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The Oil of Deirezzor From the Revolution to ISIS

Deirezzor Countryside _ Ahmad's lens _ exclusive for Ayin al madina
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper addresses the topic of petroleum extraction and trade in the province of Deirezzor, the main region for oil and gas resources in Syria. The study sheds light on the periods during which different parties and actors were controlling the extraction process and trade of petroleum, and presents an analysis of the complex nature of the relationship networks that had evolved between those actors. It also highlights the administrative structures that were established in light of the Al-Nusra Front's control over some petroleum entities and oilfields, followed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS), which later gained complete control over those fields.

The study relied on a group of private sources of engineers, technicians and workers in its data collection process, some of whom are still on top of their work, in addition to oil traders and oil tank truck drivers. Each and every one of them was interviewed and met by some of the researchers who participated in this study. Other researchers conducted a series of interviews with public figures who had a prominent role in the issue of oil in its various stages. The statements and resolutions issued relating to oil were represented by active commissions and bodies at the time, and were published over the Internet. Regarding the data system of the Ministry of Petroleum, the official reports adopted were prepared by the field staff of the ministry at Al Furat Petroleum Company, which was operating in the oilfields and facilities of Deirezzor. The fact-checking processes were done by double checking-crossing the testimonies and the interviews in all research aspects.

Following the outbreak of the uprising against Bashar al-Assad's regime, which turned into an armed resistance, his government lost control of most of the territory of the province in June 2012, including its oil facilities and fields, specifically in Deirezzor. The oil became a weapon used by some of the local populations to force the Assad regime to mitigate the policy of collective punishment, or to bind them to «Protection Contracts» - a mechanism initiated by Assad Government's Ministry of Petroleum by delegating some local groups to protect pipes that pass through their regions in exchange for monthly payments. However, those who protected the oil plants found, with the emergence of basic burners to refine oil, that selling crude oil which ran through their lands was financially more effective and profitable than any contract. Hence, this led to the popularity of oil trade and refinement, and associated businesses, which caused a boost in wealth for many.

The Military Council, which was expected to protect local armed forces of rebels, nor the Revolutionary Military Council which had previously defected from the latter, both did not have the capacity nor the desire to intervene in the issue of oil and to prevent or systemize it. The tribal identity chaotically mixed with armed brigades was represented as the «Free Syrian Army», the broad headline for fighters. At the same time, the «Sharia'a Commission», with Salafi views, who were expanding steadily and acquiring a growing influence in public affairs, did not agree on a unified position on the oil issue initially.

Al-Nusra Front was able to unify a number of actors to establish a «Central Sharia'a Commission», as of March 2013, and tried to organize local labor in the oil industry and create a more just process from their point of view, and alleviate harm to public health, in addition to avoiding clashes with the militant investors initially.

Al-Nusra Front and its Sharia'a allies had two prominent roles in the Deirezzor oil issue; the first was to control the massive «Conoco» gas plant, after the expulsion of tribal groups controlling the latter. The tribal groups' behavior was characterized as reckless and chaotic which jeopardized the "gas for electricity" agreement with the Assad regime, and led to a power cut in the province by the Assad Government each time the supply of gas was suspended. The second role for Al-Nusra was controlling the main site of the "Al-Omar" oilfield after the expulsion of Assad's forces from it, in a pro-

active step in the context of competition and struggle, of Al-Nusra with “ISIS”, which was in its initial development and expansion back then.

The story of Deirezzor’s oil trade wasn’t tragic in all chapters, as three occurrences of varying degrees had emerged, in the management of its resources and placing them in the public interest which are as follows: 1) The “Taym” oilfield, which was run by a private commission under the auspices of the Military Council, and 2) an oil refinery with average capacity according to the local market considerations at the time, run by the Revolutionary Provincial Council, 3) and an oil well near the town of “Jerthy”, which was managed by a special committee under the auspices of the local council.

Within a very complicated and changeable scene, the Mez’al oil well; referring to the family that was controlling it for the longest period, shows a real example on how conflicts occurred between families, tribes and other powerful groups to control over the oil wells.

At the time, the opportunity was always in favor of ISIS, to incite the Sharia’a Commission and Al-Nusra Front, which stands behind it, in a grinding war between Al-Nusra, ISIS and the forces of the Free Syrian Army, supported avidly by Al-Nusra, which ended with the complete control of ISIS on Deirezzor province in June 2014.

