

Study

The Palestinian Liberation Army in the Syrian War



Yousif Faker Al Deen & Homam Alkhateeb

Reviewed by:
Anwar Al Bounni



Syrian Center for Legal Researches & Studies www.sl-center.org



Democratic Republic Research Center www.drsc-sy.org

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1- Introduction	5
2- The ID of the Palestinian Liberation Army	7
3- Conditions of the Establishment and the Conflict over the Referential Frame.....	10
4- The Financial Relationship.....	16
5- Contesting over the PLA with Ba'ath in Syria	18
6- PLA in the Syrian War	21
7- Defections Against the Implication.....	27
8- The Map of Battles of the PLA in Syria.....	29
9- Conclusion.....	39

1- Introduction

Palestinians refugees suffered a great harm during the war in Syria. The Yarmouk Camp¹, Huseiniyeh Camp, Daraa Camp and Handarat Camp were largely damaged by the Russian – Iranian – Syrian coalition, while other camps were differently affected. Ignited by revenge, Syrian authorities arrested 1,693 Palestinians, all of whom are now enforced disappeared. 556 others were killed under torture, and 3,871 Palestinians were killed during the fighting and military operations and battles. UNRWA has estimated that 120,000 Palestinian refugees fled the country during the war, while we think there are approximately more than 146,000.

The conflict's parties contributed to the harm caused to the Palestinians. The Syrian regime has harshly taken revenge on the Palestinian refugees, as they – by majority – have not taken its side to oppress the Syrian people². That is, the majority refused to help the regime fight against the revolution, believing in its righteousness. This Palestinian attitude was collectively and openly expressed in the demonstration on June 6, 2011 during the funeral of the Palestinian people who had been killed on the borders of Golan Heights. The demonstration was named "Yarmouk Intifada", and demonstrators called upon Assad not to "manipulate" the Palestinian blood to cover up Syrian blood shed by his hands. In that demonstration the Syrian Palestinian crowds cried out "the Palestinians and Syrians are one" for the first time, contesting the Syrian regime's claims.

The pro-regime Palestinian forces, however, continued to defend the Syrian regime, ignoring the voices of the Palestinians. The Palestinian Liberation Army (hereafter, PLA) is one of the most prominent forces that supported and still supports the regime. This study sets forth a holistic presentation of the PLA's establishment; it delineates how its participation in the Syrian war is unlawful and stands exactly against its legitimacy; and it explores the Syrian regime strategies that were being used to engage PLA in the war. We explore how The Syrian regime attempted to bypass traditional and expected resistance by making the PLA take part in a war outside of its legitimate-based existence.

¹ You may review the report: *Yarmuk Camp Set on Fire*, (last visit on 21/09/2018).
<http://drsc-sy.org/en/yarmouk-camp-set-on-fire/>

² Faker Al Deen, Yousif-(2015) *Yarmouk Camp: generation conflict and destroying the generations of insurgents*, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. 103. (last visit on 21/09/2018).
<http://drsc-sy.org/en/yarmouk-the-generational-conflict-and-the-destruction-of-the-defiant-community/>

In doing so, this study follows the gradual engagement of the PLA in the Syrian war, and draws a map of its participation in the war around the Syrian provinces, in addition to the human rights abuses committed by its members.

This study will adopt a descriptive-analytical methodology using the documenting technique³ by analyzing documents, official papers, and other types of secondary data, such as news, articles, studies, and so on. Additionally, this study will use the data collected from observations conducted by the researchers. The data were analyzed qualitatively later, through workshops held by the researchers.

This study contributes to the human rights reports, and political studies and reports, by showing and proving how the role played by the PLA is against its legitimacy. It will help to determine the legal issues that are relevant to the war criminals and to design a collection of documents and data that could be useful for further studies to come.

This study was finished on 25 July 2018, so the participation of the PLA in the Syrian war after this date was not added, because we have started the process of editing and translating.

3- This type of research is defined as: "a research following basic steps, starting from using the pieces of evidence from the relevant documents and records; logical ordering of them, drawing on them to conclude new facts or creating valid generalizations of past or present events or generalizations on the motives, the traits, and the human ideas". Al-Aris, Mohammad (2012) Memos on the Methodology of Pedagogy and the Basics of Documentation, Beirut: Dar Al Nahda. P. 120.

2- The ID of the Palestinian Liberation Army

The Logo



Definition:

PLA is a formal Palestinian military body, formed by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It lies under the overseeing of its Executive Committee, and it follows its order to achieve the mission of liberating Palestine. The article 22 of the PLO Basic Law reads: "The Palestine Liberation Organization shall form an army of Palestinians, to be known as the Palestinian Liberation Army, with an independent command which shall operate under the supervision of the Executive Committee, and carry out its instructions and decisions, both general and particular. Its national duty is to become the vanguard in the battle for the Liberation of Palestine."

Formally, the PLA is formed to be under the supervision of the military leadership of the PLO, but actually, the territories and countries' governments – where the PLA exists – have full control over it.

The Status Quo

After the Oslo Accord 1993, those who were once the soldiers of the PLA in Jordan and Egypt moved to the newly established National Guard of the Palestinian National Authority, and they, accordingly, entered Palestinian lands to occupy their new positions and roles. The Syrian regime, however, has kept its control over the PLA. The Syrian regime engaged the PLA in the Lebanese civil war, even pushing it to fight the PLO, and recently it entrapped it within the Syrian war after 2011.

The Structure of the PLA

The PLA consists of three brigades: "Hattin", whose site is in Qatana near Damascus, "Ajnadayn" based in Mount Hermon near the border with Occupied Palestine, and "Qadesiyah" in the Province of Seweda, south of Syria. There are also some small "supporting" battalions.

The Leaders

- The General Leader, and the Chief-in-Command: Mohammad Tarek al-Khadra (major general).
- The head of the military security service and the branch of military observation: Fayez Pasha (brigadier general).
- The head of the Department of Moral and Political Guidance: Nabil Yakoup (brigadier general).
- The head of "~~Agnadien~~ Ajnadayn" Troops: Mohammad Tarek Abo Srur (brigadier general).
- The head of "Qadesiyah" Troops: Suliman Ahmad Ibrahim (brigadier general).
- The head of "Hattin" Troops: Ahmad Hasan.
- The head of the 412 battalion (Uqap): Walid Ahmad al-Kurdi (brigadier general).
- The head of the 413 battalion: Ahmad Akkawi (brigadier general).
- The captain Mohammad Jawdat Edries: He is the leader of a group fighting in the Northern rural area of Hama Province, working under the supervision of Military Observation of the PLA. In September 2017, he was awarded the Russian Medal of Valor, due to his immense role in liberating "Uqierabat" in Hama countryside.

The Site

The army has four basic military sites in Syria. In addition to the three sites of the three brigades mentioned above, there is the training camp in Masyaf area in Hama province, the Head of Staff in Moudamiyah in Damascus Countryside Province, and other small sites (in Jaramana, and Mazzeh). There are also some medical and cultural centers serving the PLA, such as Hulwa Ziedan Cultural Center, Fayez Halawa Hospital, and the financing administration in Yarmouk.

The Arms

Light weapons, mortars, rockets, armored personnel carriers BTR-152, Tanks T-34/85.

