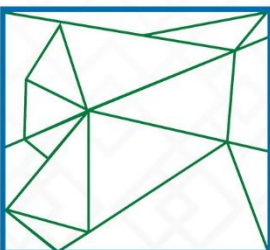


How is “Abu Amsha” Making Millions of Dollars Every Year?





How is “Abu Amsha” Making Millions of Dollars Every Year?

Royalties imposed on Shaykh al-Hadid locals, as well as extortions accompanying arbitrary arrests and kidnappings are largely Muhammad al-Jasim (Abu Amsha’s) main source of wealth, backed by illegal investments his five brothers run in Syria, Turkey, and Libya





Executive Summary

This investigation sheds light on the various sources financing the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), at a factional level, and its commander, Muhammad al-Jasim (Abu Amsha), at an individual level, which help both the armed group and its leadership maintain a tight military grip in Syria, especially in the area of Shaykh al-Hadid, in Afrin region, which is referred locally by its Kurdish residents as Şiyê.

The investigation provides corroborated information about the sources of Abu Amsha's personal fortune and the many illegal "investments" he manages in Syria, Turkey, and [Libya](#), depending on his five brothers and a small circle of close personalities.

The investigation reveals that Abu Amsha's wealth, and that of his faction, comes mainly from the pockets of civilians in [Shaykh al-Hadid district](#). Locals are subjected to a systemic pattern of extortion. They are arbitrarily arrested or abducted and then asked to pay ransoms in exchange for their release. They are also robbed of their properties, residential or commercial, which are seized under the pretext of the owners' affiliation with the Kurdish Autonomous Administration that remained in control of the area until March 2018. Testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) confirm that Abu Amsha ordered many of these violations, which are supervised by his brothers and executed by his faction's fighters.

In addition to extortion and property appropriations, Abu Amsha's wealth for the large part rests on large-scale crop confiscations or taxes on the local population. Abu Amsha accumulated the greatest sum of his money, estimated at millions of dollars, after Afrin region was [occupied](#) in March 2018. Abu Amsha seized almost all the olive yield and other crops cultivated by Kurdish farmers in 2018, while he continued to impose taxes and royalties on farmers over the following harvest seasons, which amounted to 25% of the harvest value.

Furthermore, in the context of agricultural abuses, Abu Amsha resorted to other methods to burden the area's original inhabitants with additional royalties. Abu Amsha's faction established control and monopoly over the springs in Shaykh al-Hadid district and coerced Kurdish farmers to pay extra sums of money in return for irrigation water.

In addition to the sources behind Abu Amsha's growing finances, the information STJ obtained through 26 extensive interviews reveal the extent of his annual revenues, which exceed the 30,000,000 USD mark.¹

The interviewees, among them victims and informed military figures, also recounted that Abu Amsha has assigned high-ranking positions within the faction to several of his brothers, to whom he also delegated the management of his projects and investments in Syria, Turkey, and Libya. Moreover, the testimonies demonstrate that Abu Amsha's brothers and his closer relations do not only "run his enterprises," but that they are also directly associated with a wide range of the violations. Additionally, they partake in acts of embezzlement, as they continue to withhold portions of the salaries dedicated to the faction's fighters in Syria, Libya, and [Azerbaijan](#) previously.

¹ This number does not include stable funds, channeled every 50 days, and dedicated to the faction as a military entity, each payment of which nearly amounts to 3,000,000 Turkish Lira.





Additionally, Abu Amsha's brothers and associates had found a human trafficking network, are involved in the drug trade, and are running a network for smuggling banned goods and materials through the Syria-Turkey borders.

Notably, after the U.S. Department of the Treasury [designated](#) Ahrar al-Sharqiya/ Free Men of the East on 28 July 2021, there have been rising calls for widening the scope of sanctions to include other armed groups, which continue to perpetrate large-scale violations with impunity in the region. The Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC) [demanded](#) sanctioning several groups, including the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat) of the Syrian National Army (SNA). The SJAC stressed that the al-Amshat's commander is engaged in a variety of serious crimes, including sexual violence and looting.

Methodology

For the purposes of this investigation, field researchers with STJ conducted 26 interviews. The sources include civilian residents, and civilian merchants, who were personally subjected to reported abuses at the hands of al-Amshat's fighters. Additionally, the field researchers reached out to aid workers, from humanitarian organizations operating in Shaykh al-Hadid district. They reported to STJ the mechanisms used to divert aid towards fighters and their families in the area, at the expense of those in need.

In addition to conducting interviews, STJ matched information obtained from the sources with complaints that other civilians filed to the Military Police, or the faction's Security Office directly. Some of the complaints were referred to the Joint Restitution Commission in Afrin and its countryside. STJ opted for the comparison to identify the scale of reported violations, as well as the patterns underlying them, because civilians had filed complaints, estimated with [hundreds](#), against al-Amshat faction alone.

STJ's team carried out a second cross-checking process to information collected from the sources. They matched the interviewees' accounts with the information compiled first-hand by field researchers in Shaykh al-Hadid, especially data about and the locations of Abu Amsha's local business, including a coffee shop and a mall, in addition to a few of the investments he runs in Turkey.

The team also traced links between collected information and violations already [documented](#) and aggregated into STJ's database, particularly [arbitrary arrests and abductions](#) of original inhabitants for the sake of ransoms, and royalties imposed on olive yield and other crops.