Oil was the most important target for ISIS in the region. After gaining control of the wells and oilfields, and systemized their investment under an independent department called “Diwan Al-Rakaz” (an old Arabic term used by Islamic jurisprudence to indicate the various wealth buried in the ground). This department included, in “Welayet Al-Khair” (the new name for Deirezzor

Province under ISIS), a production management section and financial management section, in addition to sections for vehicles and machines maintenance. As for staff who formed these structures, were a group of foreign managers “Muhajereen”, with little experience and knowledge in the oil business. These managers were depending in the real course of business on employees from the oilfields, who were working in the oilfields for the benefit of private companies or the public sector of the Ministry of Petroleum, or even those who still worked for these companies or the ministry, and still were paid from Damascus, giving more mystery to the relation between ISIS and the Assad regime, in the oil sector, at least.

As a result of the extreme importance of these fields in financing many ISIS battles, ISIS gave the higher priority to the continuity of oil extraction and quantities’ increase. It was able to achieve important developments in this area compared to previous amateur investors, both in the technical and administrative aspects. They were also able to mitigate, in many ways, the impact of coalition air strikes as much as possible.

Despite the reticence on the overall figures for the production, and the fluctuation of prices; it was possible, through the collection of undisclosed testimonies of engineers and experts that are still working in the province fields, as well as the workers and drivers of oil tanks; to come up with an estimated number of about two million dollars a day worth of revenue. A figure with a potential to increase, yet fluctuating because of the frequent changing conditions in the area.

The most interesting part of the story is ISIS cooperation with the Assad regime in oil and gas sectors. This cooperation was happening through “ENESCO”, a company owned by businessman George Haswani, a friend of Bashar al-Assad, and the one who manages most of his oil dealings. The company, which is still functioning in Deirezzor, has provided ISIS with vital help in increasing

production and continuity, due to its expertise and equipment.

To summarize, we can say that oil was, and still one of the most important factors affecting the various aspects of the conflict in Deirezzor province, whether in relation to the revolution against Bashar al-Assad's regime, or the emerging conflicts between the military, religious and social powers. The political and military entities in the revolutionary society, who were responsible after the Assad regime lost control of the oil entities, could have managed the oil issues or intervened to serve public interests and reduce the size of the devastation that struck most of its facilities, before falling in the hands of ISIS who invested in the industry at the broadest level, to feed their wars and various activities.

The research team made the following recommendations:

1. The international community, who is locked in a state of war with ISIS, must take into account, in its necessary attempts to hinder the production and regulated investment of oil, the big economic impact of this disability on the population, as well as other effects in health, agriculture, services and transport sectors. Oil wells and fields of Deirezzor are

the only source of power supply in the province, and the main source of these supplies in the entire Syrian territory, which is currently controlled by ISIS.

The international community must take into consideration the potential effects and the economic and social reflexes of any step taken towards the population, regarding oil, in the province. This will certainly have more serious implications, than the sole reason of ISIS' benefit from the oil industry.

2. The Syrian opposition must start working on the preparation of an integrated program for the rehabilitation and investment of oil facilities in Deirezzor to serve the public national interest.

3. The military and the revolutionary forces in Deirezzor province must reassess their previous roles in the oil issue. They must conclude with firm future decisions in this regard. They are the only entity able to protect oil facilities and to ensure fair investment in them after liberating the province from ISIS and the remainders of the Assad regime.