The Allies

- Various Shiite-Militias.
- The Syrian Army.
- Other pro-regime Palestinian factions (Damascus factions).

Financing

- The National Fund of the PLO.
- The Syrian regime.

The total number of the PLA is estimated to 6,000 persons, 3,000 out of whom were engaged in the military operations in Syria, as announced by the leadership of the PLA.

Participation in the Syrian War

- At the very early stages of the war, the PLA was charged to non-military tasks, such as protecting Tishreen Power Plant.
- Participated in the battles of Tal-Kerdi, Tel-Souran, and Adra city in late 2015.
- The battles in the military air-base of Tha'ala, southwest of Seweda Province.
- The battle of Shiekh Meskin in Daraa Province.
- The battles of Zabadani city.
- The battles against ISIS, in the east of Seweda.
- The battles of Eastern Ghouta at the beginning of 2018.
- The battles in the South of Damascus in April 2018.

Human Rights Violations

- Shelling and bombing civic areas.
- Terrorizing civilians.
- Besieging civilians.
- Participating in the enforced evacuation of inhabited areas.

The number of killed PLA fighters

213 have been killed and 420 have been injured until July 2017, according to the chief-in-command of the PLA. The "Action Group for Palestinians of Syria" has documented 258 killed soldiers until July 2018.

3- Conditions of the Establishment and the Conflict over the Referential Frame

The PLA was configured under the decision of the First Palestinian Conference in 1964. The decision addressed establishing formal military units, arming them, and mobilizing the Palestinian youth to join the Arabic military colleges⁴. This decision was a result of the development of the national Palestinian struggle and increasing public demand to form such a National Palestinian entity⁵, in addition to the personal pursuit of Ahmad Shukairy⁶, the Palestinian delegate in the League of the Arab States to create a military tool for the emerging entity.

Shukairy was charged to continue his communications with the states of the Arab League and with the Palestinian people to establish the foundation for organizing the Palestinian people, which, in turn, would take up its task to liberate the country and enjoy the right of self-determination.⁷ This endeavor, followed the first Arab Summit⁸ in 1964, which was held a few months before the Palestinian Conference.

4- The second item of the "military decisions" adopted by the first national summit, Jerusalem, May 28 – June 2, 1964. It reads: "establishing regular, armed, militant Palestinian battalions, and Fedayeen battalions, active and capable". (Last visit on 21/09/2018) <http://www.plo.ps/article/43718/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89>

5- At this time, the idea of establishing an independent Palestinian entity has spread out. Ba'ath Party addressed in its statement in 1959, the issue of the Palestinian entity and the popular Palestinian army, and in its decision in Beirut, Aug 1960, to create a popular front consisting of all the Palestinian organizations in the Arab states, conditioning that it must be independent from the governments. This could be considered as the basic factor that has put pressures on the governments to accept the idea of the national Palestinian entity. The Arab governments willingly accepted that idea in order to have the influence on that entity. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian President, has chosen the person that he thought would be able to deal with the Arab governments. For more information about the Ba'ath Party and the Palestinian entity at that time, cf. Hussein, Gazi (1993) *The Palestinian Political Thought 1963-1966*, Damascus: no publisher. pp. 46-48. (available on net)

6- Shukairy had worked as an Assistant Secretary of The Arab League, then as a president of the Syrian delegation to UN, then a minister in Saudi Arabia for the UN affairs. You can review Shukairy's book (1971): *From the Arabic Summit to the defeat with the presidents and kings*, Beirut: Dar Al-Awda, p.19. (Arabic)

7 - Shukairy (1971), *ibid.*, P. 68.

8- Encyclopedia Palestina, (last visit on 21/09/2018).

<https://www.palestinapedia.net/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA/>

The Arab Summit had asked Shukairy to deliver the results of his communications at the next summit⁹. But Shukairy surpassed the boundaries of these tasks¹⁰. He was enthusiastic to found, not only communicate about, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) before the second Arab Summit. He was urged on by the enthusiasm of the Palestinian people to create a "national Palestinian entity" and by the support of Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt, in addition to his own desire to impose a *de facto* situation¹¹ on the Arab states, which were against establishing such a body. He thought that he could "exploit" the disputes among the Arab states to found this Palestinian entity¹².

Incited by the basic task of liberating Palestine, the founders of the PLO thought the most pressing need was a military body to conduct an operation for that purpose. Based on that belief, the "military issue" occupied the heart of the first national conference.

9- The first decision of the Board of the Arabic League was made in Aug. 1960, Shtoura, Lebanon. It reads: First: Re-organizing the Palestinian people and showing it as a unified one. Second: Creating a Palestinian army in the hosting Arabic states...The Board, however, reneged the decision later, because of the refusal of Jordan. It –instead- suggested supporting a government of Palestine. Again, Jordan refused. Shukairy (1971), *ibid.*, P.79.

10- Faisal Al Saud, the Crown Prince, denounced the report that Shukairy (the president of PLO) announced on the First Palestinian Summit and establishing the PLO, in the Arabic Summit in Alexandria, 1965. Faisal has said: "Brother Ahmad (Shukairy) had passed the authority he has after the Summit in Cairo ... Your Excellencies had delegated Mr. Shukairy to study the means of creating the Palestinian entity, not to create the entity itself." Shukairy (1971), *ibid.*, P.164.

11- Shukairy (1971), *ibid.*, P.82.

12- Yazid Sayigh (1999) mentions that Iraq called for the creation of the "Palestinian Liberation Troop" in 1960. and it called the Arab League in 1963 to establish an elected national Palestinian council; establishing a Palestinian government with formal relations with the Arabic states; and establishing an army for liberating Palestine. Sayigh, Yazid, (1999) *The Palestinian Liberation Army, challenges of configuring phase 1954 -1966, Palestinian Studies, Vol.9, No. 35. Pp. 23-24.*

Sayigh (*ibid.*, pp.20-21) explains the Egyptian leadership's encouraging of establishing the PLO and the PLA, and its refusal of the PLO's controlling over the PLA in its sovereign's area (as it was proven in the Correspondences, and minutes of meetings between the leadership of the PL A and the leadership of the Egyptian army, which Sayigh has looked into) as follows: "Nasser may tried to enhance his regional status throughout supporting the PLO, but the challenge he faced till 1967, was how could he proceed with the preparations against Israel to prevent the Palestinians from running any initiative, or acting as a cat's claw for the benefit of its Arab rivals, without causing tension with Israel out of his control".

Under the article 22(4) of the PLO Basic Law¹³, edited by Shukairy, the establishment of special Palestinian forces was enacted "according to the military needs, and to the plan decided by the Unified Arab Leadership in cooperation with the concerned Arab States." At the Arab Summit II, Shukairy announced the following: "The Executive Committee of PLO decided, induced by its sacred task to liberate Palestine, to found the Palestinian Liberation Army that will undertake its role as a vanguard army, hand in hand with the Arab armies to liberate Palestine, and regain the stolen nation."¹⁴

The Arab leaders consented to Shukairy proposal under some conditions. That is, the PLA would have to work under the Unified Arabic Leadership in military operations, or under local leadership with the permission of the Unified Arabic Leadership. It is obvious that the discussed military operations were exclusively against Israel. –Shukairy, however, gained some independence for the PLO: It became the body which would "choose PLA soldiers and officers, and it would participate with the Unified Arab Leadership in enacting plans, training and arming the army. It also would choose the sites of the PLA with the permission of concerned states".¹⁵

We can conclude that a kind of cooperation and participation between the PLO and the League of Arab States was agreed upon. The PLO later endorsed a systematic effort to regain more independence from the League and to try to gain more control over the PLA.

