells us that “the sale of hashish, drugs and brothels were secretly present

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<sup>78</sup> Al-Modon, Aleppo: The arrest of the commander of the Al-Quds Brigade operations.. and security transmissions, July 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).

<https://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2018/7/2/العمليات-لواء-القدس-وتناقلات-للقيادات-الامنية/>

inside the camp and did not constitute a phenomenon, except that during and after the events that swept Syria and after, it became a widespread phenomenon; who wants to obtain narcotics in Aleppo goes to the camp to collect it, and among the people who work in these professions are Qusai Sandakli and people from the Zohouri family, most of whom are affiliated with Al-Quds Brigade or have a relationship with it”.

There are many illegal activities that the leaders of Al-Quds Brigade engage in to collect money. The canteen owned by Adnan al-Sayed has turned into a guesthouse frequented by merchants, industrialists, intellectuals in Aleppo and legal personalities in the city to take from Adnan al-Sayed and Muhammad al-Saeed the leaders of the Al-Quds Brigade as a key to their outstanding interests in state institutions (such as granting licenses for projects, or facilitating pending transactions), and some of the residents sought it to ask about one of their detained sons or to try to get them out of detention, and this is due to the relationship of the leaders of the brigade with the security authorities and influential officers. Of course, Adnan al-Sayed and Muhammad al-Saeed received large sums of money for these works. In addition to the looting operations carried out by the Brigade, whether at the level of looting homes or looting factories; during the past years of war, metals of all kinds and forms, such as destroyed building iron, electrical wires, household cooking utensils, doors and windows, and everything that could be sold as scrap metal and melted down, constituted a main target for Al-Quds Brigade militia, which committed widespread looting and theft in what became known as the Phenomenon of Looting. This is what has begun to show signs and feasibility now; this includes the participation of Muhammad al-Saeed with owners of iron smelting factories, major scrap collectors and militia leaders, to

“develop the iron industry” in a meeting held at the Prime Minister’s headquarters in Damascus on February 12, 2019<sup>79</sup>.

Regarding the sources of funding for the Al-Quds Brigade militia, one of the witnesses told us, “The sources of funding for the leaders of the Al-Quds Brigade were numerous, as they sold the areas they controlled to merchants or thieves, looted factories and brought their machines to loot warehouses belonging to them. In addition, they received money in exchange for enabling people in their positions, or getting others out of prison, or asking about the prisoner, or licensing projects, or facilitating commercial cases, or signing a transaction....”

Al-Quds Brigade saw in the youth who failed to join the compulsory or reserve service in the army, an important source of livelihood; influential elements in the Brigade were extorting these young men financially with monthly sums that they paid regularly, in return for mediating for them at the checkpoints, especially those affiliated with the Military Security, in order to withdraw their names from the wanted list or to overlook them while they were on the move. Then, the Brigade and the security services shared the proceeds of this trade. . In addition to working in smuggling people who are fleeing towards Turkey, by passing them through the checkpoints in return for paying sums ranging from 150 to 250 thousand Syrian pounds. The same witness adds that “Al-Quds Brigade militia was smuggling people to Turkey and they received, through intermediaries, a minimum amount of 150 thousand Syrian pounds per person, in exchange for their guarantee that they would not be exposed to the checkpoints, which they

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<sup>79</sup> The General Authority for Radio and Television, a report on the Syrian satellite channel “Akhbar Baladna” entitled “The main directions in the next stage for the advancement of the steel industry, February 12, 2019 (last seen on sep 6, 2021). <http://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/14595/-المهندس-خميس-يؤكد-التزام-الدولة-بعدم-صناعة-الحديد-وتذليل-عقبات-تشغيل-المعامل-المتوقفة>

encounter on their way to the Al-Bab or Idlib area. Muhammad Rafea and his brother Samer managed this matter in cooperation with officers at the airport”.

Perhaps Adnan al-Sayed’s issuance of an accredited home cooking gas cylinders license in Neirab camp, is not the last of the Brigade’s livelihood in light of the stifling crisis that Syrians are experiencing in regime-controlled areas due to the scarcity of gas or its sometimes disappearance, especially in Aleppo camps. And not only that, Al-Quds Brigade in Handarat camp controls the owners of electric generators in light of the network interruption in the camp, so electricity is sold to its residents at high prices compared to its surroundings, “because of Al-Quds Brigade’s imposition of taxes on generator owners, who in turn cover them by raising prices”, according to one of our witnesses. .



A license granted to Adnan al-Sayed authorizing him to sell and distribute gas in Nairab Camp

## Map of the Military Participation of Al-Quds Brigade Militia in the Syrian War

Al-Quds Brigade announced all the operations it participated in throughout Syrian geography without any caveats. Its media pages announced the military actions in which the Brigade participated with great pride. The Brigade participated, from 2013 until December 22, 2016, in the battles of Aleppo alongside the Assad forces and the Shiite militia, with the support of the Russian occupation aircraft, since September 2015. After 2016, the Al-Quds Brigade participated in the battles that erupted in most of the Syrian governorates, from the far north to the far south.