Furthermore, STJ obtained several testimonies from first-rank military leaders in the Second Corps and from the Al-Amshat faction itself, who are inside in Syria, Libya, and Turkey. They provided the organization with verified information about the sums of money embezzled by Abu Amsha and his close circle from the support and funding provided to the faction in Libya and Azerbaijan, in addition to the ongoing embezzlement from the financial lump sums granted to the faction, delivered every 50 days on average.



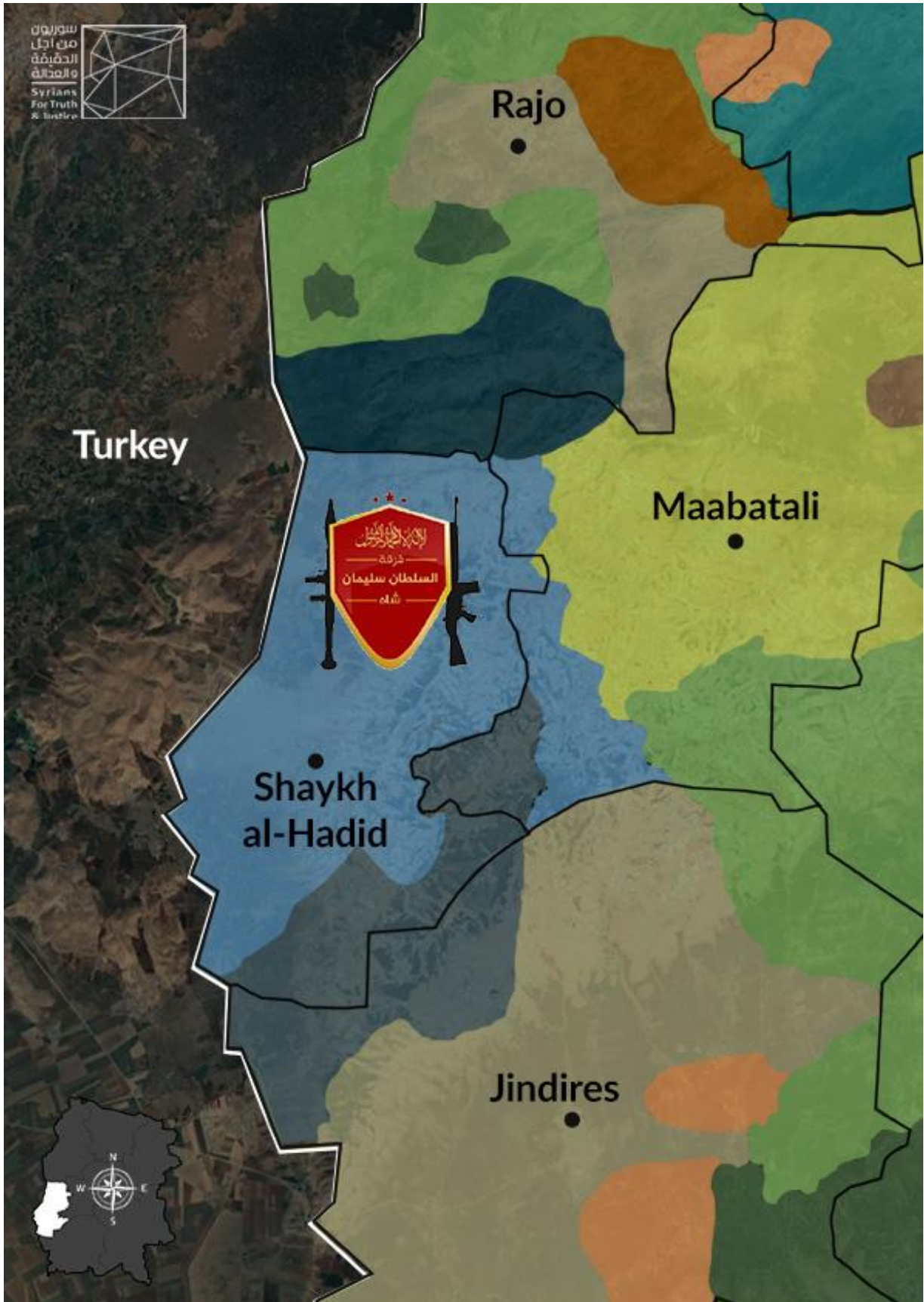


Image (2) – A map which shows the areas under the control of the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade.





The Syrian Interim Government



**Head of the Syrian Interim Government
Abdurrahman Mustafa**



**Defense Deputy
Brigadier General
Hassan Hamada**



**Second Deputy Chief of Staff
Colonel Fadlallah Al-Haji**



**First Deputy Chief of Staff
Brigadier General Adnan
Al-Ahmad**

Fourth Corps

Fifth Corps

Sixth Corps

Seventh Corps



**Third Corps
Abu Ahmad Nour
Leader of the Levant
Front**



**Second Corps
Colonel Ahmed Othman
Deputy Commander of
Sultan Murad**



**First Corps
Colonel Moataz
Elite Army Commander**



**Commander in Chief Suleiman Shah Brigade
Muhammad Hussein al-Jasim (Abu
Amsha)**



**Deputy Commander in Chief
Military Office Head
Omar Melhem**



**Deputy Commander in Chief
Military Office Head
Malik Hussein al-Jasim
(Abu Siraj)**



**Head of the Economic Bureau
in Turkey
Fadl Hussein al-Jasim**



**Head of Security Office
Hassan Naqrash**



**Head of the Security Office
Walid Hussein al-Jasim**



**Head of Public Relations
Hussam Abboud (Abu Jaafar
Al-Hamwi)**



**Military Leader
Younis Hussein al-Jasim**



**General Administration
Muhammed Hussain
Dughaim**



**Military Leader in Libya
Basil Hussein al-Jasim**

Note: The five Al-Jasim brothers are considered leaders with unlimited powers. The rest of the leaders are considered only leaders with limited powers.



