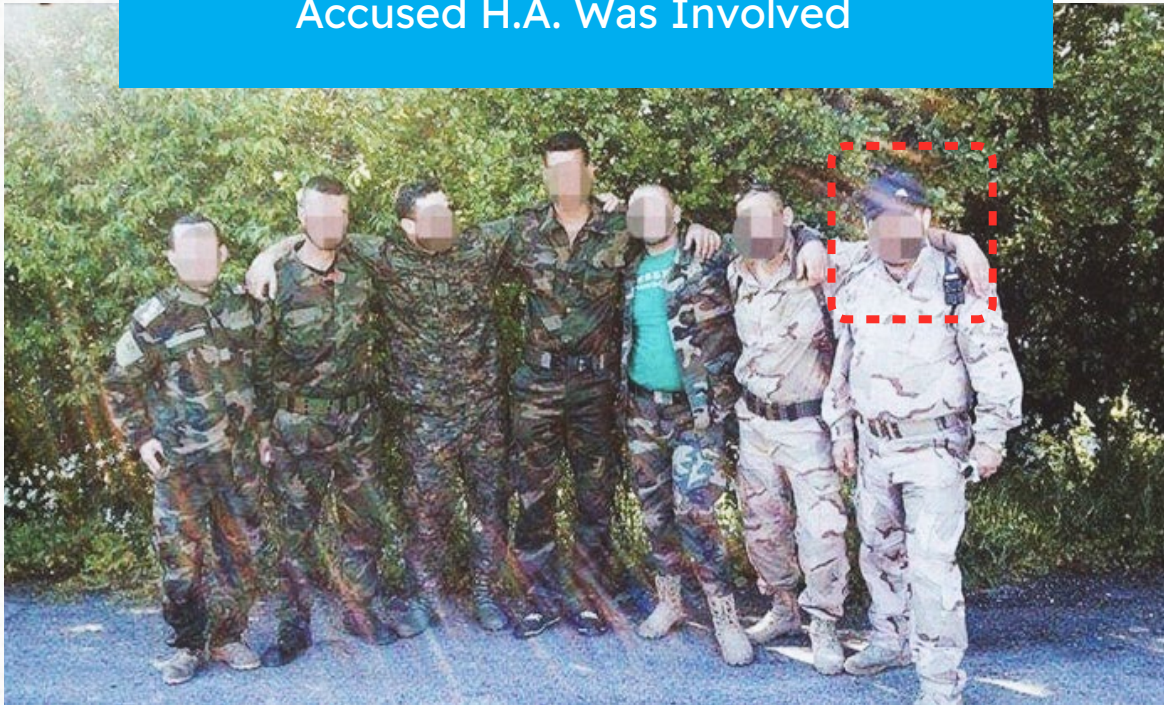


Statement

SNHR Welcomes the Arrest Warrant Issued by the Belgian Judiciary Against An Individual Implicated In Involvement With the Syrian Regime's National Defense Militias

SNHR Provided the Examining Magistrate With Data on Violations in Which the Accused H.A. Was Involved



Tuesday 30 January 2024

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyzes in Syria.

On January 27, 2024, [Belgium's Public Prosecution Service charged a man, named only as H.A.](#), with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria. The Belgium-based accused H.A. was a member of the Syrian regime's National Defense Militias in al-Salamiya city in eastern Hama governorate. The examining magistrate handling the case issued an arrest warrant against the accused on January 24, 2024.

Among the charges brought against H.A. were that he commanded a local militia between 2011 and 2015 that attacked and assaulted protestors. He is also accused of involvement in carrying out arrests of civilians in al-Salamiya city and the surrounding villages through attacking their houses and torturing them .

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has been helping to build this case since 2020 by supplying the investigators and the Belgian Prosecutor's Office with data on the violations as found on SNHR's database. The group has also assisted in finding eyewitnesses and providing additional information on violations in which we believe the accused is implicated as part of his involvement with the local militias in al-Salamiya city.

According to the information on SNHR's database regarding individuals implicated in war crimes and crimes against humanity, H.A., from al-Salamiya city in eastern Hama governorate, was a prominent member of the local militias/ National Defense militias¹ headed by Fadel Mohammad Warda² in al-Salamiya city. H.A. took responsibility for supervising the main roads in the city and eastern rural Hama from 2012 onwards, and was involved in abductions of civilians in these areas which became commonplace at the time, with the kidnappers demanding massive ransom payments to secure their victims' release. He was also involved in pillaging through imposing 'fees' on commercial cars to allow them to pass, as well as playing a similar role in other criminal practices, including raids, arrests, crushing demonstrations, and attacking protestors along with other militias who were active in al-Salamiya city at the time under the umbrella banner of 'popular committees', which the regime later rebranded as the National Defense Militias. H.A., who had previously worked as a taxi driver, joined the local militias known locally as the 'Salama Militias' in 2012, and subsequently prominently rose within the ranks of the National Defense. In 2015, the accused came to Belgium after his wife, who had already been granted asylum in Belgium at that point, filed a reunion appeal. Subsequently, H.A. settled in the Belgian capital, Brussels. However, some Syrians living in Belgium told us that, even while living in Belgium, he continued to support the illicit activities of the regime's militias in Syria.

SNHR welcomes the Belgian judiciary's issuing of an arrest warrant against a figure who has been implicated in involvement in the Syrian regime's National Defense Militias, a body responsible for multiple crimes against humanity against the Syrian people, as we believe this is another positive step on the path of accountability. We also wish to thank all the victims and eyewitnesses who have responded to appeals for information, and continued to show faith in this cause.

1. National Defense Forces is a countrywide body that was established by the Syrian regime in 2012 to fight alongside its formal forces. Those militias comprised local militias, primarily the so-called local popular committees. It was made up of civilian volunteers and retired officers.
2. Warda was first the commander of the Warda Militias, and then the National Defense Forces, a position he has held since 2011. He was also elected to the People's Assembly for Syria for the legislative term 2012-2016 as part of the Baath Party bloc, and won a second tenure in the legislative term 2016-2020.



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



info@snhr.org
www.snhr.org

No justice without accountability

© Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR).
January 2024