### The Following is an Account of Some of Al-Quds Brigade' Military Participation in the Syrian Governorates:

#### 1- Deir Ezzor Governorate

In September 2017, Al-Quds Brigade participated for the first time in the battles of Deir Ezzor, far from its positions in Aleppo governorate, along with elements of the Lebanese Hezbollah and forces from the Republican Guard, and this came after Assad's forces announced the end of the siege on Deir Ezzor. With direct support from the Russian air force<sup>80</sup>.



Members of Al-Quds Brigade forces in the village of Fayda Umm Muwayna, south of Al-Mayadin in Deir Ezzor governorate

<sup>80</sup> Enab Baladi, Al-Quds Brigade participated for the first time in the battles of Deir Ezzor, September 2017. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/171619>



**Brigadier General Issam Zahreddine with members of the Al-Quds Brigade militia**

In September 2017, Al-Quds Brigade announced that a number of its members were killed after being ambushed in the Al-Shoula area in the city of Deir Ezzor in eastern Syria. According to what was published by the Brigade, most of those who killed were Palestinian fighters from Neirab camp, the names: Mahmoud Muhammad Ayoub, Muhammad Abdul Qader Rafea, Mahmoud Muhammad Hamida, Ahmad Muhammad al-Muhammad, Ahmad Zakaria Jagl. Al-Quds Brigade groups are still stationed in Deir Ezzor governorate until the date of preparing this study.



**Members of the Al-Quds Brigade militia in Deir Ezzor**

And in January 2018, the Palestinian fighter Hasan al-Mutlaq, a member of Al-Quds Brigade, was killed while participating in the fight alongside the Syrian regime forces in the ongoing battles in Deir Ezzo, eastern Syria.



Hasan al-Mutlaq



Members of the Sheikh Muhammad Al-Saeed Al-Gharbi Company of Al-Quds Brigade in Deir Ezzor on January 11, 2019

## 2- Aleppo Governorate

In an interview with Al-Alam news channel correspondent, in May 2015, the commander of Al-Quds Brigade, Muhammad Al-Saeed, said: “A year ago, we officially announced the formation of Al-Quds Brigade, to highlight the Palestinian resistance role, because of those who offended the name of the Palestinian”. He pointed out that “this Brigade has a major and essential role in protecting Neirab camp, as Al-Quds Brigade has ensured the protection of the civilian and the Nayrab military airport”, explaining that “the Brigade began participating in several battles alongside the Syrian army in the liberation of

several areas”. According to Al-Alam TV report, Al-Quds Brigade participated in 140 battles in Aleppo Governorate<sup>81</sup>.

Al-Quds Brigade made an essential contribution to digging a trench in the vicinity of Al-Nayrab Military Airport, to secure the protection of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards inside the airport for fear of armed opposition groups storming it. After that, Al-Quds Brigade was deployed on the fronts of Al-Nayrab Military Airport, Aleppo International Airport, Al-Aziza, Sheikh Lotfi, Hilan, Handarat Camp<sup>82</sup>, Jamiat Al-Zahra, Rashideen, and Sheikh Saeed<sup>83</sup>).



Members of Liwa al-Quds in the Sheikh Saeed neighborhood of Aleppo

In May 2016, the leadership of Al-Quds Brigade militia admitted the killing of 46 of its members during the armed opposition’s attack on the regime’s positions in western Aleppo. This came in a statement issued by the Brigade, indicating that they were killed in the process of detonating the tunnel in the al-Zahra area,

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<sup>81</sup> Al-Alam TV report on the Al-Quds Brigade militia, May 2015 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://youtu.be/ubz15K-uFVk>

<sup>82</sup> Scenes from the storming of the Assad Army and the Al-Quds Brigade militia to the Handarat camp in the northern countryside of Aleppo Governorate, April 2016 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://youtu.be/34dMGrCzopl?t=174>

<sup>83</sup> Scenes from the confrontations with the Al-Quds Brigade militia on the Sheikh Saeed front in Aleppo, March 2014 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://youtu.be/aii20-nvY94?t=187>