Muhammad Hussein al-Jasim (Abu Amsha)

According to STJ's sources, Abu Amsha was born in 1985. He hails from Jossa village, in Hayalin district, in the northern Hama countryside.² He worked as a tractor and combine driver before the Syrian revolution. He is married to three women. Against their lineage, which is al-Na'im tribe, Abu Amsha and several of his fighters promote themselves as having Turkman roots.

STJ's sources indicated that the larger segment of the faction's fighters is from various areas across Hama's countryside, Idlib's countryside, Rif Dimashq (Damascus countryside), and Homs' countryside. One of the sources recounted that Abu Amsha was granted Turkish citizenship, under the name Muhammed Eljasem. At odds with his claims about the Turkmen descent, the source added that Abu Amsha himself said that his mother's name is Guroub, which is an Arabic name, and that he was born on 1 January 1985.

Abu Amsha's Five Wingmen

Abu Amsha relies on his five brothers almost entirely to manage and expand his business in Syria, Turkey, and Libya. Four of his brothers, all of them born in Syria, hold high-ranking positions within the faction, assisted by a small circle of Abu Amsha's relatives and acquaintances.

Notably, the Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) of the Syrian Islamic Council ([SIC](#)) convicted the faction and its commander, following an investigation into violations attributed to both. Based on the findings of the investigation the GRC issued a decision that provided for decommissioning Abu Amsha and barring him from any "revolutionary positions" in the future. The decommissioning decision also covered two of his brothers and three key faction figures.

A. Malik Hussein al-Jasim (Abu Siraj)

Malik Hussein al Jasim, born in the village of Jossa in 1983, was his brother's, Abu Amsha, second within the faction's command chain, and his strong arm. He managed the faction's political and military affairs down to the minutest details and was Abu Amsha's advisor on all related issues.

The GRC's decision forced Abu Amsha to [remove](#) Abu Siraj, and their brother Seif, from their positions. However, he proceeded with the removal only after Fahim Issa, commander of the Sultan Murad Division, assured him that they will be released shortly and cleared of the charges leveled against them. The brothers were arrested on charges of corruption and perpetration of several violations on 25 December 2021. Both are still in prison.

Commenting on the corruption charges, a member of the Afrin-Based Restitution Commission told STJ:

"Abu Siraj is the second person to profiteer the most from the faction after Abu Amsha. He was responsible for looting, thefts, abductions, and ransom demands in Shaykh al-Hadid, all carried out under the direct orders of his brother Abu Amsha, as shown by the files, testimonies, and records we personally managed to check. I do not believe that Abu Siraj was brought before court as Abu Amsha's scapegoat. As far as I know,

² Other sources track Abu Amsha's birthplace to A'mrin town, administratively affiliated with al-Suqaylabiyah, in the northwestern countryside of Hama province.





given the information I have, the commander of the Sultan Murad Division, [Fahim Issa], provided Abu Amsha massive guarantees that should Abu Siraj be tried, he will be cleared off the case without conviction. This is against the efforts of [Ahmad Nour], commander of the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya, who was trying to defang Abu Amsha by putting Abu Siraj in prison.”



Image (3)- Malik Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Siraj.

B. Basil Hussein al-Jasim

Basil Hussein al Jasim, nicknamed Alemdar, was born in Jossa in 1986, is the military commander of the Al-Amshat sub-group in Libya. He manages the group’s camps, headquarters, guard points, and front lines there. He maintains close ties with military and political Libyan officials.

To obtain additional information on Alemdar’s activities, STJ reached out to a commander of one of the faction’s Libya-stationed sub-groups. He narrated:

“Alemdar has great influence here. He was directly in charge of the pillage operations and looting of civilian properties during combat with the Libyan National Army. These operations were under his immediate command. Currently, he is running human smuggling drug trades.”





Image (4)- Basil Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Alemdar.

C. Younis Hussein al-Jasim

Younis Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Hamza, was born in Jossa in 1993, is a first-rank commander within al-Amshat faction. An official in charge of the faction's training camps recounted that Abu Hamza is directly in charge of human smuggling trade inside Afrin, and smuggling smoke, phone devices, and other materials from Syria to Turkey. The goods are not transported through the territories of Shaykh al-Hadid, but rather through other smuggling routes.

The above-cited source told STJ that Abu Hamza is famous for his entourage, which consists of disciplined bodyguards, identified by their military uniforms, U.S.-made weapons, and luxury vehicles.





Image (5)- Younis Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Hamza.

D. Walid Hussein al-Jasim

Walid Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Seif, was born in Jossa in 1987, is another of Abu Amsha's brothers. A commander of one of the faction's sub-groups narrated that Seif is his brothers' "spoiled boy". He is not assigned any serious or challenging duties. He was removed from his position within the faction and imprisoned with his brother Abu Siraj following the aforementioned investigation. The commander added:

"Seif was Abu Amsha and his brother's 'precious child.' He was the most fixated on luxury and is famous for loving nightlife. He visited Turkey frequently. Abu Siraj used to delegate him with the operations of abduction, *tashlih* (mugging), and ransoms. However, all the duties he was assigned were not difficult and did not involve dangerous places. Naturally, the GRC had leveled several charges against him, mostly related to women and sexual assault."