The PLA's project continued under the PLO in very difficult conditions. The Palestinian community was divided after years of the Israeli occupation in 1948, and the non-occupied Palestinian lands (The West Bank and Gaza) were divided between the Egyptian and Jordanian sovereignties - Palestinian refugees thus spread over the region and across the globe. Shukairy got used to repeating, "I don't claim that we will have full sovereignty over our army. Our army is not on our land, its financing and weapons are not ours. I don't disguise the truth, I am trying to make

13 - Palestinian Journeys, (last visit on 21/09/2018).

<https://www.paljourneys.org/ar/timeline/historictext/9705/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A-%D9%84%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%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9>

14- Shukairy (1971), *ibid*.

15- Shukairy (1971), *ibid*. p.171.

the best from the worst... these are my conditions with the presidents and kings."¹⁶

Very soon problems emerged from the reality of having a formal army legally and financially under the sovereignty of a political entity (PLO), which was trying to have full control over it while *de facto* existing under the sovereignty of other political entities (the Arab states).

In spite of the protocols signed between PLO and the Arab states, the dispute spilled rapidly around the extent of the PLA's independence¹⁷. Independency was the persistent issue of the founding leadership until her resignation in 1967, and the arrival of a transitional leadership that prepared the Fatah movement (which had its own armed forces) to command the PLO since 1969¹⁸.

After Shukairy's resignation, the transitional leadership (1968 – 1969) continued to contest control over the PLA by the Arab states. At the Fourth Summit of the PLO in 1968, immediately following Shukairy's resignation, the "National Council" amended article 22 of the PLO Basic Law to assure the independence of the PLA from the Arab states and place it under the supervision of the PLO. "The Palestinian Liberation Organization founds an army from the Palestinian people. It is called the Palestinian Liberation Army. It has an independent leadership working directly under the supervision of the Executive Committee. This leadership executes the special and general decisions of the Executive Committee. The national task of the army is to be the vanguard in the battle of liberating Palestine."¹⁹ In July 1968 the PLO's executive committee decided to name General Wajeeh Madani in the position of head of the military department of the PLO and to abolish the post of the post of General Leader of the PLA and assign his functions to the Chief-of-Staff. The brigadier general Subhi al-Jabi was, accordingly, dismissed

16- Shukairy (1971), *ibid*.

17- Shukairy describes how the King Hussein of Jordan, early refused the project of the PLA. He describes how he added, to get the acceptance of the king and his trustees, the following sentence: "in the lands of the state that accepts". However, the King still refuses. Shukairy (1971), *ibid.*, p.85

18 Shukairy resigned in 1967, then Yehia Hammoda became the head of PLO for a transitional period, then Yasir Arafat came to the power in 1969, as the head of the PLO. As a result, Fatah dominated the PLO.

19 The Basic Law, after amendment on the website of the Palestinian National Council: <http://info.wafa.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=4923> (last visit on 22/09/2018).

from his position as Chief-of-Staff, and the brigadier general Abd al-Razzak Yahia replaced him.

The Ba'ath Party, the ruler of Syria at that time, felt threatened after these decisions were made. The Party ignited some officers in the Hattin troops to rebel and pushed to name Musbah al-Budairy in the position of Chief-of-staff of the PLA. In June 1969 the position of the General Leader was re-established and the brigadier general Yahia was appointed. In order to please the Syrians, colonel Osman Haddad, the leader of the Hattin troops, became the Chief-of-Staff²⁰.

The Palestinian National Council²¹ decided in its 8th summit (Cairo, 28/02/1971 - 05/03 1971) to create the General Leadership of the Palestinian Revolution Troops. It decided that three troops would compose it: the formal troops, the Fedayeen troops, and the popular militias²².

The Council backed this decision in the next summit, setting forth more details about the hierarchy and the functions of the General Leadership of the Palestinian Revolution Troops. Furthermore, it stressed the ability of the political leadership of the PLO to exercise its full legal rights on the Palestinian Liberation Army and thus its ability and rights to move these troops when it was necessary in battle.²³

These disputes and conflicts amounted to direct physical violence. In 1970, for example, the PLA fought under the umbrella of the PLO against the Kingdom of Jordan. Furthermore, Hafez Assad, after his coup in 1970

20- Muharram, Ahmad, PLA, the poor rifle since the birth, <https://www.ida2at.com/liberation-army-the-palestinian-poor-rifle-since-the-birth/> Abd-Razzaq Yehia (2007), *Between Military and Policy*, Amman: Dar al-Jalil. (last visit on 21/09/2018).

21- The 7th article of the Basic Law of the PLO defines the National Council as: "The highest power of the PLO which puts forth its policies, plans, and programs".

22- The article of "the General Leadership of the Revolutionary Troops", Cairo, 1971. http://www.wafainfo.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=3245

(last visit on 22/09/2018).

23- The 9th Summit of the Palestinian National council, 1971, the items: "the General Leadership of the Troops of the revolution" and "the PLA". <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=3246>

(last visit on 22/09/2018).

and securement of power in Syria, used the PLA against the PLO itself and against other Palestinian organizations in two military battles. Assad's manipulation pushed the many loyal officers of the PLA to resist, though it was a desperate resistance. In Beirut in 1976, the first defection happened within the PLA troops (which were under the leadership of the general al-Budairy) when deserters refused to fight with the PLA in battles with the Syrian army against the PLO and the national Lebanese movement. The second defection happened in Tripoli in 1983, when the PLA was under the leadership of Mohammed al-Khadra, the current Chief-of-Staff). Colonel Atieyah Awad, the leader of Ajnadayn troops (part of the PLA in Syria), refused Syrian commands to fight in Tripoli and in Palestinian camps against Fatah's fighters. Awad's fate symbolically summarizes the fate of PLA in Syria. He was ordered to travel to Damascus where the Syrian Military Intelligence arrested him. He was subjected to enforced disappearance until 2003 when his family was informed of his death. His body, however, was never delivered to his family "for security reasons," according to the Syrian apparatus.

In the current war in Syria, the same scenario has occurred again. That is, loyal officers who refused to be involved in the Syrian war have either been assassinated or publicly executed by the regime. The Syrian state has initially "imparted" its message to other Palestinian officers.

The PLA's existence is limited now to Syria, after its abolishment in the other Arab states. Hafez Assad diminished the relation between the PLO's leadership and the PLA, confining it only to the PLA's legal status because it is the last source of the Army's legitimacy. Up to this day, the PLA still gains some financial support from the PLO.

4- The Financial Relationship

Since the Arab Summit II at which the Arab states formally admitted the PLO and PLA, many Arab states have contributed financing to both bodies. Since then, when there is a shortage in PLA financing, PLO has financed it from the National Fund²⁴.