west of Aleppo. In the statement, the names of the elements who were killed in the bombing were published: 1- Muhammad Reda Samara 2- Azzam Ahmed Hosari 3- Muhammad Muhammad Rabei Muhanna 4- Muhammad Abdul Hamid Mustafa 5- Ibrahim Ahmad Ali 6- Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad 7- Ahmad Muhammad Al-Atrash 8 - Ahmed Hamdi Al-Saleh 9 - Ahmed Moussa Al-Mohammed 10 - Ahmed Mahmoud Bakdoul 11 - Ahmed Mohamed Ali Asani 12 - Ahmed Anwar Najjar 13 - Bakri Mohamed Atoura 14 - Jamil Mohamed Abdel Rahman 15 - Hassan Amir al-Atrash 16 - Hassan Mohamed Omar 17 - Khaled Abdel Al-Ghani Abu Amr 18 - Zakaria Mahmoud Tofi 19 - Samir Hassan Ezzo 20 - Saleh Abdel Latif Attar 21 - Saleh Lotfi Kali 22 - Abdel Rahman Ahmed Qattan 23 - Abdel Qader Youssef Saqan 24 - Abdullah Muhammad Mahfouz Jamal 25 - Ezz El-Din Mohamed Salem Baba 26 - Ali Jamil Qassab, 27, Omar Muhammad, age 28, Miteb Muhammad Danesh, 29, Muhammad Husayn, age 30, Muhammad Husayn Jum`a al-Hussein, 31, Muhammad Ahmad Husayn, 32, Muhammad Bakri Hosariah, 33, Muhammad Othman Rabie Othman, 34, Muhammad Khaled Abd al-Rahman, 35. Muhammad Eid Muhammad Ghashim 36- Muhammad Zakaria Fakhoury 37- Muhammad Munir Muhammad Hassan Al-Khaled 38- Muhammad Nidal Muhammad Ali S. Arj 39- Muhammad Walid Rabei Antakli 40- Mahmoud Abdel-Razek Sekmani 41 - Mustafa Muhammad Arour 42 - Mulham Khaled Abu Amr 43 - Naji Muhammad Araj 44 - Yahya Maher Abu Amr 45 - Yahya Bakri Hosariah 46 - Youssef Muhammad Muhanna. And in November 2016, the official page of the Al-Quds Brigade militia announced the killing of the military commander of the Al-Quds Brigade, Muhammad Rafea, (The Godfather), following clashes between the revolutionaries and those militias in the Al-Inzarat and Baidain areas in Aleppo city, where the militia supports the regime forces. And Shiite and Iraqi militias to control the eastern neighborhoods of the besieged city of Aleppo.

In February 2017, the Palestinian fighter Alaa Asead, a member of Al-Quds Brigade, died after an attack launched by ISIS on Khanaser area in the countryside of Aleppo, northern Syria. A few days later, Al-Quds Brigade militia admitted the killing of 28 of its members in the Khanaser area in the countryside of Aleppo governorate. The dead are: Alaa Ya'rob Malak, Waseem Muhammad Al-Sahli, Fayez Mustafa Al-Taweel, Youssef Imad Al-Din Saadia, Khaled Muhammad Raslan Diab, Hussam Mahmoud Asaad, Muhammad Abdullah Sheikhani, Walid Yasser Al-Dakhil, Fayez Akram Shaya, Nabil Saqr Al-Hallaj, Ali Diaa Zahra, Yazan Muhammad Barjas, Haitham Mahmoud al-Hamdan, Amer Fayez Abu Ajour, Sinan Ahmad al-Akta', Izzat Bahaa al-Din al-Shaar, Musa Sinan al-Yazji, Shadi Hani al-Ahmad, Yahya Marwan Anis, Mo'in Khaled al-Darwish, Abdullah Ahmad Musa, Majed Muhammad al-Sha'ar, Ahmad Mustafa Traboulsi 85 Mahmoud Hossam Al-Abdullah, Abdel-Razzaq Nabhan Shaaboun, Khaled Mamoun Al-Jinan, Taha Abdel-Nasser Ghandour, Mahmoud Mohamed Jamal Qaiser<sup>84</sup>.

In March 2017, Muhammad Imad Musa, from Neirab camp, and Ahmed Abdullah Othman, from Handarat camp, both members of Al-Quds Brigade, died after their participation in the fighting alongside the Syrian regime forces in al-Rashideen area, west of Aleppo.

### **3- Latakia Governorate**

In 2014, coordination took place between the commander of Al-Quds Brigade and the leader of the "Syrian Resistance", Ali Kayali, who is accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, but we did not obtain additional information about the nature and extent of the coordination.

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<sup>84</sup> Zaman al-Wasl, in names.. 28 mercenaries of Liwa al-Quds militia were killed in the Khanasir battles, February 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).  
<https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/76806>



Muhammad al-Saeed during his visit to a Syrian militia leader named Ali Kayali in Latakia in September 2014

#### 4- Hama Governorate

Since January 2017, the militias of Al-Quds Brigade and the Galilee Forces have begun to withdraw gradually from Deir Ezzor Governorate towards the Hama countryside. At that time, the crowds were stationed at the Hama Military Airport, and they left in the form of columns to the Crawlers School in the eastern countryside of Hama, which became the headquarters of the Military Operations Room, run by Russian and Iranian experts, in addition to Assad forces<sup>85</sup>.