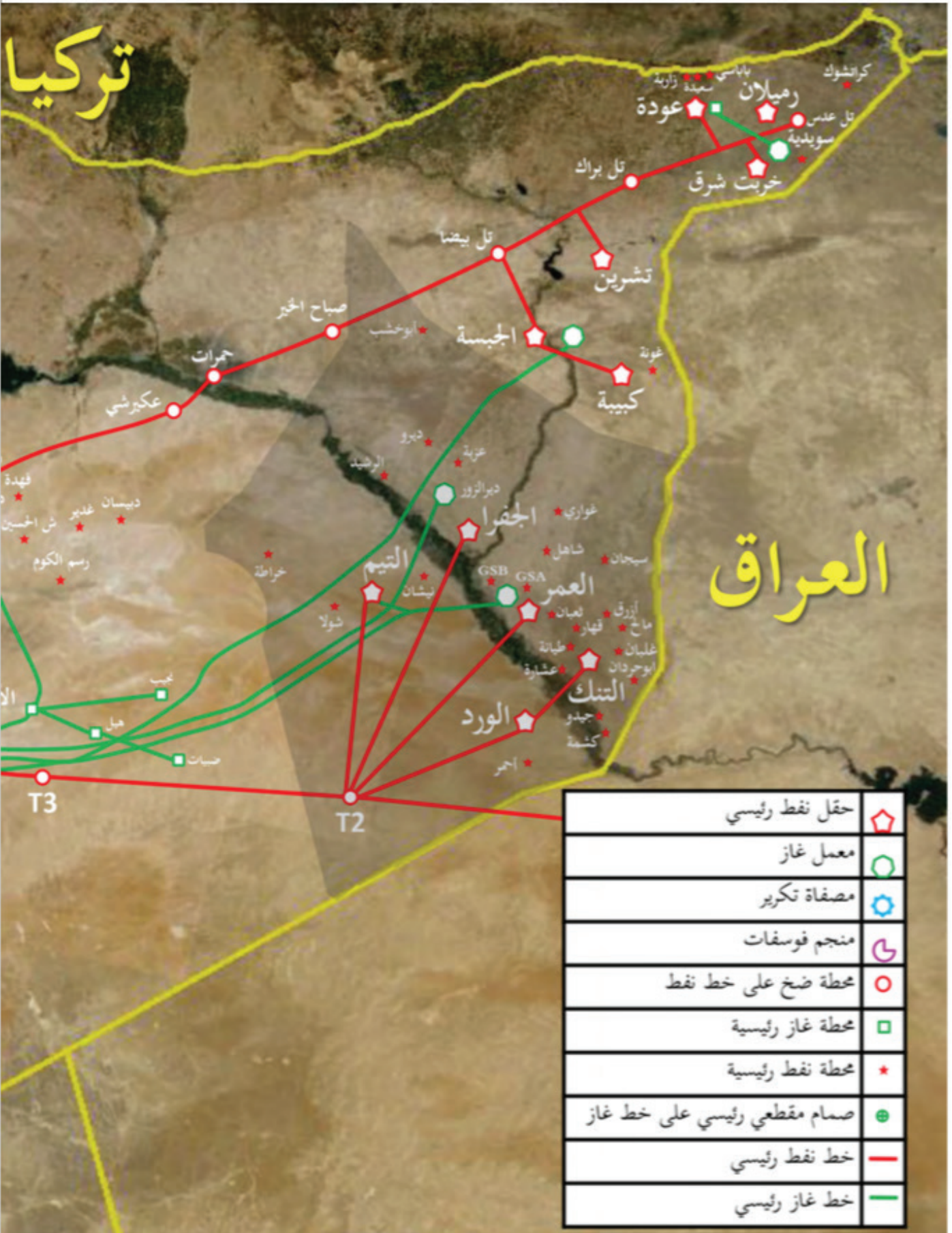
The team faced many challenges; among the most significant are as follows:

1. The most significant of challenges were security challenges, due to the work of researchers in a dangerous environment under the control of ISIS, which imposed an atmosphere of secrecy and prevented any kind of publicly exchange opinions in oil affairs. This proved difficult for researchers who were keen on their personal safety and the safety of their missions.

2. The absence of local institutions or research centers interested in the affairs of oil played an additional role in increasing burdens on researchers.

3. The frequently changing realities and circumstances led to pausing the research many times.

4. Some individuals that previously worked in the oil issue refused to cooperate with the research team, for reasons that were not disclosed, with the exception of a few times. Other individuals, who had partially cooperated in the research, were extremely careful in disclosing any numbers that might expose their relationships with entities that work in the oil extraction and trade.



Introduction

Since the early nineties of the twentieth century, and for a period of two decades, Deirezzor was a major source of the wealth of oil and gas in Syria. The Ministry of Petroleum managed this wealth through Al Furat Petroleum Company (AFPC) (in partnership with Shell Company) and Deirezzor Petroleum Company (DEZPC) (in partnership with Total), and the Syrian Petroleum Company (SPC) (national), and others. The province produced more than 130 thousand barrels per day¹ in 2010, or more than a third of the Syrian general production. In the same year it also produced 6.5 million m³ of gas per day, equivalent to approximately a quarter of national production.