Image (6)- Walid Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Seif.

E. Fadi Hussein al-Jasim

Fadi Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Malik, was born in Jossa in 1979, does not hold an official position within the faction but oversees Abu Amsha's Turkish investments. He moved to Turkey permanently after he obtained Turkish citizenship, according to an account STJ obtained from a member of the faction's media office.





Image (7)- Fadi Hussein al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Malik.

Abu Amsha's Wealth: Illegal Sources of Income and Power Abuse

Profiteering from Violations in Shaykh al-Hadid

In Shaykh al-Hadid district, an intricate and manifold pattern of violations against civilians is Abu Amsha's source of wealth. These violations include the arbitrary arrest of civilians and conditioning their release with lucrative sums of money paid to the faction in ransoms, the confiscation of civilian homes, and then coercing owners to pay the faction money to recover their properties, tax imposition on agricultural crops and trade activities, as well as the seizure of olive mills and gas stations.

A. Arrest and Extortion

Victims STJ interviewed for the purposes of this investigation reported that the faction fighters carried out the collective raid and arrest drives across Shaykh al-Hadid district to collect money from residents. The victims added that the fighters had often bargained with the detainees themselves over the money they were supposed to pay in exchange for their release.

The sources stressed that the larger sum of the money taken from people went into Abu Amsha's pockets, while commanders of the fighter groups that carried out those drives also maintained shares of the ransoms.

Commenting on the gain-aimed arrests and the value of collected profits, a source from the Afrin-based Military Police narrated:





"Since they controlled Shaykh al-Hadid and up to mid-2021, Abu Amsha refused to hand over the people he detained to the Military Police. Back then, we always received complaints from the locals about the arrests and the sums of money the faction demanded in exchange for releasing detainees. I can confirm that the arrests were not random. Abu Amsha and his fighters carried out secret studies about the financial standing of the locals and those who had relatives outside Syria. This class of civilians was repeatedly targeted."

The source added:

"The average sums the faction demanded was 1000 USD. In one case, we verified that the faction demanded 25,000 USD in exchange for the release of several individuals from the same family. The family did actually pay that sum."

Notably, STJ documented over 2000 [arrests](#) of civilian original residents across Afrin, all carried out after Turkish forces and armed opposition groups jointly controlled the region in 2018. Several of the arrested people provided testimonies that corroborate the violations above.

B. House Confiscations

After the faction established control over Shaykh al-Hadid district, Abu Amsha allowed the faction's fighters and their families to stay in the homes of Kurdish residents, who were forced to flee during Turkey's military operations. Owners who were allowed to return had to pay different amounts of money to the faction's security office, which is run by Abu Amsha's brother.

One of the faction's fighters, who currently resides in one of the displaced residents' houses, narrated:

"Abu Amsha gave me and a group of fighters in my charge permission to live in one of the villages in Shaykh al-Hadid. However, a while later, several of the owners of the houses showed up and asked to live in their houses. They demanded that we empty the houses and hand them over. The fighters refused to leave the houses, of course, and some even asked for amounts varying between 3,000 and 5,000 USD to leave houses. We asked the owners to refer to the faction's security office to resolve the issue. There, the families were shocked because the office asked for 3,000 per house to allow owners to get their homes back, on top of the money the fighters living in those houses requested. In addition to money, some fighters asked owners to find their families substitute housing."

Furthermore, in an exclusive testimony obtained by STJ, a resident of Sheikh Al-Hadid stated that the faction imposed a "monthly royalty" on the owners of houses in which only one person was currently living, often due to the displacement of other members of their family out of Afrin. In their testimony, the witness told STJ:

"The first monthly payment was 10,000 Syrian pounds, or else the owner of the house would be forced to vacate their house without taking any of their belongings and give it to the faction. The faction would then give it to Arab families coming into the area, after arbitrarily seizing the house and evicting its original owner."

The source continued:





"They told me that I had no choice. Either pay the royalty, which varies from person to person, bring back my wife and children who were living outside Syria, or remarry; otherwise, they would force me to remarry."

C. Taxing Crops

Field researchers with STJ have been collecting extensive data on the royalties the faction imposed on crop harvesting, particularly olive, [between 2018 and 2021](#). In 2018, the first year of the faction's control, the faction confiscated all types of yields from farmers and owners, including olive harvests. Additionally, the faction recruited people displaced from other regions across Syria to the area as harvesters, for collecting olive and wheat. Abu Amsha claimed all the profits personally, and nothing was retained by the faction.

In 2019, the faction imposed specific royalties on olive trees, demanding 8 USD per fruiting olive trees, and 4 USD per less fruiting ones.

In 2020, the faction reduced the royalties to 4 USD per fruiting olive tree.

In 2021, the faction opted for imposing general royalties, amounting to 25% of the value of the olive yield and oil production, regardless of the production size.

STJ obtained these figures from the area's locals and persons who had access to the faction's tax records and harvest books.