In the same period, 12 members of the Al-Quds Brigade militia were killed, in clashes with the Islamic State (ISIS), in the eastern countryside of Salamiyah, and in the northern Hama countryside<sup>86</sup>. The dead are: Abdullah Khalil Al-Rifi, Amjad Zuhair Abed Rabbo, Ahmed Ghiath Daoud, Ahmed Rabie Tawuz, Mazen Munib Shaheen, Muhammad Mustafa al-Bakri, Jihad Muhammad al-Jassem, Muhammad Amer Kharbatli, Abd al-Rahman al-Kouz, Walid al-Suyufi,

<sup>85</sup> Sham News Network, Al-Quds Brigade and the Galilee Forces leave Deir ez-Zor and head to the Hama countryside, January 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).

<http://www.shaam.org/news/syria-news/مليشيات-لواء-القدس-وقوات-الجليل-تغادر-دير-الزور-وجهتها-ريف-حماة.html>

<sup>86</sup> A video report showing the participation of the Al-Quds Brigade in the battles in the eastern countryside of Hama, June 2016 (last seen on March 7, 2019).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLD58OqrbiA&t=48s>

Muhammad Hussein Muhammad, Imad Issa Ali<sup>87</sup>. According to the Action Group for the Palestinians of Syria, among the dead were three Palestinian refugees: the refugee Abdullah Khalil Al-Rifi, a third-year university student in English literature, the refugees Amjad Zuhair Abd Rabbo, and Ahmed Ghiath Daoud from Neirab camp.



The dead from the Al-Quds Brigade militia in the eastern countryside of Salamiyah on August 4, 2017

In November 2017, Al-Quds Brigade militia lost dozens of its members, either dead or wounded, during battles that took place in the eastern countryside of Hama in the Rahjan axis, as part of a series of regime attacks to storm areas controlled by the opposition factions<sup>88</sup>. Al-Quds Brigade militia had participated in the storming of the village of Tabarah Al-Diba, south of the village of Aqrab Al-Safia in the eastern countryside of Hama in July 2017<sup>89</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> Zaman al-Wasl, most of them from Al-Quds Brigade.. The killing and loss of 20 regime members in the Hama countryside, August 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).

<https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/80685>

<sup>88</sup> STEP NEWS, Dozens of casualties from the Al-Quds Brigade in the eastern Hama countryside, June 2019 (last visit to the website in July, 2019). <https://stepagency-sy.net/2019/06/02/-لواء-القدس-ينعى-عشر-ات-القتلى-الذين-سبق>

<sup>89</sup> Video showing the participation of the Al-Quds Brigade militia in the storming of the village of Tabarat Al-Diba in the rural area of Hama Governorate, July 2017 (last seen on March 7, 2019). <https://youtu.be/8BxQ4BjSB98?t=23>

## 5- Idlib Governorate

In June 2015, Kamal Youssef Asead, a member of Al-Quds Brigade, a resident of Al-Raml camp in Lattakia, died as a result of the battles that erupted in the town of Mhambel in the countryside of Idlib governorate.



Kamal Youssef Asead was killed in the battles that erupted in the town of Mhambel in the countryside of Idlib governorate

And in January 2018, conscript Muhammad Khaled Hamadeh, a member of Al-Quds Brigade, was killed while participating in the fight alongside the Syrian regime forces in the ongoing battles in Idlib countryside, northern Syria.



Muhammad Khaled Hamadeh, a member of the Al-Quds Brigade, was killed in the ongoing battles in the Idlib countryside.

## 6- Homs Governorate

Al-Quds Brigade recruited Palestinian refugees in the city of Homs, and plunged them into the battles in the countryside of Homs, especially in the battles of Palmyra in 2017, to support the regime forces there<sup>90</sup>. In May 2017, a Palestinian, Hamada Dakour, from Neirab camp, a member of Al-Quds Brigade, was injured while participating in the fighting alongside the Syrian regime forces in the Palmyra desert.



Al-Quds Brigade in the ancient city of Palmyra

## 7- Damascus Governorate

In 2015, Al-Quds Brigade participated in military operations on the Jobar front in the city of Damascus, and its first participation was in Damascus and its countryside, before participating in the last attack on Eastern Ghouta on March 2018<sup>91</sup>. Al-Quds Brigade paid special attention to the battle south of Damascus in April 2018, especially the battles of Yarmouk camp due to its importance as the largest Palestinian refugee camp, and for its symbolism in the Palestinian collective memory; before the start of the battle south of Damascus, media close to the Syrian regime published a statement by the deputy commander of Al-Quds Brigade, Adnan Al-Sayed, in which he announced that he was preparing for about

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<sup>90</sup> The Syrian Press Center, the regime's Palestinian Al-Quds Brigade recruiting refugees in Homs, June 2017 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://syrianpc.com/Archive/archives/219879>

<sup>91</sup> Enab Baladi, Al-Quds Brigade announces heading to Eastern Ghouta for the second time (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/210315>

5,000 fighters who will be directed to Yarmouk camp after completing their fight in Eastern Ghouta. After the end of the battle south of Damascus, the commander of Al-Quds Brigade participated in raising the Arab-Syrian flag in Al-Najma Square in the city of Al-Hajar Al-Aswad<sup>92</sup>. The human losses of Al-Quds Brigade amounted to 17 fatalities (according to the announcements published on the media pages of Al-Quds Brigade) in the military operations in southern Damascus from April 19 to May 22, 2018, and they are:

Ammar Yasser Malak, Muhammad Ismail Barhoush, Omar Taher Abu Darwish, Omar Mahmoud Al-Khatib, Yassin Mustafa Sheikh Saleh, Suleiman Khaled Suleiman, Qusai Fadel Al-Khidr, Ahmed Shehadeh Jaafar, Koman Musa Musa, Fahd Abdel-Moeen Al-Maidani, Ayman Badr Al-Din Al-Dabbas, Ared Farhan Abdel Razek, Mohamed Yasser Harhar, Anas Amer Al-Beqai, Tariq Mohamed Aliwi, Ahmed Juma Mohamed Deeb Maaqali, Kifah Saeed Abdel Aziz.

## 8- Damascus Countryside Governorate

In March 2018, Al-Quds Brigade militia sent dozens of its fighters to Eastern Ghouta in the Damascus countryside to fight the armed opposition factions. At the end of March 2018, the Brigade mourned, on its official Facebook page, the deaths of Hassan Muhammad Jaafar Osta, Hassan Faisal al-Bashara and Louay Muqbil al-Omar, during the confrontations that erupted on the outskirts of Douma in Eastern Ghouta.



A column belonging to Al-Quds Brigade heading to participate in the battle of Ghouta

<sup>92</sup> A video showing the participation of the commander of the Al-Quds Brigade in raising the Syrian Arab flag in Al-Najma Square in Al-Hajar Al-Aswad (last seen on March 7, 2019).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWumpjnN1Gg>

In April 2018, Al-Quds Brigade posted on its Facebook page photos and videos showing the participation of its members in the fighting and military actions targeting the city of Douma in the Damascus countryside. In the pictures, military columns equipped with medium and heavy weapons bearing the flag of Al-Quds Brigade, whose members are bombing the Douma area, where Jaysh al-Islam, which is affiliated with the armed Syrian opposition, is located<sup>93</sup>.



A military convoy belonging to the Al-Quds Brigade in the Douma area in Damascus countryside

In October 2018, media sources confirmed that Al-Quds Brigade had sent one of its leaders to Eastern Ghouta in the countryside of Damascus, with the aim of urging young people in that area to volunteer in its ranks. He arrived in Damascus from the city of Aleppo and was able to recruit about fifty young men, most of whom were wanted for compulsory service. The media sources indicated that Al-Quds Brigade provided the new volunteers with financial grants, and cards issued by the General Intelligence Division, that avoided the security attaché and arrest.

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<sup>93</sup> A video showing the participation of the Al-Quds Brigade in the hostilities in the Douma area in Eastern Ghouta, and the preparation of the operatives to bomb residential neighborhoods (upload date May 2018 and last seen on March 7, 2019).

<https://www.facebook.com/SyrianReporters/videos/1626952980753432>

Noting that the Brigade sent 30 young men from Eastern Ghouta to the coastal fronts to fight the Syrian opposition forces<sup>94</sup>.

## 9- Daraa Governorate

In June 2018, the Palestinian fighter from Neirab camp, Muhammad Seif al-Din, the military ambulance official in Al-Quds Brigade, was wounded in the battles taking place in Daraa, southern Syria, between the regime and the Syrian opposition forces.



Muhammad Seif al-Din, the military ambulance official in the Al-Quds Brigade, was wounded in the battles in Daraa Governorate

Al-Quds Brigade also participated alongside the regime forces in the battles that took place in the Yarmouk Basin against ISIS<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> Action Group, News about the recruitment of youths by the Palestinian Al-Quds Brigade in Eastern Ghouta into its ranks, October 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019).  
<https://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/10704/%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D9%88%D8%B7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B6%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B5%D9%81%D9%88%D9%81%D9%87>

<sup>95</sup> Footage of the guided missile unit of Al-Quds Brigade targeting ISIS operatives in the battles for the Yarmouk Basin (West Glen - Beni hill east of Sahem Al-Golan - Qusayr), August 2018 (last seen on March 7, 2019).  
<https://www.facebook.com/LWQDS/videos/1843174709096711>





Members of Al-Quds Brigade in the town of Al-Shajara in the countryside of Daraa governorate

## 10- Quneitra Governorate

In June 2018, fighters from Al-Quds Brigade arrived in Quneitra governorate, coinciding with military crowds brought in by Assad's forces to start a military operation. Pages close to the Brigade published a picture that collected the governor of Quneitra, Hammam Sadiq, with leaders of Al-Quds Brigade after their arrival to participate in the operations of the south.