Despite its economic importance, Deirezzor did not receive the appropriate government attention, which officially kept it in the box of «developing regions», due to the low rates of development. The government spending on infrastructure development and the education and health systems and services was low, compared to what they provide to the state treasury.

Every year tens of thousands of young people enter the job market, going through a discriminatory unjust hiring policy in the province, especially in the sectors of education and oil. Because of the high salaries for workers in the oil sector, many of those employed were Alawites, a sect to which many from the Regime belong, and increased steadily, against the unemployment of thousands of graduates of universities and institutes from the region, and mass displacement from villages because of the drought, especially villages in the vicinity of the Khabur River, of which oil and gas facilities were distributed on its east and west banks.

This deepened the feelings of injustice among the population, and decreased the sense of patriotism, and the belief that «Deirezzor oil» is not for its people, but rather for those who are affiliated with the regime and its intelligence agencies.

The Syrian Revolution broke out in March 2011, and the province participated in the events since that time. The issue of oil issue was on the list of griev-

ances and demands in the facing the regime, before the peaceful uprising turned into an armed rebellion. The course of events imposed a new reality, in which its first features crystallized, in the oil sector, with angry attacks on the pipelines, marking the first year of the summer revolution.

Events accelerated, and the Regime lost control of the oil facilities, in the summer of 2012. Our study starts from this date, in an attempt to highlight the newly surfacing facts and the constant change during the three years that followed

Oil out of control

The month of June of 2012 created a significant time interval between two phases of the Syrian revolution in Deirezzor governorate. It enabled the free army during this month to expel Assad's forces from most of the countryside of the governorate, and controlled large parts of the city. Since then, the phenomenon of looting and encroaching on the oil facilities of various kinds, came to be.

The attacks initially affected the vehicles, tools and equipment of the oil companies operating in the governorate (see table at the end of study). Those who participated in the attacks are listed as follows:

1. Some Free Army battalions who were motivated by the need for these vehicles and equipment to be used in the conflict against Assad's forces.
 2. Newly formed brigades: After the liberation of the countryside, new brigades were formed by tribal groups and affiliates who had agendas far from the conflict with the regime².
 3. Individuals and looters: They found in emerging chaos and the absence of appropriate penalty, an opportunity for looting and theft.
- In addition to the former type of attacks, another type appeared proving more serious, represented by families or clan groups who blew up oil pipelines passing through their territory to apply the utmost pressure on the regime and force it to make certain concessions -that can be identified as follows:

¹ These figures are extracted from the total yields of oil companies operating in Deirezzor, according to official data. The unit adopted by these companies is the American oil barrel, the size of 159 liters, while in this study, we will use the unit of a normal standard barrel, the size of 220 liters.

² There is a distinguishability between the free army battalions and factions in the governorate according to several criteria for those interested, namely and most importantly, the date of origination. After the liberalization of the countryside, and unlike brigades and forces which had already fought the Regime; some tribes founded their own battalions to defend its own people and compete with others, and to take advantage of looting profits. In an interview with Muhannad Talaa, the military council commander of Deirezzor province at the time, observes the increasing number of people who contacted him, after members of tribes took a position of neutrality in the conflict with the Regime, and informed him of the formation of new battalions and requested that they become registered within the formations that fall under his leadership, greedy for the monthly salaries allocated for all those registered in the lists of the Free Army.

1. Financial gains, under the name of «protection contracts». The Ministry of Petroleum of the government of Bashar al-Assad resorted to signing contracts with the attackers-or with other parties- which placed them under a commitment of protecting the oil pipes³ passing through their areas in exchange for monthly payments paid by the ministry to them.⁴

2. Forcing the Regime to mitigate the policy of collective punishment enforced by it on the inhabitants of those liberated areas, by providing electric power, and facilitating the arrival of fuel and materials and equipment needed for major services in these areas.

3. The release of some detainees from the Regime prisons, and delivering the bodies of the martyrs belonging to people of these tribes, who fall in confrontations with the Regime.

