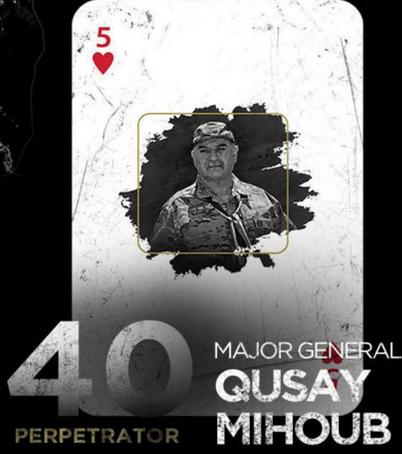




PRO JUSTICE

مع العدالة



Qusay Ibrahim Mihoub, relative of Syrian military spokesman General Ali Mihoub, joined the military early in his career, attending military school at Air Force College. He was later assigned to the Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFI) after failing to graduate as a military pilot. He is well known for his sectarian attitude toward security issues since commencing his service in the AFI.

At the start of 2011, then-Colonel Mihoub served as an assistant to the chief of the AFI Southern Region Branch in the city of Harasta, which is responsible for all security in the southern governorates of Damascus and its countryside, Daraa, Quneitra and Suweida. As popular anti-government demonstrations became widespread, Mihoub was deployed to Daraa to command the AFI troops responsible for suppressing the protests in the southern region. He served in a security team headed by the late Major-General Hisham Bakhtiar, who oversaw the National Security Bureau, Brigadier-General Zuhair Hamad, the deputy director of the General Intelligence Directorate, and Rustum Ghazali of the Military Intelligence Directorate.



Mihoub was a prominent supporter of the military intervention to dismantle the sit-in at Al-Omari Mosque in Daraa in March 2011, ordering security forces to shoot at demonstrators, which resulted in the death of 31 people and the arrest of dozens more. Mihoub is also accused of planning a lethal ambush on civilians on route to Daraa to participate in the protests, which killed 60 people and injured around 300 others.

During this time, he also oversaw the arrests of hundreds of Daraa residents while working at the AFI Southern Region Branch, where heinous violations including torture and murder were carried out against detainees under his watch.

Human Rights Watch's report «By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria» documented that the then Colonel Qusay Mihoub gave himself orders to the Air-force Intelligence personnel to open fire and repress protesters by any mean. The report quoted a defector who served in Air-force Intelligence in Daraa, Mansour, as saying that "Colonel Qusay Mihoub, gave his unit orders to stop the protesters by all possible means, which included the use of lethal force".

«The orders we were given were to force the demonstrators to retreat Method, including shooting them. It was too broad to allow the shooting. During the presence of the officers, they decided when to shoot and who, if there was someone with a microphone or a sign, or if the demonstrators refused to retreat, we would shoot. We had Kalashnikovs and automatic rifles with us, and there were snipers on the roofs.»

The Violations Documentation Center in Syria published an eye-witness testimony of the detainee «Ahmed Abu Ali», in which he spoke about the circumstances of his detention at the AFI headquarters in Daraa and the methods of torture he and the detainees were subjected to. Dozens of detainees were tortured to death under Mihoub's direct supervision.

Human Rights Watch (July 2012) published a testimony to one of the detainees in a report entitled, "Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011", in which he said, "I went to the funeral at the cemetery. After the security forces let us out of the cemetery, they opened fire. I just laid down. The shooting continued for 10 to 15 minutes. Afterwards, when I stood up somebody hit me in the back of my head with a stick. I fell down, but they continued to beat me. They hit me over the eye with a stick. When I woke up I was in the Air-force Intelligence branch. There were four people in the cell. I was then taken out of the cell and beaten in the corridor. They then took me to an open yard outside where they beat me for two hours before they brought me back to the cell and then transferred me to another branch.

It was a room underground. There was a chair where the interrogator sat, and a table. Two people in the room were beating me with a one-meter long cable with metal wire inside and plastic on the outside, accusing me of taking part in the protests and of carrying weapons. I was on my knees with hands behind my back. The other one was using his boot to beat me on the mouth. I was bleeding. They showed me a picture of Bashar Assad and asked who it was? I said, "The president." They said, "No, it is God." One of them put a boot on my neck and the other shoved the photo under my nose. This lasted for about an hour. Then they took me back to the cell where there were about 130 people. The cell measured four by four meters. People were on top of each other, standing, lying, etc. About 10 of the 130 were not severely beaten. Clearly one of them was a spy, but we didn't know which one. They told us, "Welcome to the Air-force Intelligence. Here you will lose your faith in God." Mihoub bears joint responsibility for all crimes committed in the AFI Southern Region Branch, which was headed by Major-General Mohammed Rahmoun, including the killing of detainees under torture. Hundreds of these cases were brought to light in revelations by the whistleblower codenamed "Caesar".

Mihoub is one of a number of officials responsible for imposing the siege on the city of Daraa from April 25-May 5, 2011. He later partook in the storming of the city, ordering raids and arrests on civilians. Large-scale sweep operations also took place, resulting in the detention of around 2,000 people in the municipal stadium of Daraa where witnesses reported cases of mass-executions.

The crimes perpetrated by Mihoub were not limited to the city of Daraa, but also spread to its villages, including those of Al-Sanamein, Sheikh Miskeen, Dael, Kafr Shams, and Saida, where 120 people were killed and 160 were arrested. These violations were carried out in collaboration with Brigadier-General Suhail al-Hassan, Major-General Jamil al-Hassan, Brigadier-General Abdel Salam Fajr Mahmoud, Brigadier-General Louay al-Ali, and Brigadier-General Wafiq Nasser.

Mihoub's crimes also include ordering the assassination of regime opponents, as has been exposed by the recorded confessions of one captured assassin involved in the killings.

In 2014, the US Treasury Department announced the imposition of sanctions on Mihoub for ordering lethal force to stop the protests in 2011. «Under Mihoub's command, the [AFI] Daraa Branch was responsible for human rights abuses and the deaths of hundreds of civilians, including targeted assassinations. These abuses included the shooting, beating, detainment, and burning alive of civilians, as well as the use of torture against detainees, including beatings and electric shock," the Treasury announced in a statement.

Mihoub is also subject to UK, EU and Canadian sanctions. He was also named by former US envoy to United Nations Samantha Power at the UN Security Council in 2016, in which she listed Syrian officials confirmed to have committed prosecutable war crimes against civilians.

Along with Major-General Ali Mamlouk, Mihoub was also linked to a failed 2012 bombing plot by former Lebanese MP Michel Samaha involving a series of attacks allegedly designed to target Lebanese political, military and civilian figures.

Mihoub is also accused of arresting a regime loyalist who launched the "Waynon" (Where Are They?) campaign to determine the fate of pro-government fighters at Al-Tabqa Military Airbase, which was overrun by the Islamic State group in 2014. At a later stage, Mihoub was transferred to the AFI Directorate in the capital Damascus, where he served as the right-hand man to AFI Chief Major-General Jamil Hassan. While stationed there, Mihoub was assigned to oversee security in the Badia region and the area surrounding the Damascus International Airport.

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