Leaders of Al-Quds Brigade with the Quneitra Governor Hammam Sadek on June 3, 2018 (Facebook)

In May 2018, the official page of Al-Quds Brigade militia published pictures of its leader, Muhammad al-Saeed, standing on a hill overlooking the Hawaran Plain and the occupied area of the Golan. Sources in southern Syria reported that Al-Saeed's visit focused on the town of Hader, the cities of Al-Baath and Khan Arnabah, and border points with the occupied Golan. During his visit, Al-Saeed vowed to launch a major military operation on the area, which he called “the abstaining plain”‘ considering that the battle “has a different character, color and taste”, due to the proximity of Israel, pointing to the presence of 23 armed factions preparing for the battle.



Commander of the Al-Quds Brigade in Quneitra Governorate

### **Al-Quds Brigade, Extended Mission**

At the present time, Al-Quds Brigade controls the service and security facilities in Neirab and Handarat camps, and it is keen to provide services through it, even if these services are provided by UNRWA or other parties. On the security front, Al-Quds Brigade formed a security committee (security police group) inside Neirab camp, with the task of arresting and handing over wanted persons to the security services. On the cultural level, Muhammad al-Saeed put his hand on a

cultural office in the city of Aleppo called the “Palestinian Arab Club”, officially affiliated with the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees, making it a center for the Brigade propaganda and the “resistance alliance” that it serves. . As a result, the residents of the two Aleppo camps are now living in a state of intimidation; they express their views only in accordance with the orientations of Al-Quds Brigade, being the military force striking in it, with the “traditional Palestinian factions role in the camp being limited to attending traditional Palestinian occasions and celebrations and giving speeches, and setting up some paid educational courses, while not interfering with the services, and security inside the camp”, according to one of our witnesses. A good example of the regression of the role of the Palestinian factions in the areas under the control of Al-Quds Brigade, is the request of the Fatah al-Intifada movement from Al-Quds Brigade to reopen an office in Handart camp, which was affiliated with it by virtue of the presence of historical leaders of the movement in the camp. After it opened its office, witnesses from the region note that the logos and pictures in the office belong to the Brigade, more than to the movement itself.



Members of the security police group of Al-Quds Brigade

Moreover, the Brigade has become a representative of the two Aleppo camps on the occasions that are held outside the camps, the Brigade has begun to receive periodic visits from economic, social and religious actors to get closer to it. Which means that this militia has become a de facto force, through which Assad’s

authority governs the Palestinian presence in Aleppo with iron and fire, determines the path and the use of the Palestinian cause within its claims of resistance, and leads the Brigade to further involvement in Assad's authority wars to be its fuel.



A delegation consisting of religious and social activities in the city of Aleppo during their visit to the headquarters of the Al-Quds Brigade



Muhammad Al-Saeed in the meeting of the Syrian tribes and clans in the town of Ithriya in Aleppo



**The participation of Al-Quds Brigade in the Forum of Sheikhs and Notables of Syrian Tribes and Clans in Aleppo**

The role of this militia was strengthened after the Russian military forces located in the Hmeimim military base, in October 2016, honored their leaders. The Russian honor included the leadership of the militia and the leaders of the battalions and companies, where they were awarded the medals of "heroism, commando<sup>96</sup>". In August 2016, the commander of the Russian forces in Syria, Alexander Zhuravlev, awarded the commander of military operations in Al-Quds Brigade militia, Muhammad Rafea (The Godfather) the Medal of Heroism and Honor in recognition of his bravery and achievement in various combat missions<sup>97</sup>. The Russian Reconnaissance Command also awarded the commander of Al-Quds Brigade, Muhammad Al-Saeed, the Order of Victory after the announcement of the liberation of Yarmouk camp and Al-Hajar Al-Aswad on May 22, 2018.



Photo of the certificate of the Russian Medal awarded to Muhammad Rafea



The Medal of the Russian Championship is awarded to Muhammad Rafea



Russian officers honor their leaders And elements of Al-Quds Brigade



Russia awards Mohamed Al-Saeed the Order of Victory after the destruction with Assad's army of Yarmouk camp

<sup>96</sup> Kayali, Zain, "Russia is competing with Iran in Syria and buying the loyalty of Al-Quds Brigade", Baladi News - Aleppo, November 2017 (last visited on March 7, 2019).

<https://baladi-news.com/ar/articles/12081/%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85-%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A1-%22%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3%22>

<sup>97</sup> Al-Quds Brigade militia forces its operatives into the Ghouta battles, Orient Net, March 2018 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). [https://orient-news.net/ar/news\\_show/146664/0/-مبليشياالواء-القدس-تزوج-بعناصر-هافي-معارك-الغوطة-صور-فيديو](https://orient-news.net/ar/news_show/146664/0/-مبليشياالواء-القدس-تزوج-بعناصر-هافي-معارك-الغوطة-صور-فيديو)

The sense of the danger of this militia on the Palestinian presence in Syria and its impact on their present, future and choices increases, if we know that the Russian occupation has moved from the level of honoring this militia to the level of training, support and supervision of its elements directly. Russia has recently begun training members of Al-Quds Brigade in the city of Aleppo; on December 27, 2019, the Russian news agency, ANNA News, published on Twitter pictures of the training of Russian officers for members of Al-Quds Brigade in the city of Aleppo, and said that Russian trainers were teaching the members of Al-Quds Brigade on combat methods in Aleppo city. The pictures showed Russian elements training Al-Quds Brigade fighters in shooting and use of weapons.