Protection contracts did not succeed in reducing the ever-widening and accelerating attacks, or even prevent their recurrence in the points and parts that were attacked before. In most cases, most “protection contractors” did not have the ability and the desire to prevent new groups -or individuals- from attacking the pipes that passed through their towns and villages, because the latter also had the special demands from the Regime, or sometimes, simply for the challenge and in the framework of envy and rivalry with the “protection contractors”. It could be argued that the best results recorded for the “protection contractors” are when the contractors themselves, cease to repeat attacks during the period covered by the amount provided by the Ministry, which, allowing for the latter, and during the few days when the payments are still in effect and influencing the behavior of the pipe attackers, to pump large quantities of oil in a short time. For example, the Al-Omar oilfield technicians succeeded in pumping 350 thousand barrels of field storage tanks, after a large brigade of the Free Syrian Army had received the amount of 65 million SYP to protect the field. That figure does not compare to the price of oil transported via the export line, which was

supposedly protected by the brigade. The Ministry of Petroleum is aware that it would apply only for just a few days after they pay the amount.

During the last quarter of 2012, and coinciding with the emergence of basic burners used in oil refining, a new type of attack on pipelines appeared, represented in persons or families who puncture these tubes to withdraw amounts of oil to a large vent next to the drills, and these oil reservoirs are exposed and sold by the “reservoir owners” as crude oil to traders, thus achieving huge profits. This has increased the obstacles for the Ministry of Petroleum, and its commissioners of brokers and associates of the Regime’s security intelligence, in tempting pipeline attackers with “Protection Contracts”. Although the Ministry sought strenuously to find the characters and groups able to fulfill its promises, but they failed to do so in most cases, and they fell, in many times, in the trap of brokers and fraudsters who focused on obtaining these contracts only⁵. According to a special report to assess the damage, prepared by technicians at the Furat Petroleum Company, about attacks which affected oil pipelines belonging to the company, of different types and diameters, the number of attacks reached 912, up till August 2013.⁶

The high rate of attacks, and their widening geographical scope, led to an accelerated decline in the amount of oil exported via the transporting pipelines to outside the province, to reach its minimum at the end of 2012, and then to stop completely when armed groups, between its tribal and mixed formations; gained complete control of all wells and facilities and oil fields in the province. With that, ending a chapter in the Deirezzor oil story, which is summarized in extracting it directly, via completely basic procedures,⁷ after getting rid of all the physical obstacles for this extraction. By opening the valves placed on top of each oil well, or uprooting, if necessary, and cutting the carrier oil pipeline between the well and the station associated with it, and then uprooting the station itself, and dismantling its parts for sale, similar to scrap for the cheapest prices.

³ Several incidents of bombing some oil pipelines were observed in the first year of the revolution and before the growing armed action.

⁴ -According to an internal report between the Ministry of Petroleum offices, the amount of US \$ 2.5 million was paid to only eight of the many Protection Contracts signed in 2013. According to a private source, the ministry tried to co-opt a tribal leader prominent in the governorate, with commanders in the Free Army, to sign a Protection contract for one million dollars (US\$1 million).

⁵ Many times the Ministry of Petroleum paid large sums to worthless individuals and figures of influence in their communities, which in turn, became a subject of ridicule and scarce.

⁶ According to a report submitted to the Ministry of Petroleum, prepared by engineers and technicians working at the “Furat Hakliyun Company”.

⁷ By digging a small channel between the well and a large crater to create a reservoir that receives flowing oil, or by using tractors (which is a new process popular among modern oil extractors) in some wells that require a mechanical lift.

Only the wells and plants within the wall of the main site of the Al-Omar oilfield remained under the control of the Regime at that time. This was a result of an understanding between the tribes of the area and their gunmen on one front, and the Assad forces and the Ministry of Petroleum on another, for several reasons that will be explained later in this search. Meanwhile, the Regime lost control of all wells and other old plants, which were far from the main site. As for wells adjacent to the site, which were in the direct line of fire where Assad's forces were existent, were protected based on daily understandings among oil traders and the field commander of the garrison and head of the military intelligence.⁸