As for the destination of the collected taxes, a member from the Restitution Commission told STJ that the larger portion of the crop taxes ends with Abu Amsha, not the faction. He narrated:

"I examined the harvest book kept by the faction's Financial Office. The latest tax that Abu Amsha imposed on the agricultural production of Kurdish farmers is 25% of the value of the harvest, regardless of the crop type and amount. For instance, the faction confiscated 250 K of olive oil out of a ton that one of the farmers produced, and so on and so forth."

The source added:

"Through assessing the harvest book, I noticed that Abu Amsha and his faction managed to collect approximately 15,000,000 USD in taxes over the first three years of control alone, collected from the olive trees and yield only. I confirm that the actual profits are far greater because some Kurdish farmers refused to pay the tax and, in retaliation, the faction confiscated their entire olive crops."

He added:

"Kurdish residents and owners are coerced into paying taxes by force and at gunpoint. Those who obstinate, face the known fate of arrest and torture, or are forced to sell [their plots of land] under gun threat. And then, these plots are handed over under the *Daman* System (a local form of land transaction, whereby the land is rented out in exchange for cultivation or taking care of the crops), to Arab IDPs, who settled in the area after 2018. Should the farmer survive all these coercions, the faction bulldozes olive trees and damages the crops."





Another local source from Shaykh al-Hadid commented on the information provided in the previous testimony by providing additional details about the destruction of the region's olive trees. The witness told STJ:

"After the olive trees are razed, arbitrarily vandalized and their branches cut, the members of the faction sell them as firewood. The olive trees in the area are between 80 to 200 years old."

Agricultural abuses and profiteering do not stop at crops. Abu Amsha has also confiscated oil pressing facilities. The interviewed sources told STJ that there are 18 olive mills in Shaykh al-Hadid. Abu Amsha expropriated two and is operating them his own interests. He forced farmers to press their olive yield exclusively in these mills for several seasons before he returned the facilities to their owners. Moreover, the faction dismantled three olive oil production lines and sold them, allowing the remaining mills to continue working only in return for monthly taxes.

In an exclusive testimony, a Kurdish mill owner told STJ that he paid al-Amshat faction taxes amounting to least 80,000 USD since it controlled the area and imposed royalties on owners in 2018. He added that seven mills are out of service because owners could not afford the accumulated taxes.

D. Royalties on Irrigation Water

According to affected district residents and farmers, Abu Amsha controlled the main water source which they used for crop irrigation. He denied farmers access to water unless they paid annual taxes.

A different source from the Afrin Restitution Commission told STJ:

"According to the record kept by the faction's Financial Office, and which he managed to examine, Abu Amsha sells farmers an hour of pumped water for 5,000 Syrian Pounds (SYP). With this, the faction manages to collect thousands of dollars every year.'"

He added:

"Should the farmer refuse to pay money for irrigating his vegetable and other crops, the faction confiscates his plot of land and puts it the charge of another former, under the *daman* system. The faction then takes crop and irrigation taxes from that other farmer."

In an exclusive testimony obtained by STJ, a local resident said that Al-Amshat faction, in addition to taking control over natural water sources, imposed royalties on the owners of wells. Residents were denied the right to draw water from their own wells to irrigate their trees and crops. The source confirmed that there are dozens of wells in the Shaykh al-Hadid area.

E. Shop Confiscations and Fuel Business Monopoly

One of Shaykh al-Hadid's affected civilian merchants told STJ that Abu Amsha dominates the fuel trade almost entirely. He took over a [gas station](#) in the area on the pretext that its owner belongs to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). He then banned the area's people from trading in fuel. The merchant recounted:





"The faction invests in the fuel trade. They bring fuel into the district from the areas held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and sell it at the gas station they seized. In case a civilian or a merchant purchases fuel from sources outside Shaykh al-Hadid, the faction confiscates it. They use pretexts such as IED in the fuel barrels . . . the usual security pretexts . . . this is how they dominated the market."

According to information STJ collected, the faction expanded property confiscations to include shops owned by absent people, who fled the area during previous military operations. The faction then rented these shops for monthly sums ranging between 100 and 250 USD, based on the shop's area and location. Abu Amsha also claims the profits.

Human Trafficking and Drug Trade inside Syria

A. Drug Trade

STJ's collected information demonstrates that al-Amshat faction participates in the drug trade in Shaykh al-Hadid district, as well as in the areas where deployed groups are stationed in Libya. Additionally, a person called Abu Rasha, who is simultaneously Abu Amsha's relative, partner, and commander within the faction had lately discussed a dispute he had with Abu Amsha. Abu Rasha revealed that Abu Amsha is engaged in the drug trade and other violations. Abu Rasha's disclosure made [headlines](#) in local media.

Following leads on the revelations, STJ managed to verify some of the details pertaining to the drug trade, but not the other accusations of violations both commanders exchanged. STJ reached out to an informed source from within the faction, who narrated:

"The media war between Abu Rasha and Abu Amsha brought many violations to light. However, I was a witness to Abu Rasha's involvement in drug trafficking, and I was with the group that raided one of his warehouses. All the photos the [al-Amshat] faction published about the drug incident are genuine."

Complementing the source's account, a security source, also from within the faction, said:

"Abu Amsha and Abu Rasha had some sort of an agreement on drug trade. Abu Amsha was entitled to certain shares of the trade revenues. Later, he learned that Abu Rasha was stealing it and that the trade's actual returns were much greater than those he stated. This ignited the disputes."