In 1966 the head of the Executive Committee of the PLO made many decisions around the organization and regulation of the PLA's financial issues. In 1967 a bank account was opened under the name "The General Leadership – The General Affairs Management" for the military struggle's financing. The general Wajeeh Madani, brigadier general Subhi al-Jabi, and lieutenant colonel Abd al-Aziz Fayad al-Wajih all had the power to manage that account.²⁵

The PLO's leadership has shown real flexibility in this regard. It has been determined to pay the salaries of PLA officials as much as it can. The 7th National Council has stated that "the expenditure on the PLA and the Popular Liberation Troops should be done in a specific balance, enacted by the general leadership of the army according to the balance of 68/69 after it is issued by the Executive Committee²⁶".

According to the website of the PLO, the National Fund has acted as the Ministry of Finance of the PLO. It has been responsible for covering the different financial activities of the PLO, including the expenditures of the PLA, which has not changed up to this point.²⁷

As an example of the way the PLO has dealt with the financial issues of the PLA, the 11th session of the National Palestinian Council, held in Cairo January 6-10, 1973, discussed the balance of the PLA, which amounted to 1,500,000 JD for 1972-1973. The Committee charged with

24- Article 24 of PLO's Basic Law, Ibid.

25 - Ayash, Abdullah (2014), The PLA and The Popular Liberation Troops (1964 – 1973), Beirut: Zaytonee, p.55.

26- The 2nd item of the decisions about PLA, the 7th summit of the National Council.
<http://www.plo.ps/article/43724/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%80%D8%A9>

(last visit on 22/09/2018).

27- The official website of the PLO.

<http://www.plo.ps/category/91/1/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%82->

(last visit on 22/09/2018).

discussing the report of the Palestinian National Fund recommended "moving in spite of the circumstances and positions in order to urge the Arab countries to fulfill their accumulated financial obligations towards the PLO budget and the expenses of maintaining the Palestine Liberation Army and to allocate additional appropriations in the 1973/1974 budget to finalize the air-defense systems" ²⁸

Series	Institution	The amount
1	The National Council	20,750
2	The Executive Committee	58,000
3	The department of administrative affairs	15,000
4	The military department	116,000
5	The public organization department	79,216
6	The moral and media affairs department	50,000
7	The political department	12,000
8	The National Fund department	33,000
9	The affairs of the occupied nation department	60,000
10	The cultural and educational affairs department	5,000
11	Research Center	50,000
12	The planning center	25,000
13	The radio	15,000
14	The high political committee of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon	30,000
15	PLA	1,500,000
16	The offices of PLO	175,000
17	The cash reserve of the National Fund	20,000
18	Total	2,263,966

28- The 11th summit. http://www.wafainfo.ps/ar_page.aspx?id=3252
(last visit on 22/09/2018).

5- Contesting over the PLA with Ba'ath in Syria

The Ba'ath Party, the ruler of Syria since 1963, has sought to keep control over the PLA since its establishment. It demands to channel communications between the PLA and PLO through the Syrian Military Intelligence. The Syrian authorities have always intervened in naming the leaders and officers of the PLA, in addition to overseeing every small detail of operations.

Mustafa Sahtot, the manager of the PLO-branch in Syria, claimed that he received a letter from the Syrian authority protesting against the naming of Samir al-Khatib, Abd al-Aziz al-Wajih, and Abd al-Razzak Yahia as officers in the PLA.²⁹ On June 8, 1965, the PLO Executive Committee issued a decision to name the colonel Subhi al-Jabi an officer of a PLA-branch in Syria. Al-Jabi had to meet both Ahmad Suidani, the head of the Syrian Military Intelligence, and Salah Jedid, the Chief-of-Staff, to get verification from the Syrian authority on his appointment³⁰.

The PLO has tried at its routine summits to assure and retain the independence of the PLA, and its monopolized role in leading it. From the second summit until the 12th PLO summit, decisions were made to assert the free and independent leadership of the PLA and the PLO's full ability to move and place the PLA in positions it deems proper for its goals, especially in Jordan. The Arabic states, however, have not always given the PLO what it has asked.

When Hafez Assad gained power in 1970, a dramatic development took place in this regard. He adopted a new track, obeying (or attempting to obey) the Great Powers' interests at that time. He radically pushed – or rather enforced – a change in the ideology of the PLA, shifting it from a non-partial to clearly partial body, pro-Ba'athist on the surface, and deeply pro-Assadist. This shift was fully contradictory to the basic law of the PLA, which asserts its neutral and non-partial nature.

Assad could now, based on this shift, drive the PLA onto a path away from its national and patriotic task.

In 1976, the PLA (branch of Syria, under the leadership of Musbah al-Budairy) entered Lebanon with the Syrian army to attack the PLO and the patriotic Lebanese movement. The first defection ensued from this intervention.

29 - Ayash, Abdullah (2014), *ibid.* p. 44

30- Ayash, Abdullah (2014), *ibid.*, p.41

When Mohammad Tarek al-Khadra became the Chief-of-Staff of PLA-Syria, the Syrian authority gained great control over it. Al-Khadra played a notable role in supporting the Syrian regime in its military intervention in Lebanon. He founded the military intelligence of the PLA, served as the leader of the Hattin battalion, and accepted to serve the Syrian army in the North of Lebanon between 1975-1976³¹, when other Palestinian officers refused to fight against the PLO and defected. This fellowship of al-Khadra encouraged the Syrian authority to push the PLA- Syrian branch to fight the PLO in Tripoli in 1983, and to break into the Palestinian camps there. Another defection, led by Atiah Awad, followed.

Al-Khadra was one of the key persons who solidified the fellowship of the PLA with the Syrian authority, and participated in curtailing actual relations with the PLO. He, however, admitted the legal authority of the PLO over PLA-Syria. In an interview with a Syrian TV channel, on September 22, 2015, he said, "An agreement has been made on the PLO's institutions, and the PLA was the most important because it will be the military arm which will liberate Palestine with the Arabic State."³² Ironically, and contrary to what he said, he re-articulated a different speech in the-second part of the interview with the same channel (As an apology for saying that the PLA is one of the PLO institutions in the first part). "The Syrian leadership was ordering me, appointing the most difficult tasks to me, and I have done all those tasks successfully," he said, in addition to mentioning clearly that both the Syrian officer Hekmet Shihabi and Gazi Kanan had ordered him many times during the Lebanese civil war³³.

To recapitulate, the relation between PLA-Syria and the PLO is still "legislative" and kept at this level so that the PLA continues to receive legitimacy and financing from the PLO. Thus, the decisions of Palestinian National Council are in force, but none are applied by PLA-Syria in response to the decision of the Syrian regime, especially those assuring the independence of the PLA and its monopolized overseeing by the

31 A general review of the life of al-Khadra, the Chief-of-Staff of the PLA: the website of the PLA:

<http://www.palarmy.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85/>

(last visit on 22/09/2018).

32- Al-Khadra's interview with the Channel of al-Akhbaria, the program: The Hidden of the History. 22/09/ 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XCSVEF9KTQ>

(The last visit on 29/08/ 2018). The youtube channel was deleted later.

33- *ibid*.

PLO, and The decision of the 10th special session of the National Council, held in April 1972, concerning the membership of three officers from the PLA in the National Council (including Mohammad Tarek al-Khadra), and the membership of the leader of the PLA in the PLO Central Committee.