Members of the Al-Quds Brigade are being trained by a Russian fighter

On February 9, some press websites circulated news that a private Russian security company called Vega/Vegacy was supervising the training of the Palestinian Al-Quds Brigade supporting Assad's forces, and published pictures of the training operations carried out by the company's elements. The security forces, displaying the emblems on the military uniforms they are wearing, prove their affiliation with the aforementioned company. It is worth noting that the security company Vegas was established in Cyprus in 2012. The company defines itself as an international company that provides a wide range of specialized services, with the main aim of identifying and preventing potential security

threats to individuals and infrastructure in vulnerable areas. The company has its official representative offices in Ukraine, Malta and Panama, and official agents in Greece, Russia, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Madagascar, and in many other countries in Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, according to the company's official website<sup>98</sup>.



A fighter from the Russian company, Vegas, oversees the training of members of the Al-Quds Brigade



A Russian fighter appears on his military uniform with the logo of the security company (VEGASY) during a training session for a member of Al-Quds Brigade to shoot

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<sup>98</sup> The official website of the security company Vega (last visited the website on March 7, 2019). <http://www.vegacyltd.com/ru/8-main/1-vega->



After the remarkable Russian interest in Al-Quds Brigade, and seeking to invest its leaders and elements as mercenaries, Assad's authority honored Al-Quds Brigade in its own way. Here is Muhammad Al-Saeed, at the headquarters of the Council of Ministers in Damascus, participating in approving economic plans with economists and industrialists like him, during a meeting held on February 12, 2019; Where the Prime Minister of the Assad Authority, Imad Khamis, met with owners of iron smelting factories, major scrap collectors, and militia leaders, to "develop the iron industry." Among them are Muhammad Al-Saeed, the leader of the dissolved "Suqur al-Sahraa" militia, Ayman Jaber, along with Subhi al-Qaterji, Wahib Maree and others as representatives of the private industrial sector, which is united by corruption and their "mafia" nature and other matters that we could not be sure of, which are left until we complete their data. During this meeting, it was decided to stop granting new licenses, to "develop the work of the scrap committee," according to Al-Najm TV, which showed a quick meeting with Muhammad Al-Saeed, identifying him as "industrialist"<sup>100</sup>. At the end of the meeting, Al-Saeed indicated that "the main objective of the meeting is to develop final solutions to the problems faced by the smelting, rolling and scrap factories, and to provide the requirements for restarting the suspended factories, indicating that the necessity of preventing smuggling and the possibility of importing and exporting scrap and forming a committee to calculate quantities and set prices was emphasized. suitable for national production"<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>100</sup> The General Authority for Radio and Television, a report on the Syrian satellite channel in the segment "Akhbar Baladna" entitled "The main directions in the next stage for the advancement of the iron industry, February 12, 2019. A previously mentioned source.

<sup>101</sup> SANA Agency, Eng. Khamis affirms the state's commitment to supporting the steel industry and overcoming the obstacles to operating the stopped factories, February 2019 (last visit to the website on March 7, 2019). <https://www.sana.sy/?p=893987>



Muhammad Al-Saeed during the meeting that took place at the headquarters of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in Damascus

## **Conclusion**

The study demonstrated the validity of its main hypothesis that Al-Quds Brigade was established by the Syrian regime, with a central participating and supportive role for the leadership of the General Command organization, with the support of the coalition of factions led by Talal Naji, to be a tool with a Palestinian name to kill, besiege and terrorize the rebellious Syrian people, allowing the leadership of the General Command, and the leaders of the factions affiliated with it, the opportunity to evade political and organizational responsibility for this role. It indicated that the Brigade gained its legitimacy in the Palestinian territories through the alliance of Palestinian factions loyal to Damascus, called the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces, which was calling for its activities under its name, and on behalf of the Baath Party division in Neirab Camp, and under the name of Al-Quds Brigade. As well as through the political cover that It is secured by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of the General Command, Talal Naji (Director of the Department of Education in the Palestine Liberation Organization), who is undisputedly the man of the Syrian regime in the Palestinian community; where he grants permissiveness, complicates agreements, commands and ends in this medium, and this is what has been proven in our study. Which means that he decided to establish Al-Quds Brigade and give it its job, in which key leaders from the Palestinian factions affiliated with Assad's authority participated. Some of whom had initially rushed to try to fulfill the role played by the Brigade. This means that the leadership of the General Command, represented by its Secretary General Ahmed Jibril and its Assistant General Secretary Talal Naji, is politically and legally responsible for the violations committed by this militia. Along with its leaders, regardless of the Brigade's survival or dissolution and termination of its services.

