

Profile: Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade

by [Abdullah Hayek \(/experts/abdullah-hayek\)](#), [Kyle Robertson \(/experts/kyle-robertson\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Abdullah Hayek \(/experts/abdullah-hayek\)](#)

Abdullah Hayek is a research assistant with The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program. He specializes in Iranian-backed militias in Syria and Iraq as well as the military affairs of the Levant and Gulf regions.



[Kyle Robertson \(/experts/kyle-robertson\)](#)

Kyle Robertson is a research assistant with The Washington Institute's Rubin Family Arab Politics Program. He specializes in Syria, Yemen, and Libya.



Articles & Testimony

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Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade is an Arab tribal militia directly operated by Iran's IRGC, established in 2023 to fight the SDF east of the Euphrates in Syria.

Name: *Liwa Usud al-Uqaydat* (Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade, or LOB).

Type of movement: Tier 3 *fasail* (armed group) engaged in kinetic military and paramilitary actions in Syria, particularly in the eastern region, including Deir al-Zour province. Primarily focused on combating the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with activities aimed at reinforcing Arab tribal power and opposing U.S. and Kurdish influence.

History:

- The movement is drawn from the Ougaidat tribal confederation, the largest in Deir al-Zour province and the strongest in east Syria. According to a [2018 study \(/https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/tale-six-tribes-securing-middle-euphrates-river-valley\)](#) on local sentiments in this area, "Members of the Ougaidat tribe hold a hostile attitude toward the United States dating to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and overthrow of Saddam Hussein. This negative perception was reinforced by reports from hundreds of Iraqi Sunni officers, as well as former Baath and other government officials, who were displaced to Ougaidat areas during the war."
- According to [OpenSanctions \(/https://www.opensanctions.org/entities/opensyr-node-9932/\)](#), Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade was founded in 2021 as a local militia affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The militia comprises roughly 200 fighters, the majority of whom are from the Shuwait clan, and operates in the city of al-Mayadeen and its southern desert.
- In August 2023, footage [captured \(/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XVC0nby9gM\)](#) dozens of armed members of the Ougaidat clan mobilizing through the village of al-Shahil in the countryside of Deir al-Zour. The assembly was part of a larger movement to engage in combat against the SDF.
- During the Arab Tribal Uprising in August and September of 2023, the commander of Usud al-Uqaydat, Hashim al-Sattam ([nicknamed Abu Bassam \(/https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/10/30/10028\)](#)), was [photographed \(/https://npasyria.com/en/106897/\)](#) with other militants crossing to areas east of the Euphrates River in Deir al-Zour province near Dhiban reportedly to fight the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Sattam also released a [video \(/https://www.syriahr.com/%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%83/678135/\)](#) inviting Arab tribes in eastern Syria to participate in the fight against the SDF.
- On September 25, 2023, Arab tribal militias, among them the Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade, the Hashemite Tribes Regiment, and the Arab Tribal Forces, [engaged \(/https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/9/25/%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%AF%D8%AF%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9\)](#) in significant combat with the SDF in the town of Dhiban in Deir al-Zour. This escalation followed an [announcement \(/https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/9/6/%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d8%aa%d9%82%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%af-%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a-%d8%aa%d8%ad%d9%8a%d9%8a%d9%87-](#)

[%d8%b9%d8%b4%d8%a7%d8%a6%d8%b1](#)) by Sheikh Ibrahim al-Hifl, marking the end of a two-week ceasefire and initiating an attack against the SDF. The concerted efforts of the Arab tribal militias resulted in the complete expulsion of the SDF from the towns of Dhiban and al-Huwaij, showcasing a significant shift in control within the region.

Objective:

- This group's primary objective is to fight SDF units in order to strengthen Arab tribal control east of the Euphrates. A secondary objective is to strengthen Iran's grip in this area and push U.S. forces out of Syria. Areas under SDF control are generally inaccessible to Iranian proxies in the so-called "axis of resistance," so gaining a foothold in these zones would enable the IRGC to establish a northern land corridor leading to Aleppo.

Chain of command:

- **Hashim al-Sattam (Abu Bassam):** Sattam is an official in the IRGC's affiliation office in al-Mayadeen. In this role, he [recruits](https://www.jesrpress.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%91%D9%84-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%87/) (<https://www.jesrpress.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%91%D9%84-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%87/>) locals in Dhiban and al-Hawaij and [recommends](https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/04/19/8267/) (<https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/04/19/8267/>) them for acceptance into IRGC-affiliated militias. He reportedly establishes "cells" (<https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/05/20/8568/>) for the IRGC in SDF-controlled areas east of the Euphrates River. He uses fishing boats to transport weapons to IRGC-affiliated militia across the River. [Eye of the Euphrates](https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/10/30/10028/) (<https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2023/10/30/10028/>) reported that Sattam supervised the IRGC-affiliated militia members responsible for attacks on the U.S. bases at the Conoco and Omar oil fields.
- **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps:** The Arab tribes of Eastern Syria have effectively become affiliates or subordinate entities of the IRGC through various strategies. These strategies include organizing tribal council meetings to encourage opposition against the U.S. and SDF in Eastern Syria, financially supporting the establishment and operational activities of these tribes, providing training, and facilitating the integration of newly trained members into tribal militias. Additionally, the IRGC has played a role in strategically relocating these militias as necessitated by operational requirements.
- **Assad regime:** Sattam's brother, [Aseeb al-Hattam](https://www.jesrpress.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%91%D9%84-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%87/) (<https://www.jesrpress.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%91%D9%84-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%87/>), is reportedly a Brigadier General in the Syrian Arab Army. The Syrian Army plays a crucial role in the operational support of tribal militia forces within Eastern Syria, encompassing the transportation and utility of militia personnel across the region. Additionally, it [ensures](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/kyf-abtlt-almlyshyat-alayranyt-dyr-alzwr/) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/kyf-abtlt-almlyshyat-alayranyt-dyr-alzwr/>) the provision of essential resources, including ammunition, food, and military supplies, to these militias. Moreover, tribal militias, notably the Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade, engage in recruitment efforts within the towns and villages of Eastern Syria. These efforts are not limited to their own ranks but also extend to sourcing personnel for the Syrian regime's military and intelligence operations.