The contradiction between the reality and the "legal" structure increased dramatically after the Oslo Accord, 1993. While an autonomous Palestinian Authority has emerged under international coverage, the *de facto* breach between PLA-Syria and the PLO went deeper.

Some personnel of Badr and Ain Jalout troops left Syria to join the "new project" for the birth of Palestinian Authority. But the Syrian regime refused to recognize Palestinian Authority and accused the Palestinian leadership of betrayal. This eventually caused and managed a great defection of Fatah, creating what is called "—The alliance of the Palestinian resistance forces," among other names. The manipulated Palestinian core forces (by the Syrian regime in 1975-1980s during the civil war in Lebanon) have been still playing a main role in this defection.

6- PLA in the Syrian War

As PLA-Syria has changed its ideology from being Palestinian non-partisan to Ba'athist, Hafez Assad and his son's regimes have continued to have absolute control over it, which we referred to, when talking about the recognition of Mohammad Tarek al-Khadra in the interview with the Syrian TV channel³⁴.

PLA-Syria consists of Palestinian refugees who live in camps in Syria, serving as officers, voluntarily recruited, or involuntarily through obligatory military service. The army is located in four sites occupied by three brigades - Hattin, Qadesiyah , and Ajnadayn. The fourth site for training purposes is in Masyaf, Hama, in central Syria. The chairman of staff is stationed in Moudamiyah near Damascus, yet there are many small sites of the chairman of staff, in Jaramana, Camp and Mazzeh. There are also some medical and cultural centers serving the PLA, such as Hulwa Ziedan Cultural Center, Fayez Halawa Hospital, and the financing administration in Yarmouk Camp.

According to the Chief-of-Staff, al-Khadra, PLA-Syria's personnel count is 6,000, 3,000 of whom have been involved in the war in Syria.³⁵

While the Syrian regime endeavors to involve the PLA in its war in Syria, it has faced resistance from within the PLA, in line with the official attitude of the PLO and the Palestinian popular stance, which is to keep distance from the war.

This resistance has occurred in spite of Syrian control over the PLA. Its mechanism could be depicted as escaping from the country to avoid obligatory recruitment to the PLA, defection from it, and occasional joining to some Syrian opposition groups. The deserters, however, have been depicted positively by the Palestinians and their colleagues unable to defect.

To face this resistance (what has been called "brainwashing" by al-Khadra ³⁶), the Syrian regime has adopted its old and deep strategy,

34 ibid.

35- Al-Khadra interview with Al-Watan Newspaper, July 2017.

<http://alwatan.sy/archives/110932>

(last visit on 21/09/2018).

36 Al-Khadra, an interview with al-Manar, the TV. Channel of Hezbollah.

which has resulted in the gradual engagement of the PLA in the Syrian war. This strategy can be described as follows:

1- Assassinating Palestinian officers and soldiers who refuse participation in the war and accuse the opposition.

In late February 2012 the colonel Rida Khadra was killed in Artuz, near Damascus, and the colonel Abd Nasser Muqary was killed in Yarmouk Camp. In both cases, the regime was suspected to be behind the killing due to both colonels' stances of non-engagement. The regime, however, accused the opposition. In the same year, two officers were assassinated, Ahmad Saleh al-Hassan and Mohammad Anwar al-Saqqa. Assassinations continued, targeting those who refused to engage in the war. The brigade general, Abd Razzaq Suhim, was one of the victims; he was killed in front of a regime-checkpoint in Qatana near Damascus. Other officers were kidnapped (like the colonel Wahdan Rawashdeh who was kidnapped near a military checkpoint near Damascus), while others have been killed under torture in regime prisons.

In July 2012 anonymous armed gangs kidnapped 16 Palestinian belligerents (PLA-Syria members) as they were on their way from the military site in Masyaf to their camp near Aleppo (Nayrap Camp). They were soon executed. The Syrian regime again accused the opposition and

He describes the stance of the Palestinian people in Syria, including the soldiers and officers of the PLA: "We started to prepare our fighters psychologically, politically, socially, and ideologically in the PLA which most of its members were living in the rural areas. Most of the Palestinian people were living in various rural areas of the Syrian provinces. Unfortunately, these areas were Incubator of terrorism, and it was difficult to detach the Palestinian youth out of this focus of terrorism that incites against Syria. The PLA's leadership has to make a great effort to clarify the secret goals of the popular movement, which claims reforming explicitly, but actually, and implicitly it is nothing but trying to create a chaos and disorders, and then an armed conflict against the Syrian state to make it collapse. It is to achieve the American – Zionist plot".

He adds: "This issue was a basic goal, and it needed a doubled effort to wash the brains of those whom were deceived, those who thought that the issue is about reforming and it is an internal issue Syrian –Syrian. We created the unified stance, thought, will, and convince which point to the fact of the movement: destroying Syria.

<http://www.palarmy.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%B7%D8%A7/>

(Last visit: 23/09/2018)

exploited the incident to mobilize the Palestinians in the camp to join its troops. At that time another body was being established, the Quds Brigade, which would consist of Palestinians fighting with the regime against the opposition. The opposition denied any connection to the killings of the soldiers. In early 2015 opposition troops seized Idlip and found photos of people killed under torture in the province's central police station. Some of these photos were of two Palestinian soldiers killed in the 2012 kidnapping - Mohammad Abo Lil and Anas Karim, both of whom were killed under torture. This, according to the opposition, provides evidence of the regime's responsibility in killing the 16 soldiers.³⁷

The 16 soldiers killed:

Number	Name	Date	Adresse
1.	Mohammad Sabri Abo Khaled	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
2.	Mohammad Mahmoud Abo Lil	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
3.	Mohammad Gadaa	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
4.	Ahmad Kishta	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
5.	Mahmoud Saaed	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
6.	Farid Qasem	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
7.	Anas Karim	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
8.	Sharief al-Bash	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
9.	Imad Manaa	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
10.	Mohammad Ayoup	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
11.	Mostafa Mohammad Hilal	11/07/2012	Handarat Camp
12.	Mohammad Jomaa abo-Zolof	11/07/2012	Handarat Camp
13.	Mohammad Rafi Rafi	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
14.	Ahmad Mjamseh	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
15.	Firas abo-Hasan	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp
16.	Ahmad abo-Ezz	11/07/2012	Nayrap Camp

2- The regime ordered the PLA to protect civil facilities on the front line, to cause clashes with the opposition, and then engage it in battles. It is obvious in looking at the map of PLA's engagement and movement in military operations that the regime dealt with the PLA under the pretense

37 - The Action Group, the 6th anniversary of the massacre against the PLA's recruited soldiers in the North of Syria, the killer still anonymous. July 2018.
<http://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/10159>
 (last visit: 21/09/ 2018)

of their being margin troops and that they were gradually engaged - pushed by the regime – into military operations. For example, at the beginning, some PLA troops were assigned to protect Tishreen Plant as a non-military task, but were then recruited to defend Adraa when it was attacked by Islamic groups. Al-Khadra explained the situation well to Al-Alam channel, the pro-Iranian channel, on August 30, 2017: "The first sage of coordination between the Syrian leadership and PLA started when the Syrian leadership asked the PLA to protect some of the civic and economic facilities, like power plants, fuel stores and others, to guarantee the supplement of electricity and other vital needs to the civilians. In this vein, the members of the 80 battalion of the PLA defended the oil station near Adraa against the attack launched by terrorists. They could push them back, inflecting many casualties among them."³⁸

The regime involved the PLA in its battalions against ISIS in Seweda and Salamiyah. We didn't observe a notable participation of the PLA with the elite's forces (such as the Republic Guards, the Fourth Battalion, and the Tiger forces), only in very few cases. Most of the participations of the PLA took place with other "margin" unimportant forces. The regime deliberately puts them on the front to weaken the opposition before getting rid of them. That is why high numbers of them have been killed.