In the context of proving the validity of the hypothesis of the study, we analyzed the policy of the General Command leadership, through which it was able to fulfill the function entrusted to it by the Assad authority. This policy was manifested in the formulation of an alliance of Palestinian factions under the name of the Alliance of Palestinian Resistance Forces, the political support for the participation of the Palestine Liberation Army in the Syrian war, and the continuation of forming military militias with Palestinian names, and to satisfy the leadership of the PLO.

This policy was also manifested in re-communicating with actors and personalities who joined the opposition and working to assimilate them for the benefit of the regime, benefiting from the policy of collective punishment pursued by the Assad regime, the opposition's mismanagement of its affairs and the relations with the people. And the use of networks of agents with civilian names, some of whom worked to detain activists and interrogate them illegally and in contravention of the United Nations principles on imprisonment and detention and their conditions.

This policy was also manifested in participating in the regime's battles directly when needed, with a minimum of publicity, and often discreetly until after the collapse of the Palestinian people's pressure in Syria, as a result of the destruction of most of their camps by Assad regime and its allies, besieging them, starving them, displacing them, and expelling nearly half of them out of Syria. As a result of the decline in the pressure of the leadership of the PLO, which began to search for political gains in relation to the weakened Assad's authority, and organizational gains among the Palestinians in Syria, whose wills were broken for a while, and they became governed by need. In addition to continuing to form military militias with Palestinian names that are not shy about participating openly in the battles of Assad's authority.

And the fact that Al-Quds Brigade is the heaviest of those militias in terms of participation, extension, number and kits, and consequently violations. In the study, we focused on tracing the Brigade participation in the war in most of the Syrian governorates, and on the violations it committed against civilians in the Neirab and Handarat camps in Aleppo. Relying on monitoring, observation, and in-depth testimonies. We also analyzed the structure of this militia by probing the circumstances of its inception and the circumstances surrounding that helped to produce it, as a militia structure that implicated the people of the Palestinian camps in Aleppo in the Syrian war, and is hostile to the surrounding, by reviewing the stages and the stations through which the Aleppo camp passed, and to highlight its impact in creating the appropriate environment for the production of opinion trends, the fruits of which were reaped by the Assad's authority in charging tension and mobilizing for the benefit of a militia that emerged from the moral bottom of the camps. We reviewed how the role of this militia was strengthened and established as an enforcer and a de-facto force in the camps, through the honor and support received from the Iranian and Russian occupation forces, Assad regime, Palestinian factions, and local and international civil institutions.

In the context of our endeavor to answer the question of responsibility within the Brigade's structure, we knew its "mafia" structure, where the power is concentrated in the hands of three main poles: "the father of this mafia" is Muhammad Al-Saeed, and the authority is shared by his deputy and the military official, Adnan Al-Sayed (the position held by two brothers from the "Godfather" family, the first was killed and the second was arrested by the Syrian security services), which limits the responsibility within the brigade for its violations to these three.

The study also monitored indications of the insistence of Al-Quds Brigade to take control of the camps, and to use their residents as a fuel to continue the war, including the establishment of training courses in Handart camp recently. While we monitored the development of this militia, we approached, without much focus, on the networks of corruption that its leaders woven in search of wealth.

And based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries stipulated in Article (27) of the Palestinian National Charter, in which it is stated: “The Palestine Liberation Organization cooperates with all Arab countries, each according to its capabilities, and is committed to impartiality among them, in light of the requirements of the battle of liberation and on the basis of that, and does not interfere in the internal affairs of any Arab country”. Which was violated by the organization of the General Command, the member of the PLO; And based on the principle of the responsibility of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the political forces affiliated with it and stipulated in Article (26) of the Charter The Palestinian National Authority, in which it was stated: “The Palestine Liberation Organization, which represents the forces of the Palestinian revolution, is responsible for the movement of the Palestinian Arab people in their struggle to retrieve their homeland, liberate it, return to it, and exercise the right to self-determination, in all military, political, and financial fields, and in all other fields, and what the Palestinian cause requires at the Arab and international levels”; And based on the fact that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (referred to in our school as the General Command Organization) is a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization PLO, and based on the fact that Talal Naji, Assistant Secretary-General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, is Director of the Department of Education in the PLO, and that he led the aforementioned violations while he was on top of his work, and based on the signature of the authority of limited self-rule, which is on behalf of the PLO, on

the Charter of the International Criminal Court, We find that the victims and their representatives have the right to resort to the International Criminal Court to prosecute Talal Naji and the rest of the leaders of the General Command Organization, the leaders of Al-Quds Brigade militia, and the Palestine Liberation Organization within the limits of their aforementioned responsibility mentioned above. From the date of January 1, 2015, the day the United Nations International Criminal Court announced that it had received a declaration filed by the Palestinian government accepting the jurisdiction of the court, knowing that in January 2, 2015 The Palestinian government handed over to the United Nations documents related to its accession The Rome Statute governing the work of the International Criminal Court.