Gas in exchange of electric power

Attacks on pipelines transporting gas produced from the gas plant «Al-Tabiya», known as «Conoco» -referring to the American Company that founded the plant- only ceased when the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham took control of Deirezzor governorate in June 2014. The Islamic State maintained the previous agreements between various forces that came to control the gas plant and between the Regime's Ministry of Petroleum, and that is to ensure the continuation of pumping an average of 90 million cubic feet per day of clean gas through the gas transmission line feeding the network of power plants (Jandar in Homs, and Mhardeh in Hama, and Tishreen and Deir Ali in Damascus), in return that the Regime allow the electric current to pass to Deirezzor with a 130MW power. The gas for electricity agreement experienced many violations in the years of liberation that preceded the control of the Islamic State in Deirezzor governorate. Dozens of attacks were committed by families and tribal groups, and even individuals, on gas transmission pipelines. The reaction of the Assad regime was to cut the power from the entire governorate of Deirezzor until the attackers allowed the maintenance and repair of damaged pipes and resuming pumping gas. These attacks were the

subject of unanimous indignation and condemnation that did not come to fruition, despite its agreement on the act of deterring attackers, and having them commit to respecting the public interest, and especially when they belong to the same tribe. And then newly formed factions and with a sense of higher responsibility, of the Free Syrian Army, will be able to reach an amicable understanding with them. In fewer cases, when attackers descended from relatively weaker tribes in the area where the power cut exists, some Free Syrian Army factions resorted to the use of weapons as an alternative for the amicable understanding.

In most cases, gas lines attackers had similar demands that can be identified as follows:

1. To apply pressure on the dominant forces controlling the «Al-Tabiya» plant to engage the attackers in the sharing of oil imports, in addition to the sharing of «Condensate» or what is otherwise known as red gasoline, a result of gas processing.
2. To increase the village's shares, the place of origin of the attackers, with gas cylinders domestically packaged in the laboratory station, which lies about 5 km away from the village, and is under the control of Al-Nusra Front since the 6th month of 2012. The process of providing the gas cylinders will happen via Al-Rafdán family who were affiliated with Al-Nusra Front back then, and who were residing in the village of «Jadeed Ekadat» near the plant⁹.
3. To receive sums of money from whoever is controlling the plant.
4. Revenge and malice and anger from the fact that only a small group of people monopolized control of the plant with huge financial profits, was an influencer on the attackers' mode of operation.¹⁰
5. Applying pressure on the Regime, because of its need for gas, and forcing it to meet special demands of the attackers, which can also serve as a way to draw attention with the aim of signing a contract with the Ministry of Petroleum.

⁸ In most cases, during the year 2013 the garrison commander, and first assistant Ali Abbas, head of military security, allowed oil traders to fill their tanks from wells that were in directly in the line of fire, in exchange for 500 thousand Syrian pounds for every tank.

⁹ Amer Al-Rafdán was one of the most prominent leaders of the Al-Nusra Front in Deirezzor, before pledging allegiance to the Islamic State upon the announcement of the «Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant» proclamation in April 2013.

¹⁰ In the village of Marrat, the dissident officer and commander of the armed group blew up the gas pipeline passing through his village, demanding the tribes of «Khusham town», who were controlling the gas plant at the time, a fixed share of the «Red gasoline»-profits, and to increase the number of allocated gas cylinders to the village, and appointing a number of men to serve as guards to the plant for a monthly salary. He also prevented maintenance workshops from working for five days, during which the power was cut off from the entire governorate. In addition, someone from the town of «Khusham» blew up a gas pipeline, in protest of the deprivation of his tribe from their usual share of the plant's oil revenues.

Mapping of power and influence within the first year of liberalization of the countryside

The Syrian Revolution imposed significant changes to the rural community of Deirzour, and reshaped the map of power and influence on the basis of revolutionary participation –both armed and pacifist- in each component of it. Tribal groups descending from revolutionary outposts scored a remarkable rise, and impacted public affairs at the county level, while in concurrence, there was a decline in the role of the tribal groups that have taken a position of neutrality, or those that have shown loyalty to Assad in the first year of the revolution. Both these types of tribes –neutral and Assad supporters- went into an idle phase following the liberation of the countryside. Assad supporters and neutral tribes revised their agendas on the basis that the Assad regime is certain to fall, while retaining the thread of support in case of the probability that the Regime might continue its control. This recalculation process produced armed battalions and brigades, councils and civil gatherings and bodies.¹¹

During the second half of 2012, local public opinion has shown increasing discontent of the chaos that brought by the liberation, and the beginning of a gradual separation between so-called amateur rebels –armed and non-armed- and functional rebels, who have gained instinctively special skills to deal with this chaotic reality, and were in a frantic quest to try and win resources that would enable their troops in their war with the Regime, without any consideration of the thin line that distinguishes public from private use.¹² For some of these fighters, their reckless actions and their loose dealing at the borders in order to buy arms and ammunition to fight the Regime, gave the green light for opportunists and looters to pounce on public money in various

forms, and justified most of these actions. Others were blunter by admitting that they were stealing because they are poor, and because the Assad regime has been stealing and corrupt for many years, now it's their turn to take revenge.