3- The regime involves the Palestinian Camps in the war by establishing paramilitary from criminals who were sentenced for various reasons, as is the case with the Quds brigade in the two Palestinian Camps in Aleppo and Free Palestine brigade in Damascuss. These militias were pushed to fight in coordination with the PLA.³⁹

38 - Al-Alam interview, Aug. 2017.

<http://www.alalam.ir/news/2010654/%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%82-%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7--%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A9>
(Last visit: 22/09/2018)

39 - Al-Khadra in an interview with the media apparatus of Quds-brigade. He celebrates this brigade and his leader the Mohammad Saed.

<https://www.facebook.com/yarmoknews/videos/1648927765183076/?t=202>
(Last visit: 22/09/2018)

On the other hand, some opposition groups (arguably permeated by the regime's intelligence) forcibly intervened in the Palestinian camps. For example, "Golan Hawks" group, led by Bayan Muzael, broke into the Yarmouk Camp in December 2012, looting and inflicting much damage to the civic properties.

4- The regime executes those who refuse orders. In February 2015, five officers of the PLA in Qatana near Damascus were executed after they refused to deploy their soldiers to Daraa to participate in the fighting there.

5- The regime persevered to find political support from the Palestinian battalions and NGOs that work for Palestinians, to create an umbrella under which the PLA would have to engage in the war on the side of the regime. For example, the Palestinian coalition demanded the intervention of the PLA in Khan Shieh Camp near Damascus, Yarmouk Camp, and other camps. The Jafra Institution as well organized a festival to celebrate the PLA war victims who fought with the regime. This event was created in cooperation with Free Palestine militia on November 11, 2017, to celebrate the 53rd anniversary of the foundation of the PLA and the 72nd anniversary of the foundation of the Syrian army, under the slogan "one homeland - one blood - one trench".

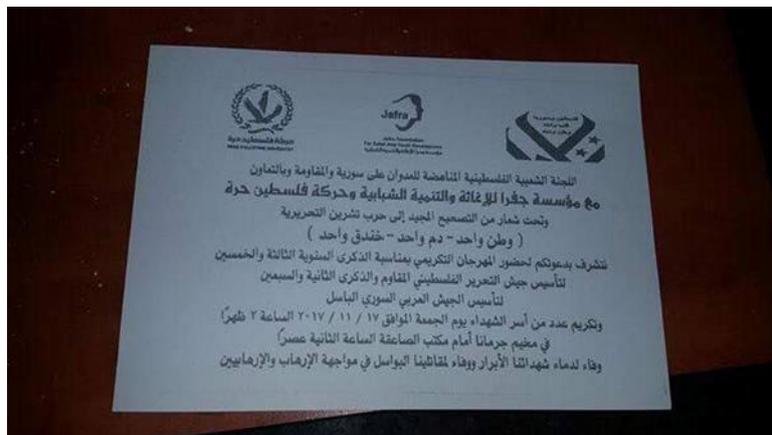


Photo of the invitation designed by the Palestinian Popular Committee against the aggression on Syria in partnership with Jafra and Free Palestine Movement.

6- The regime moved battalions to Khan Shieh Camp after making sure that it was covered politically by the factions of the "Alliance of the Palestinian resistance forces," and after exhausting the Palestinians in the siege and starvation, so that entering the army is the lesser evil. then it pushed

the Palestinian NGOs to praise this entry, and make them call to do the same thing in Yarmouk camp

In late 2016 a PLA checkpoint was built in Khan Shieh Camp, which imposed very tough measures on Palestinians. More than 150 young men were arrested and took to military camps to do their obligatory service.

7- The regime has transported ISIS groups near to PLA areas in Seweda to create clashes. In May 2018 hundreds of ISIS fighters moved from southern Damascus to the eastern rural area of Seweda after an agreement was made between Russia and ISIS. The regime did not engage its elite troops in the battles in Seweda, but relied only on some weak, ill-equipped troops such as the 15 battalion, the 5 battalion, and the PLA.

7- Defections Against the Implication

While pressures have increased on the PLA to actively participate in the war in Syria, many PLA soldiers and officers have defected. As a result, "The Free Palestinian Liberation Army Battalions" has emerged, Later, the brigade of "The Liberals of PLA" and "The Free PLA" are formed.

The most prominent deserters:

1- The colonel Qahtan Ibrahim Tabbasheh

On July 20, 2012 the colonel Tabbasheh announced his defection from the PLA. He was serving as the leader of battalion 421 in Qadesiyah Brigade. He decided to join the armed opposition, formed "The Free Palestinian Liberation Army Battalions"⁴⁰, and participated in the battles in line with the opposition in Daraa. In October of the same year, he was killed with a group of fighters during battle in Zayzoun area.

2- The colonel Khaled Ismael Hasan and a group of officers and soldiers

In early April 2013 a video was disseminated via social media (Facebook and YouTube) in which the colonel Hasan announced his defection from the PLA with a group of officers and soldiers. They joined the Free Syrian Army, forming the brigade of "The Liberals of PLA"⁴¹. He also served as the leader of 421 battalion of the PLA. He mentioned that the reasons for defection were the brutal crimes of the regime and its persevering endeavors to implicate the PLA and the Palestinian people in the fight against "our brothers in beloved Syria".

The other deserters included the following: the first lieutenant Iyas Nuemi; the lieutenant Mohammad Khalil; the lieutenant Iyhap Qasem; the lieutenant Basel Ali; the lieutenant Ahmad Hasan; and the lieutenant Mohammad Asad. The number of the officers and soldiers who defected counted 100 or more.

They acted in the southern area of Damascus, and most of them were killed in fronting the Syrian Army, especially in the towns of Bahdaliyah

40- The declaration of the colonel Qahtan Ibrahim Tabbasheh's defection on Youtube.

<https://youtu.be/hmPkiMUOCtA?t=65>

(Last visit: 19/09/2018)

41- The declaration of the colonel Khaled Ismael Hasan's defection on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HOAZzB-DwQ&feature=youtu.be&t=13>

(Last visit: 19/09/2018)

and Diyabiyah between the second half of 2013 and early 2015. In Yarmouk Camp, Khaled Hasan was assassinated by ISIS in April 2015.

8- The Map of Battles of the PLA in Syria⁴²

As mentioned earlier, the PLA was gradually pushed – by its pro-regime leadership and the Syrian regime – to take part in the conflict in Syria. These endeavors have resulted in the PLA fighting battles in most of the Syrian provinces⁴³. The Chief-of-Staff of the PLA, al-Khadra, told al-Watan newspaper that the PLA has been fighting with the Syrian Army since the emergence of the conflict, and he called the seizure of Yarmouk Camp a betrayal. "We fight now in more than 15 places, in Seweda, Daraa and Damascus's suburbs," he said, "and the PLA and the Syrian Army prevented the belligerents of the opposition from reaching Adra Prison."