He added:

"However, money was not the real reason behind the dispute. In fact, Abu Amsha raided Abu Rasha's warehouse and headquarters, acting on a report by the Turkish intelligence that Abu Rasha had transported a shipment of drugs into Turkey, which is strictly forbidden by Abu Amsha. He does not tolerate crossing this line. Abu Amsha plays the guarantor that no smuggling, of whatever kind, would be conducted from his areas of control into Turkey. Abu Rasha crossed the red lines, so Abu Amsha had to sacrifice him."

B. Smuggling

Younis al-Jasim, Abu Amsha's brother who goes by the name Abu Hamza, oversees smuggling operations to and from Turkey, including humans and goods, particularly cellphones and





cigarettes. He conducts these operations from other areas where he has influence, especially Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê area.

Several sources from within the faction reported to STJ that smuggling operations are conducted by a number of sub-groups within the faction, all micro-managed by Abu Hamza. None of these sub-groups is allowed to bypass smuggling orders and plans. The sources added that Abu Hamza gains 200 to 300 USD for each mobile phone smuggled into Turkey, preferably iPhone and Samsung. The sources stressed that the profits of smuggled foreign cigarettes coming from Iraq are massive and are estimated at hundreds of thousands. As for human smuggling, operations are always destined towards Turkey, from the areas of Azaz, Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad. The faction demands a fee varying between 600 to 1,200 USD from each person wishing to illegally cross to Turkey.

A local resident of Shaykh al-Hadid told STJ that the faction asked them for 8000 USD to help them cross into Turkey to conduct an interview with a European consulate to complete documents to reunite their family, which consists of two adults and three children. Payment had to be made before they were smuggled across the border. The source confirmed that many families had used the smuggling route.

C. Misappropriation of Funds

According to a military source (a first-ranked leader within the Second Corps), explains that Abu Amsha exaggerates the numbers of his faction's members to the countries which support it. Currently, al-Amshat's man-power is claimed to be 3,500 fighters, however, the actual number of the faction's fighters ranges between 1,800 and 2,000 members.

Another source, a leader in the faction, said that Abu Amsha acquired sums of money that a security company provided to the faction in return for its members fighting in Libya.

D. Stealing Funds Dedicated to Mercenaries Deployed to Azerbaijan

Al-Amshat faction deployed nearly a thousand of its fighters to partake in the former combat in the Karabakh region, on the side of the Azerbaijani forces. In return, a security company provided Abu Amsha with approximately 3,000,000 USD in exchange for the services of his fighters for a period of 45 days.

The information obtained by STJ indicates that the security company designated each fighter 3000 USD. However, Abu Amsha paid his fighters sums varying between 1000 and 1200 USD only, withholding the remaining portions, and claiming they will be invested in financing the faction and buying it weapons. Commenting on salary deductions, a military commander who fought in Azerbaijan recounted:

"When the conflict started in the Karabakh region, combat in Libya had faded. However, there was a substantial number of us there, because the war was expected to rekindle at any moment. Addressing the conflict in Azerbaijan, Turkey asked for an Ankara meeting with the commanders [Abu Amsha, Fahim Issa, and Saif Abu Baker]. During the meeting, each of the commander's factions was asked to deploy a thousand fighters promptly. Abu Amsha indeed gathered the largest number of recruits he could from Syria. But the recruits were surprised by the destination, believing they were bound for Libya. There were riots at the Hawar Kilis crossing. In response, Abu Amsha shot several fighters in the legs, ordered the shaving of the heads of several of them, and put the situation under control. He then transferred the fighters to Azerbaijan."





The source added:

"[A security company] paid 3,000,000 USD in fighter salaries, but Abu Amsha paid salaries ranging from 1,000 to 1,200 USD only and gave the wounded and families of the dead compensation between 1,000 and 1,200 USD only. A few people only were paid compensations."

The source added:

"Abu Amsha retained the remaining amount, alleging he would use it to buy arms for the faction and finance its fight against the regime forces, but he did not buy any weapons. In fact, Abu Amsha did not buy any weapons at all over the previous years. On the contrary, he sold arms to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Idlib, and this is one of the reasons why the two factions maintain a good relationship."

E. Stealing Funds Dedicated to Mercenaries Deployed to Libya

An administrative official within the al-Amshat faction reported that Abu Amsha seized a large part of the funds allocated as monthly salaries to the faction's fighters deployed in Libya by defrauding the party that finances the presence of the faction's members in Libya. He did not directly deduct percentages of the funds the party provided, but rather forced his fighters to personally give him up to a third of their salaries.

Over the first three months of deployment in Libya, estimated at late 2019, and the first two months of 2020, Abu Amsha did not deduct any portions of the fighters' salaries. However, misappropriation continued over the following months, whereby he cut off fighter salaries to 2,000 USD, corresponding to minimized funds from donors, which fell to a monthly 2,000,000 USD.

Notably, STJ deduced a covert pattern of misappropriation of funds, relying on information and testimonies collected from fighters in 2020 and 2021. Neither Abu Amsha nor his brother Basel, nicknamed Alemdar, did directly expropriate funds. Instead, they extorted fighters into giving them percentages of their salaries in exchange for registering their names and offering them fighting contracts in Libya. The fighters paid the two commanders almost a third of their salaries.

When the Libya combat abated, and warring parties signed the armistice in October 2020, the financier diminished the faction's monthly allocations to 1,500,000 USD. With this, the administrative source said, Abu Amsha imposed sharp reductions on fighter salaries, which plummeted to merely 300 USD a month.