The power map in the province may be determined by, at the beginning of the year 2013 phase, and in descending order according to the degree of presence and influence, according to the following:

1. Military formations of the Free Syrian Army who continued to fight Assad's forces, after the liberalization of the countryside, in other fronts far from where they were originally founded, both the relatively chaotic and orderly brigades.
2. Al-Nusra Front. Founded in late 2011, and developed significantly upward since the liberalization of the countryside and the control of ISIS on the province.
3. Shari'a bodies¹³, councils and other non-military gatherings, all which originated, for the most part, under the general interests of serving the public good in every village and town, and especially those with a close relationship with the armed military formations for reasons of kinship.
4. Military formations newly established in towns and villages who have not managed to record effective fighting against Assad's forces.
5. Looters, and groups and individuals scattered along the liberated areas.
6. Elderly and traditional tribal leaders, who did not re-produce themselves in one of the previous power categories.¹⁴
7. Revolutionary civilian activists, journalists and volunteers of relief and demonstrators, and others who have had a role in the peaceful phase of the revolution.
8. The educated elite of college graduates, who enjoy a margin of appreciation in their local communities.

¹¹ This failure did not lead the tribes in the revolution to spare themselves from the embarrassment of forming associations and councils, but recorded a remarkable activity, seeking as much of gains as possible. Many local or civilian councils, taking shape at the time, in villages and towns, were Baathist affiliates, linked with the Regime intelligence. Some famous informants formed armed battalions from their own tribes, under the name of "Free Syrian Army".

¹² Tracking the whereabouts of some of the machines and vehicles and equipment seized by some leaders and fighters effective at that time, and which were initially used to serve the public interest; many of them later became the private property of those who stole them, and have undergone processes of buying and selling. Even medium and heavy weaponry were bought and sold in the process.

¹³ With its rapid and irregular geographical expansion, Sharia'a entities became increasingly influential in public issues.

¹⁴ The decline of traditional tribal leaders during the revolution, to a large extent, in their power and influence they had before.

Next to this combination of power and influence, donors with a Salafist direction emerged in the Arabian Gulf, active as individuals or as part of boards and bodies that were established in the Gulf countries and were significant in financing the military and relief work in the province. Serious attempts to direct recipients of donations, from those donors or their delegates, to leaders of brigades, to work on the protection and management of oil entities, were unfortunately not recorded.

It is noted in the composition mentioned above that there is almost complete absence of imams and preachers in mosques, who are of moderate and Sufi inclination, formerly of people living under the Assad regime, represented by the Directorate of Religious Endowments. In parallel to the absence of such moderate figures, began an escalation in the number of Salafist activists, in varying degrees, in civil and military formations of the liberated cities, towns and villages, and that was prior to such movements falling apart and forming exclusive Salafist movements that grew rapidly at the time, against other revolutionary formations. The inability of the moderate revolutionary formations to carry out important roles qualified the Salafists to be the alternative which filled the vacuum created by the collapse of Assad's authority.

The Position of the Military Council and leaders of important military formations in the Free Syrian Army

A special meeting to discuss the issue of oil in October of 2012, based on the urgent request of a group of engineers working in the oil sector, was held in the village of "Breihaa", 30 km east of Deirzozor. The meeting was attended by Colonel Mohammed Al-About, the commander of the Revolutionary Military Council at the time, Lt. Col. Muhannad Talaa, Military Junta leader at the time,

in addition to the officers of the two councils, and prominent leaders of battalions and brigades of the Free Syrian Army. It was also attended by members of the Supreme Shariah Board, which at the time was the new version of the Shari'a Commission for the Revolutionary Military Council, which was formed immediately after the establishment of the Revolutionary Military Council and its separation from the Military Junta¹⁵. The engineers made a presentation of the reality of wells and facilities and oil fields, which are exposed, on a daily basis, to looting, theft and infringement, and demanded the leaders of the two councils, an immediate plan to protect these facilities, with their assistance.