He circulated the regime's claim of an American-Zionist plot cooperating with some Arabic states to create "creative chaos" and assure the security of Israel⁴⁴. The regime, however, has rewarded the PLA and its leadership many times.

We can address the following provinces in which the PLA has actively participated in the war:

1- Damascus Countryside Province

In September 2015 three Palestinian PLA soldiers, Nour al-Din Khair Hassan, Abd Rahman Subhi Rajeh and Ahmed Jihad Saleh, were killed in the confrontation between the opposition and the Syrian army with its ally, PLA, in Tal Kurdi. In September 2016 at least 10 soldiers were killed in Tal Sawan battles, according to pro-PLA Facebook accounts mourning them:

Soldier Mohammad Majed Horani, soldier Qasem Nabil Dassoqi, Lt. Alaa Ali Ajaj, Mohannad Hamid Abdullah and Mostafa Howary from Handarat Camp; Mohammad Naser Fallah and Daya Mohammad from

42- Interview with al-Khadra with Sama News.
<https://www.facebook.com/palarmy1964/videos/146529165946538/>
(Last visit: 09/09/2018)

43- A report on the PLA at Sama News, Oct. 2, 2017.
<https://www.facebook.com/tahrer.pal/videos/1749422342018027/>
(Last visit: 23/09/ 2018)

44- Al-Khadra's interview with Al-Watan newspaper: The PLA fights in 15 locations ... "We prevented the terrorists to get Adra Prison". Sept. 2015
<http://alwatan.sy/archives/20982>
(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

Sayeda Zeinab camp ; Mohammad Fathi Berro and Ahamd zuhir Shaban. All of them were killed in Tal Sawan in the clashes with the opposition, and many others Palestinian recruits from Khan Dannoun camp were injured⁴⁵.

Later, another soldier of the PLA, Ammar Mahmoud Hamid Abdallah, was killed in the same area.



Ammar Mahmoud Hamid Abdallah

In November 2016 PLA battalions participated in seizing Khan Shieh Camp⁴⁶.

In July 2015, Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of Hezbollah, made a speech declaring his slogan, "Jerusalem road passes through Zabadani", alluding to the importance of the battle of Zabadani which Hezbollah's fighters were launching. Facebook accounts showed videos of PLA elements participating in the battle with Hezbollah and the Syrian Army. They were striking the city with heavy rockets, chanting, "We are coming Aqsa, we are coming Quds"⁴⁷.

45- The action group for Palestinians in Syria.
<http://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/5647>
(Last visit: 23/09/2018)

46- The Action Group for Palestinians in Syria.
<http://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post/6125>
(Last visit: 22/09/2018)

47- Video of PLA's participation with Assad Army in shelling Zabadani City, July 2015.
<https://youtu.be/8nzbNSgdIxx?t=55>
(Last visit: 21/09/2018)



Photos from the pages of Assad loyalists alluding to PLA participation in the battle of Zabadani (Damascus countryside)

In July 2017, PLA’s Facebook account mourned 9 soldiers killed, declaring that they had been killed achieving patriotic aims, fighting against the terrorist gangs in the Damascus suburb of E. Ghouta: Mohammad Khaled Hassan; Mahmoud Khaled Hassan; Yehia Mofid Hussin; Ibrahim Hussin Muhsen; Ahmad Bassam Hassan; Kifah Mohammad Hassan; Hietham Ismail Qasem; Mohammad Kheir Mostafa Sweid; and Mohammad Ahmad Ayedi.



A photo of PLA's fighters in the Damascus countryside

In January 2018, Sada Yabroud News' Facebook account, which is pro-opposition, reported that the Islam Army had captured three PLA soldiers

in E. Ghouta: Ahmad Mahmoud Mousa; Lt. Ahmad Ziyad al-Khateeb; and Mohamad Adnan Qubaiyah, after an operation resulted in the deaths of nine soldiers and the capture of three others of the PLA.

In March 2018 pro-regime media outlets and social media circulated a photo showing more than 20 soldiers of the PLA fighting with the Syrian Army in the battles of E. Ghouta, which was under siege, in alliance with the Revolutionary Iranian Guards.



PLA Chief-of-Staff meets with the leaders of the Quds-brigade militia

Al-Khadra, has asserted that the participation of the PLA in battles of besieged E. Ghouta is a great honor and fundamental to abolishing the existence of terrorist groups in Syria, "those groups which are supported by the West and the enemies of the Arabic Nation and the Palestinian Question," he said. "–Our participation in the E. Ghouta is important steps and fundamental positions to end the terrorist presence in Syria until we move together to liberate Palestine⁴⁸".



A soldier of PLA bombing civic places of Jobar-Ein Tarma Front

48- The Coalition of the forces of the Palestinian Resistance, al-Khadra: Our participation with the Syrian Army in E.Ghoutta is an honor, a basic stance against the Zionist enemy. Feb. 2018.

<https://www.tahaaluf.com/?p=30092>

(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

He mentioned to Al-alam Channel's website that the PLA had participated with the Syrian Army in re-seizing Darayya, Moudamiyah, Khan Shieh, Wadi Barad, Barza, Qabun, Joubar, and Ein Tarma⁴⁹.

2- Dier Al-Zoor Province

In September 2016 the Palestinian soldier Abdul Salam Ali al-Ubid from Alhujierah, Damascus Countryside, was killed in Dier Al-zoor fighting with the PLA against the opposition.



Photo of Abdul Salam

3- Dara' Province

In January 2016, many battalions of the PLA were moved to Shiekh Meskin front in Daraa Province to fight in line with the regime, after an order from the Syrian authority⁵⁰.

Lt. Samer Ahmad Hassan and Lt. Ibrahim Ali Juma were killed there, both from the PLA.

On that front, Battalion 12 of the PLA played an essential role in seizing the town of Shiekh Meskin and "al-Mahjoura" Battalion place in the north of Daraa. President of Russia Vladimir Putin has rewarded the leader of Battalion 12-PLA, Walid Murie al-Kurdi, and other officers

49- Al-Alam Channel (Aug. 2017) ibid (Last visit: 21/09/2018)

<https://www.alalam.ir/news/2010654/%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%82-%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7--%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B6%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A9>

50- The Action Group for Palestinians in Syria.

<http://www.actionpal.org.uk/ar/post4066/>

(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

have been rewarded with the Medal of Valor by al-Khadra, Chief-of-Staff.

In September 2016 the soldier Raafat Mohammad Hamid al-Shamloni was killed in Daraa in clashes with the opposition.

In June 2018 the PLA participated in battles at Busr al-Harir and Maliha al-Atash⁵¹.



Commendation letter from the leader of the 5th Battalion of the Syrian army to the brigadier general Walid Murie al-Kurdi for his role in the battles⁵²

In late July 2018 Assad's regime implicated the PLA in the battle with pro-ISIS Khaled bin Al-Walid Army in Daraa. On July 21, 2018, two Palestinian soldiers were killed in the area of Yarmouk River basin: Ahmad Tayseir Ibrahim and Sharaf Majd Abd Fattah abo Sweid.