STJ analyzed the figures put forward by the administrative source. Since early 2021, salaries have been reduced to 300 USD, while the number of fighters deployed in Libya was reduced to 600, which means that the faction paid 180,000 USD monthly salaries only, out of the monthly 1,500,000 USD the financier dedicated to the faction. This leaves a surplus amounting to 1,320,000 USD, which the source said, all end up with Abu Amsha and his brother Alemdar.

F. Investments in Libya

After the Libya truce was signed, Abu Amsha's brother Basil al-Jasim, nicknamed Alemdar, invested in one of Libya's flourishing trades. He started a marble and natural stone business. Alemdar partnered with a Libyan politician within the Government of National Accord. They





jointly opened a stone quarry, and Alemdar brought in skilled stone craftsmen from Afrin. The workers were recruited under fighter contracts and then sent to work in the quarry, according to information provided by one of the faction's Libya-stationed fighters.

G. Violations in Libya

Like his brother Abu Amsha, Alemdar profited from violations. He made a fortune from the looting operations carried out by his fighters with his knowledge. He also started a business of drug smuggling and selling and arrested deployed commanders that sold or promoted drugs without former coordination with him. Commenting on this, one of the faction's fighters, currently based in Libya, narrated:

"At the beginning and over the course of the battles, Libyan civilians fled, having no idea what will happen to their homes, so they left cash and gold behind. When we searched the houses, we took the money and gold and hid them. The commanders knew we did this. Later, the commanders carried out a thorough search and collected everything that was looted from the civilians' houses. Of course, they divided it amongst themselves and with Alemdar. Then, there were clashes, because the commanders disputed over the distribution of their shares of the looted money."

On the drug trade, a commander within the faction, currently in Libya, narrated that Alemdar started a trade of Lebanese hashish and meth, locally known H-pause, smuggled from Syria to Libya through Turkey relying on an organized network. The source added that Alemdar also founded a sale and promotion network and prosecuted those who promoted drugs without coordinating with him. So, he already arrested several people from within the faction and punished others for daring to do so without coordination with him. Punishments inflicted on these fighters, varied, including returning them to Syria, denying them all their salaries, and imprisonment. The source added:

"Al-Amshat fighters devised various ways to hide and smuggle drugs from Syria through Turkey to Libya, whether during fighter change travels or when equipment and ammunition were brought in. Narcotic pills were hidden within portable individual weapons and in the fighters' quivers. Other substances were stuffed into the fillings of anti-armor missiles and in Kalashnikov and RPG stores, or inside bulletproof vests. The vests were reaped open, and H-Pause pills were hidden inside them."

The source added:

"The thing that helped smuggle drugs so easily is that the Turks do not search the weapons or the fighters' quivers. At the Hawar Kilis Crossing, only the fighter's personal bag is searched, and this is normal because it would not occur to them that someone would hide drugs inside weapons."

Illegal Trade and Investments in Syria and Turkey

A. Investments in Turkey

Fadi al-Jasim, nicknamed Abu Malik, manages all of Abu Amsha's businesses and investments in Turkey, which include money transfer offices, a car dealership, a real estate office and a restaurant.





- **Money transfer offices:** Information collected by STJ from sources within the faction confirms that Abu Amsha has a money transfer office in Shaykh al-Hadid. This office is linked to offices in Turkey, located in the province of Kilis, and the cities of Reyhanlı and Istanbul. All these offices are in the charge of Abu Malik.

Providing STJ with further details on the administration of these offices, a security official within the faction narrated:

“All financial transfers to and from Shaykh al-Hadid are subject to the controls of the faction's security office. Transfer offices provide us with monthly statements. Transfers are managed by Fadi, who changes the names of transfer offices every now and then.”

STJ's team, with leads from field researchers, [located](#) a transfer office in Shaykh al-Hadid town, which is supervised by Fadi, Abu Malik. The office is across from the Shaykh al-Hadid Mosque, on the town's main road and near the Shaykh Store.

- **Car dealership office:** A security official within the faction said that Abu Amsha opened a car dealership office in Reyhanlı city and assigned its management to one of the faction's commanders, called Hassan Khaled Al-Satouf, and nicknamed [Abu Sakher](#). The official added:

“When complaints against the faction abounded with the Military Police and the Grievance Redress Committee (GRC), Abu Amsha started to protect the faction's commanders closest to him, who were involved in violations and subjects of complaints. He, thus, sent them to Libya or Turkey permanently, or until the issues surrounding them were resolved. He did this with commander Abu Sakher. He sent him to Reyhanlı and entrusted him with managing the car office there. Abu Sakher is known to have committed many mistakes and caused several problems. He was involved in kidnappings and sexual assaults against Kurdish women.”

STJ also learned that Abu Amsha owns, in partnership with the leader of Ahrar al-Sharqiya, Abu Hatem Shaqra, the Al-Safir [Company](#) – ELSAFIROTO for cars, and it has offices in Kilis, Gaziantep, Urfa, and Istanbul. This information corroborates other information provided by [AI Monitor](#) about Abu Amsha's ownership of the company.

- **A real estate company and a restaurant:** The above-cited source said that Abu Amsha opened a real estate office/company, which executed projects in Kilis under the management and supervision of his brother Fadi, Abu Malik. The source was unable to provide STJ with the company's name and the location of its headquarters in Turkey. However, he confirmed it exists and sent pictures of Abu Amsha at the company's headquarters.

