

# FEDERAL PUBLIC PROSECUTOR GENERAL

AT THE FEDERAL COURT OF JUSTICE  
- Press Office -

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Arrest of Four Suspected Members of a Syrian Militia and a Suspected Syrian Intelligence Officer for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes

Today (3 July 2024), the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office had the stateless Syrian  
Palestinians

Jihad **A.**  
Mahmoud **A.**  
Sameer **S.** and  
Wael **S.**

as well as the Syrian national

Mazhar **J.**

taken into custody in execution of arrest warrants issued by the Investigating Judge at  
the Federal Court of Justice on 6 June 2024. Jihad A., Mazhar J. and Sameer S. were  
arrested in Berlin; Mahmoud A. was arrested in Frankenthal (Palatinate) and Wael S.  
near Boizenburg (Mecklenburg-West Pomerania). The residence of another suspect, not  
arrested, was searched in Essen.

The arrested individuals are strongly suspected of killing and attempting to kill civilians,  
qualified as crimes against humanity and war crimes (section 7 para. 1 no. 1, section 8

para. 1 no. 1 of the German Code of Crimes against International Law [VStGB], sections 22, 23 of the German Criminal Code [StGB]). In addition, Mahmoud A., Mazhar J., Sameer S. and Wael S. are accused of torture (section 7 para. 1 no. 5, section 8 para. 1 no. 3 VStGB), in case of Mahmoud A. and Mazhar J. in conjunction with deprivation of liberty (section 7 para. 1 no. 9 VStGB). Mahmoud A. is likewise alleged to have committed crimes against humanity in the form of deprivation of liberty resulting in death (section 7 para. 1 no. 9, para. 3 VStGB) and war crimes against property (section 9 para. 1 VStGB).

In essence, the arrest warrants set out the following facts:

At least from the end of April 2011 onwards, the Syrian regime systematically resorted to brutal force against critics. The objective was to suppress the protest movement from early on and to intimidate the population. Accordingly, actual and presumed political opponents were arrested across the country, detained, tortured and, in many cases, killed. Early 2012, the tensions in Syria escalated into a civil war between, in particular, the Syrian armed forces and armed opposition groups.

Jihad A., Mahmoud A., Sameer S. and Wael S. were affiliated with the armed militia "Free Palestine Movement" (FPM) in Syria since no later than spring 2011. At the time, the militia exercised control over Al Yarmouk on behalf of the Syrian regime. This district in Damascus had emerged from a Palestinian refugee camp and was predominantly inhabited by Palestinians. The Syrian regime cordoned off Al Yarmouk completely since July 2013 resulting in a shortage of food, water, and medical supplies. FPM closely collaborated with the Syrian Military Intelligence Service, in particular with its Branches 227 and 235. Mazhar J. was a member of Branch 235, the so-called Palestine Branch.

All suspects participated in the violent crackdown on a peaceful anti-government protest in Al Yarmouk on 13 July 2012. They and other accessories specifically targeted the civilian protesters, shooting at them. Six individuals succumbed to their wounds while other victims were, in part, seriously injured.

Furthermore, Mahmoud A., Mazhar J., Sameer S. and Wael S. physically abused civilians from Al Yarmouk severely and repeatedly. The events occurred between mid-2012 and 2014, *inter alia*, at checkpoints, which the FPM and other pro-regime militias had established at the district's entrances or exits. The victims' heads were

punched with fists and beaten with rifle butts or they were brutalised with kicks. Mahmoud A. turned one individual, who had been arrested, over to the Syrian Military Intelligence Service to incarcerate and torture him. Moreover, he forced a woman at a checkpoint – also threatening to rape her – to pay with family jewels for the release of her minor son. Mazhar J. also ordered the arrest of a man and abused the victim with his own hands in the prison of Branch 235.

On 16 April 2013, members of Branch 227 killed at least 41 civilians in a scheduled mass execution in the Damascene district of At-Tadamon. Three of the victims had previously been arrested at a checkpoint in Al Yarmouk and turned over to Branch 227 by Mahmoud A. and other accessories.

The Berlin State Criminal Police Office and the Rhineland-Palatinate Criminal Police Office are tasked with the investigation. Officers of the Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine Westphalia State Criminal Police Offices, assisted by the Federal Criminal Police and Europol, were also involved in today's arrests and searches. Another three alleged FPM members suspected inter alia of participation in the crackdown on the protest in Al Yarmouk on 13 July 2012 were arrested in Sweden at the same time. The Swedish Prosecution Authority is in charge of the proceedings against those individuals. The Joint Investigation Team "Caesar" coordinated the investigations.

The suspects arrested in Germany are due to be brought before the Investigating Judge at the Federal Court of Justice who will read out the arrest warrants to them and decide on pre-trial detention. The arraignment will take place today and tomorrow.