51- The PLA-media

<http://www.palarmy.com/%d8%a8%d9%85%d8%b4d8%a7d8%b1d9%83d8%a9-%d9%83d8%aa%d8%a7d8%a6d8%a8-%d9%85d9%86-%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%a7d9%84d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%b1d9%8a%d8%b1-%d8%a7d9%84d9%81d9%84d8%b3d8%b7d9%8a%d9%86/>
(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

52 - The PLA-media, news.

<http://www.palarmy.com/%D8%AB%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84>
(Last visit: 22/09/2018)



The two Palestinian soldiers killed at Yarmouk Basin "Ahmed Tayseer Ibrahim" and "Sharaf Majd Abed Al Fattah Abu Sweid"

On 22 July Ahmad Zuhier Abd Allah, another PLA soldier was killed at the same front against ISIS. Three other soldiers were injured: Hasan Ali, Mohammad al-Natour, and Mohammad Khier Khalil.



Ahmad Zuhier Abd Allah

4- Homs Province

In August 2017 the PLA participated with the Syrian Army in the military operation against ISIS in Tanaf area. On August 26, 2017, six Palestinian PLA belligerents were killed: Omr Fayad; Ibrahim Qasem Dyap; Mustafa Omar Bshara; Hamad Shihabi; Alaa Shahodi; Mohammad Haitham ahmad Isa.

5- Hama Province:

In October 2017 the PLA participated in battles in the Eastern Countryside of Hama Province. Many elements of the Observation Group and the Tanks Battalion (a group of Qadesiyah Brigade–PLA) were injured while fighting alongside the National Defense militias in the battles against ISIS. The Observation Group is a security group, its elements are not trained to be on a battlefield⁵³.

53- The Syrian-Reporter.

<https://syrian-reporter.net/%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%8A/>
(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

In September 2017 the Russian Troops in Syria rewarded the leader of the Observation Group, Mohammad Joudat Edries, the Medal of Valor due to the role the group played in liberating Uqierabat from ISIS.



Rewarding Mohammad Joudat Edries with the Medal of “Valor”

6- Damascus Province

The PLA participated in the battle of the South of Damascus on April 19, 2018. The PLA, however, didn't officially declare its participation in that battle, but its killed soldiers were an indicator of participation.

On April 21, 2018, Mohammad Nour Imad Sammor, 20 years old from the Camp of Aedeen, Homs, was killed in al-Qadam, South of Damascus. Two others were killed as well: Qasem Mohammad Ali and Mohammad al-Hindi.

Al-Manar Channel, the official channel of Hezbollah, reported April 19, 2018 on its website that military units of the PLA, Free Palestine Movement, and the Brigade of Quds from Aleppo were preparing for the battle in the South of Damascus. The report explained the details of the battle. Four axes were determined: Palestine and Yarmouk streets, and al-Qdam and al-Hajar al-Aswad, in addition to fortifying the axis of al-Tadamoun. While the National Defense would prevent ISIS from reaching the neighborhoods of reconciliation in Yelda, Papila, and Beit Sahem, PLA would be backing the attacking groups⁵⁴.

7- Seweda Province

In the summer of 2015, the PLA participated with the regime troops against the opposition at Tha'ala Airbase, west of Seweda Province. More than 250 belligerents of the PLA broke into the airbase with civilian

54- Al-Manar Channel.
<http://www.almanar.com.lb/3665748>
(last visit: 21/09/2018)

vehicles armed with medium and light weapons, using agricultural roads linking the western Seweda countryside with the airport.⁵⁵.

In the summer of 2017 the PLA joined the Syrian Army in the battles against ISIS in Suwayda's suburbs in Beir Qasab, Kra', Hibariah, Khurbet al-Enbasheh, and others⁵⁶.

The engineering units of PLA played an important role in these battles, paving the ways for the Syrian army to get to its targeted locations⁵⁷.

We didn't observe any other Palestinian military units in these battles besides the PLA.

In July 2018 two Palestinian belligerents were killed, Ahmad Mohammad Ibrahim and Anwar Nayif al-Hatib in battles against ISIS.

These battles, however, are still ambiguous and questionable, why they are not yet resolved.



Ahmad Mohammad Ibrahim and Anwar Nayif al-Hatib

55- Itihad Press.

<http://aletihadpress.com/2015/06/12/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B9/>

(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

56- PLA website.

<http://www.palarmy.com/%d9%86%d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%ac%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%af%d8%a9-%d9%84%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a-%d9%88%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b4/>

(Last visit: 21/09/2018)

57- PLA website

<http://www.palarmy.com/%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a3%d9%85-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%83-%d9%88%d8%af%d9%88%d8%b1-%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%a7/>

(last visit: 21/09/2018)

In the same month, an officer and two soldiers of PLA were killed when ISIS blew up an improvised explosive device in Seweda's western suburb. They are: the brigadier general Hussein Ali Mohammad, and the lieutenants Nidal Saed Udah and Mohammad Abd Allah Yusef. Two other brigadier generals were injured, Sharif Kayed, and Bilal Qasem Mohammad from PLA.



Hussein Ali Mohammad



Nidal Saed Udah



Mohammad Abd Allah Yusef

9- Conclusion

Legally and legitimately, the PLA was established by a decision of the PLO, which is clearly written in the PLO's law, summits, and financial reports. The Arabic Summits II and III delegated Ahmad Shukairy to consult the Palestinian people and the Arabic states in the creation of a Palestinian entity.

This legal linkage is the only source of the PLA's legitimacy. The PLO and the Palestinian Authority (which has a seat in the Arabic League and the UN) have the legal ability to intervene in order to prevent the engagement of the PLA in the Syrian war, and to hold responsible and accountable the people behind this engagement, whether they are Syrian or Palestinian.

Thus, the affected people have the right to persecute the PLA's leadership, the Syrian authority, and the leadership of the PLO, which at this time is the National Palestinian Authority. The Arabic League is responsible as well due to its inaction in preventing such bloody engagement of the PLA in the civil war in Syria, where crimes have been committed against civilians and forcibly recruited Palestinian refugees.

On the other side, for the PLO, which holds authority over some Palestinian lands and plans to establish a project for a Palestinian State, it is controversial to have an army out of its territory, especially one ordered by another state to commit crimes and human rights abuses against the people of the hosting state (Syria) and the Palestinian refugees there.

This discrepancy could be solved by moving PLA-Syria to Palestinian territories, which would require an international backing.

This is needed to assure conditions of justice for the people in these regions and for the Syrian people, who are victims of the Syrian regime and its pawns, such as the PLA.

The legal responsibility of the PLO towards PLA enables victims to seek persecution as judicial systems allow. Such potential persecution is essential to squeeze the various parties to put the PLA in its right position, as a part of the Palestinian institutions inside Palestinian territory, in line with relevant international decisions.

Justice for the victims, the human beings, is the practical way to create more peaceful international relations at the legal levels.

Study

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Yousif Faker Al Deen & Homam Alkhateeb

Reviewed by:
Anwar Al Bounni



Syrian Center for Legal Researches & Studies www.sl-center.org



Democratic Republic Research Center www.drsc-sy.org

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