Regarding the restaurant, STJ obtained information from a single source, and could not cross-check the details with other sources. This information demonstrates that Abu Amsha opened a restaurant in Reyhanlı under the name al-Bawadi.





Image (8)- Abu Amsha to the left, Amer al-Hamad, Abu Amsha's maternal uncle, to the right, at Abu Amsha's Real Estate Company.

B. Investments in Syria

- **Mall:** Shaykh al-Hadid Mall is [located](#) south of the town, and it lawfully belongs to the displaced Kurdish residents, whose shops were damaged during the Turkey-led Operation Olive Branch. Later, al-Amshat faction seized these shops and turned them into the [mall](#), the revenues of which are all claimed by Abu Amsha.



Image (9)- The opening ceremony of the Shaykh al-Hadid Mall on 30 June 2021.





Image (10)- Screenshot from the Shaykh al-Hadid Mall's promotional [video](#).

- **Café:** Abu Amsha called it the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Roundabout [Coffee Shop](#). It consists of six stores, all seized at the beginning of the faction's control of Shaykh al-Hadid. The café is [located](#) near the Shaykh al-Hadid Mosque.



Image (11)- The President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Roundabout Coffee Shop, opened by Abu Amsha.





Image (12)- Screenshot from a [video](#) of the opening ceremony of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Roundabout Coffee Shop, in the presence of the area's governor and gendarmerie. The photo features Abu Amsha's brother, to the right of the governor.

- **Horse Farm:** It was originally an apple orchard, owned by Kamal Agha, one of the area's locals. Abu Amsha seized it and turned it into a horse farm. STJ learned that Abu Amsha returned certain parts of the orchard to the owner after he paid him a sum of money.
- **Smuggling Houses:** There are two such houses, run by Younis al-Jasim, Abu Hamza. The two houses are owned by Mohammed Fawzi Dagli, one of the area's residents. They are located on the main road between Jindires and Shaykh al-Hadid.

Faction-Level Funding

Funding for Libya

Al-Amshat received a large amount of financial support from a security company in order to pay salaries to its fighters who were transferred to Libya. Over the initial period of deployment, the company paid the faction 3,000,000 USD, which went through two deductions. The first time, the funds were cut off to 2,000,000 USD. This was reduced to 1,500,000 USD, which turned into a stable payment, in addition to food and fuel allocations.

On the deductions, an administrative official from the faction told STJ that the faction's command curtailed the fighters' salaries sharply, even though the company's funds were provided at a fixed rate. He added:

“At the beginning of the fighting in Libya, we used to give fighters a monthly salary of 3,000 USD, and that lasted for three months. Then we gave them monthly 2,000 USD, and this was reduced to 1000 USD. Today, fighters are paid a monthly 300 USD.”

On the number of fighters in Libya, the source added:

“At the beginning of the battles, we deployed 1000 fighters. At the peak of our activity, we deployed 2,000 fighters (including 500 from other factions). Currently, we have only 600 fighters in Libya.”





Service Projects in Shaykh al-Hadid

Abu Amsha is actively working to improve services in Shaykh al-Hadid. He is also keen that his fighters and their families receive the attention of humanitarian and relief organizations operating in the area. For this purpose, he constantly asks the Turkish officers responsible for the Syrian file to direct Turkish and local organizations active in the area to boost services there, including the operation of bakeries, increasing flour allocations, and distributing monthly relief baskets. The Turkish Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) has complied with the calls, just as the Turkish Religious Endowment did when it renovated a mosque in the area at the request of Abu Amsha.

On the issue of services, a commander from the 2nd Corps recounted:

“Abu Amsha, with both Saif Abu Bakr and Fahim Issa, arrange periodic meetings with the Turkish government. During these meetings, Abu Amsha asks for improving the status of services by directing humanitarian organizations to implement projects in Shaykh al-Hadid. Indeed, the IHH re-maintained the bakery and raised flour allocations. Additionally, the Religious Endowment intervened to restore a mosque. We also saw Turkish and Kuwaiti organizations building housing units in the area. All this happened at the request of Abu Amsha. The Turks do not refuse him any wishes because they reinforce the stability of the region. And stability is what they aspire for.”

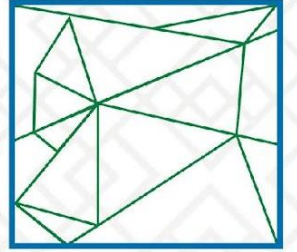
Regarding the relief aid received by the al-Amshat's fighters, an official from one of the relief organizations active in Shaykh Al-Hadid told STJ that:

“It is common knowledge that every association or relief organization appoints a representative in areas of action. In Shaykh al-Hadid, all the organization's delegates are in fact people close to the al-Amshat faction. These delegates are responsible for registering families entitled to aid, of any kind. During my work, I saw many of these lists, and the beneficiaries were mostly fighters from the faction and their families. The lists were almost devoid of the indigenous population or displaced civilians.”

The source added:

“In fact, the great attention Shaykh al-Hadid receives exceeds its real needs. The allocations assigned to other areas are barely comparable to those dedicated to Shaykh al-Hadid. When I asked distribution officials about the issue, they said that these are the desires of Turkish authorities.”





About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.



WWW.STJ-SY.ORG



[STJ_SYRIA_ENG](https://twitter.com/STJ_SYRIA_ENG)



EDITOR@STJ-SY.ORG