Figure 1: Two images of Hashim al-Sattam, in the office and on the battlefield.

(/sites/default/files/2024-04/Lions%20of%20the%20Ougaidat%20Brigade%20leaders%2C%2C

Affiliate relationships:

- **Sons of Jazira and Euphrates:** On September 2, 2023, the Telegram channel for [Sons of Jazira and Euphrates](#) ([/node/18451](#)) reported (https://t.me/algazeera_alfurat/19) that Hajem al-Bashir, the chief of the Baggara clan, declined an invitation initiated by the SDF and the Global Coalition. The request was for a meeting with Arab tribal militias within the al-Hasakah governorate. Al-Bashir's condition for the meeting was the inclusion of Sheikh Ibrahim al-Hifl, the chief of the Ougaidat clan. On September 6, 2023, a [video](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=279322558186845) (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=279322558186845>) was published by the Sons of the Jazira and Euphrates Movement showing Hashim al-Sattam in tribal clothes crossing the Euphrates River to fight the SDF.
- **Aleppo Defenders Legion:** On August 11, 2020, the Telegram channel for the [Aleppo Defenders Legion](#) ([/node/18539](#)) announced (https://t.me/f_m_aleppo/30548) that the Ougaidat clan of Syria issued a deadline, giving the United States a one-month ultimatum to transfer control of all Arab territories in Eastern Syria back to local forces.
- **Nawaf Ragheb al-Bashir:** Hashim al-Sattam [trained](https://deirezzor24.net/en/how-iran-and-assad-penetrated-the-ranks-of-so-called-tribal-fighters/) (<https://deirezzor24.net/en/how-iran-and-assad-penetrated-the-ranks-of-so-called-tribal-fighters/>) tribal fighters during the Arab Tribal Uprising at IRGC-affiliated militia camps with the permission of Nawaf al-Bashir. al-Bashir also oversees the recruitment of personnel from Deir al-Zour into Arab tribal militias such as Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade
- **Liwa Abu Fadl al-Abbas and Liwa al-Baqir:** In October 2022, personnel from the Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade, LAFA, and [Liwa al-Baqir](#) ([/node/18453](#)) [carried out](https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2022/10/17/6569/) (<https://eyeofeuphrates.com/ar/news/2022/10/17/6569/>) a coordinated live-fire training exercise, incorporating field artillery and Iranian-pattern Multiple-Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS). This operation took place in the southern outskirts of al-Mayadeen following the relocation of these groups. The movement was a response to the U.S. conducting airstrikes on IRGC rocket positions within the city.
- **Lebanese Hezbollah:** In Eastern Syria, particularly in Deir al-Zour, Albu Kamal, Ashara, and al-Mayadeen, there is a notable [convergence](https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/9/22/%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/) (<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/9/22/%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AF%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/>) in the deployment positions between Lebanese Hezbollah and personnel from the Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade. Hezbollah's presence in Eastern Syria is primarily through its 313 unit, which is actively engaged in close collaboration with local Arab tribal militias. This partnership focuses on coordinated military engagements against SDF positions, illustrating a strategic alliance in the region.

- **Liwa Fatemiyoun:** The Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade actively [recruits](https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D9%88%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9) (<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D9%88%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B2%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9>) Syrian nationals across Eastern Syria, particularly in Deir al-Zour, in collaboration with Liwa Fatemiyoun, an Afghan-based militia supported by the IRGC operating in Syria. These two groups share operational territories, including numerous checkpoints, and coordinate closely on military engagements. Furthermore, their recruitment efforts extend beyond their immediate ranks, contributing personnel to both the National Defense Forces (NDF) and the Syrian Army.

Subordinate relationships:

- The brigade does not have any known media organs, not even social media pages.



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Militia Spotlight: Profiles (</policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight-profiles>)



How to Use Militia Spotlight: Profiles

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Profile: Lions of the Ougaidat Brigade

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Profile: Arab Tribal and Clan Forces

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Profile: Arab Tribal and Clan Forces

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Profile: Arab Tribal and Clan Forces

Apr 15, 2024

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ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Kataib Hezbollah is Part of Iraq's PMF

Apr 15, 2024

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Michael Knights

(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-part-iraqs-pmf)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

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April 16, 2024, starting at 12:30 p.m. EDT (1630 GMT)

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Dana Stroul,
Zohar Palti,
Farzin Nadimi

(/policy-analysis/middle-easts-perilous-moment-policy-implications-and-escalation-risks)

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