

Saraya al-Muqawama: Latakia Local Defence Forces Affiliate

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Previously I have examined Local Defence Forces (LDF) affiliates from the Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib and Hama sectors. This post examines Saraya al-Muqawama ("The Resistance Brigades"), an LDF affiliate of the Latakia sector.



An emblem of Saraya al-Muqawama.

In its *present form* (i.e. as an LDF affiliate), Saraya al-Muqawama was constituted in early 2017, though the group had existed as fighting contingents before 2017. The leader of the group is one Asif Makhoul, who is originally from Jableh in Latakia province. Another leader of note is Kamal Fayadh, who is of Lebanese origin and describes himself as a "researcher on security and political matters." Indeed, Kamal has granted multiple interviews over the years, such as this one with Dam Press in March 2015 giving his assessment of the situation in Syria. In that interview, Kamal rejected the idea of the need for a new Yalta conference to resolve the present problems, arguing instead that "we need a great victory...through Syrian steadfastness and the steadfastness of the resistance line from Tehran to Beirut, we have created a new map in which we have altered Sykes-Picot and there has arisen a new map, with the borders from Tehran to Beirut open."

In official terms, the LDF sector affiliation of Saraya al-Muqawama is the "coastal region." The leader of this LDF sector is one al-Hajj Ayoub, whose name I remember hearing when I wrote about Saraya al-Ra'ad. It should be noted that al-Hajj Ayoub, like al-Hajj Asghar (his Idlib counterpart of similar name form), is an Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander. Below is a letter of commendation from al-Hajj Ayoub to Asif Makhoul, which I have translated in full.



"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The homeland is precious, the homeland is great, the homeland is lofty, and the homeland is steadfast because the homeland is our very essence.

The founding leader: President Hafez al-Assad.

Certificate of assessment

The mujahid hero: Abu Deya', Asif Hassan Makhoulouf.

We, the family of the LDF command in the coastal region, congratulate and bless you for the great victory and divine victory over the enemy of God and enemy of the Messenger (SAWS) and collaborator of the Zionist entity and America- the Wahhabi Da'esh terrorist

organization- at the hand of God and the hands of the believers, and we bless the resisting Syrian people, at the head of them his excellency the President Dr. Bashar Hafez al-Assad, on this blessed Eid.

Were it not for the sacrifices and shedding of the blood of the hero martyrs and efforts of our great youth, the resisting mujahideen and their patience for God's judgement and will, this victory would not have happened and this depraved enemy would not have been defeated. So may our martyrs enjoy Paradise with the Supreme Companion [i.e. the prophets and other outstanding persons] and we ask God the Exalted to grant urgent recovery for the wounded mujahideen and we ask for success for all resisters in all parts of the world and to liberate all the Islamic lands from the hands of the tawagheet [idolatrous tyrants] and at the head of that the liberation of Palestine, the blessed al-Aqsa mosque and noble al-Quds [Jerusalem] from the hands of the wretched Zionist enemy.

Wa as-salam alaykum wa rahmat Allah wa barakatuhu

Leader of the LDF in the Sahel [coastal region].

al-Hajj Ayoub."

Like other auxiliary formations, Saraya al-Muqawama offers recruitment opportunities with the opportunity to connect via phone numbers. The particular focus is on those wanted for military service, whether they have evaded conscription/call for reserve service or have deserted the armed forces. The LDF affiliation of Saraya al-Muqawama is advantageous in this case because, thanks to administrative measures passed last year, the LDF can offer taswiyat al-wad' for such people and their service in the LDF will be considered as their military/reserve service. As Kamal Fayadh wrote in a warning against those who falsely claim they can undertake taswiyat al-wad' and other promises in exchange for money:

"This situation concerns in particular the military personnel who fled from service or reserve service and all who have been defrauded in the case of a kidnapped or missing person. It is my duty to write about it and the duty of all who read this to inform others to prevent the continuation of this disgusting phenomenon.

When one of them demands money from you and says about himself that he is 'supported' and 'a mediator'- that is, that he knows officials and knows the keys to resolve your problem, look into the case of a detained person, recover a kidnapped or missing person, do taswiya for you if you are in a state of fleeing from service or reserve service: you must know that this person is nothing more than a swindler and deceiver whose aim is to defraud the simple sons of his people in order to steal their wealth. All you must do is head straight to one of the security apparatuses and inform about him because it is a national duty, and destroying the internal Da'esh is among the most noble of national duties.

We in the leadership of the Saraya al-Muqawama forces, with all pride and in

cooperation with one of the security apparatuses in Latakia, informed about the leader of a swindling gang and with him the members of his gang, and they were all detained. Even though they were one of the heavyweight gangs, we did not fear anything or anyone, and we participated in the operation to arrest these scum.

We met his excellency the brigadier general in the security branch in Latakia and informed him about members of the gang and the leader of the gang nicknamed the doctor and falsely bears the name of a noble family of the families of al-Qardaha and claims that he is the deputy minister of reconciliation for the affairs of kidnapped and missing persons.

This leader of the gang was able to swindle a number of those who fled from military service and reserve service by his claim that he could sort out their affairs [taswiyat al-wad'] and he took from them around 2,000,000 Syrian pounds.

We would like to notify all those who fled from military service and reserve service that there was a decision issued this year for sorting out the affairs of military personnel who join the ranks of the LDF and their service in the Local Defence is reckoned for them as though they are serving in their original units and sectors in which they were serving. They will also obtain a monthly salary and this means that we are the ones who will pay you in exchange for your service and you will obtain a card with which you can travel in the regions of Syria without fear of your being arrested, and we will sort out your affairs and there is no reason for you to pay money to others unless you are stupid to the point of being an utter imbecile.

We met with his excellency the brigadier general, we informed him about the situation, he was extremely responsive and we thank him for the speed of implementation. He sent his patrols immediately and this impostor doctor was arrested and with him the members of his gang. One of them was a musician previously, claiming that he was a colonel in the 4th Division. Another was working as an intermediary between the gang and the vulnerable. And regrettably there is a personality I don't want to reveal for public reasons but along with the others he became like terrified dogs during detention and verification in the security branch in Latakia.

If you were exposed to a fraud operation by this so-called doctor get in touch with me and I will tell you how to go to the security branch and recover your wealth from this so-called doctor who claims that he is the deputy minister of reconciliation for the affairs of missing persons. I ask you to end this foolishness, there are national Syrian security apparatuses that will help you, so there is no reason to pay money for some to live off your back and wealth. Enough with this foolishness: I hope you will participate in informing and publishing this post for friends and acquaintances so all people will understand the truth of these folks."



Saraya al-Muqawama flag.

In addition to Iranian support that would be given as part of an LDF affiliation, Saraya al-Muqawama has received assistance from a number of people, including the Syrian MP Abu Ali Naser (Naser Suleiman) of Tartous and some unspecified "patriotic noble expatriates."

Saraya al-Muqawama has fought in a variety of locations in Syria (like other LDF formations, therefore, not necessarily confined to its place of origin). These locations include the Latakia countryside, Hama and more recently the Albukamal area along the

border with Iraq.



Asif Makhoulf (left) with Kamal Fayadh (right) in the Albukamal countryside as part of a recent assignment.



Kamal Fayadh (far right) with Saraya al-Areen forces in Hama countryside.



A wounded Ali Kayali, leader of the Muqawama Suriya, with Kamal Fayadh.

In short, Saraya al-Muqawama matches other LDF formations in being on the registers of the Syrian armed forces and working with the IRGC.