They warned of the operation and investment of oil wells that were not under the Regime's control anymore, as well as those that are expected to be taken over by the opposition, given that the needs of technical capabilities will not be available in the field environment after the oil fields become liberated. They also warned of environmental and geological consequences¹⁶ of dangerous operation methods that were not implemented and approved by specialized oil companies, within the normal course of work. Supreme Shariah Board members announced the inadmissibility of any investment in oil wealth before its fair distribution to all Muslims. Military commanders found in the latter announcement a reason to relieve them of any additional commitments to their efforts in fighting Assad's forces, and in turn, did not offer to meet the demands needed to protect the oil entities, as proposed by technicians, for several reasons, as summarized by Mohammed Al-About¹⁷:

1. The Revolutionary Military forces were unable to carry out any decisive and radical action to protect oil entities, because of their preoccupation in the conflict with Assad's forces.
2. The belief of the high probability in the fall of the regime, then the emergence of a new authority that took responsibility towards the oil sector and other sectors, which lifted weight off their shoulders.

¹⁵ The Revolutionary Military Council was established in August 2012, following the secession of a group of battalions of the founding junta in February of the same year.

¹⁶ Engineers intentionally raised intimidation of earthquakes, without scientific support, in hopes that this intimidation will put an end to the ambitions of actors taking advantage of the arbitrary investment of oil.

¹⁷ From an interview with Colonel Mohammed Al-About, Commander of the Revolutionary Military Council, then the commander of the Eastern Front, who admitted the grave mistake committed by the two military councils, and that committed brigades of the FSA, who all lacked interest in the issue of oil and did not give enough attention to it. Had it been the counter scenario, where there was an interest, it would have avoided the revolution in Deirzozor a lot of setbacks

3. The fear of ruining their reputation by stirring suspicions that they are personally benefiting from the oil, as a result of accusing all employees in the oil sector at the time, with corruption.

The meeting in “Breiha” did not achieve any results, and other similar meetings which revolved around mobilizing effective military forces in one common position on oil wealth shared the same fate. This resulted in the greed wave of opportunists trying to take advantage of the oil wealth, to overshadow, little by little, many prominent society personalities, and religious and military forces under the lure of oil, who initially had refused to get involved in the oil industry in the beginning. Some members of the Supreme Shari’a Council –after disengaging from the council to form new bodies – made collective efforts to control the oil wells and imports which were never distributed fairly to «all Muslims» or even to some of them. Some military commanders, who were in fear of ruining of their reputations, seemed to control the wells and facilities, at first with good intentions towards the common good, before the chaotic and complex changes that took place, to turn some of the leaders, and some military formations pioneers in the revolution, from battling against the Regime to leading their battles to defend the oil wells. Other leaders were able to deal with those complications, namely the Ja’far al-Tayyar Brigade, one of many examples, a gathering of dozens of battalions of varying capacity and discipline, who seized the oil facilities and harnessed part of its profits in favor of military action. In other cases, none of these profits went to the favor of battle, because some battalions lacked sufficient commitment and a sense of belonging to the brigade, and were only fighting in favor of the tribe that most members of these certain battalions belonged to.¹⁸

Many wealthy warlords emerged at the expense of new wells and small oil lakes that feed tanks lined up to buy. When their paper currency did not match the level of their profit, they began weighing it! Only extremely small amounts of funds were spent in favor of fighting against the Assad regime, or to feed the hungry people in the cities, or to house the displaced from the brutality of the regime in places

with the minimum humanitarian standards¹⁹, or to heal the wounded. Instead, money was spent on the accumulation of weapons²⁰, vehicles and wives, and building houses and purchase of real estate for personal interest, and other objects of expenditure that were incompatible with the capacities of an originally developing province such as Deirezzor. The wisest among the wealthy oil warlords, were those who transferred their money to be saved in the Gulf countries and Turkey among others²¹.

The Position of the Tribes

Most of the tribal groups were dealing with oil wealth out of their own personal interests, and according to their geographical positioning. Each tribal group sought to seize the wells in the Deirezzor countryside close to their place of residence, under allegations that these wells were located in their territory or in the extension of the territory toward the open plains in both parts of the «Al-Shamiah» and «Al-Jazirah»²² North and South of the Euphrates River, as well as East and West of the Khabur River –Al Jazirah Land- at which tribes inhabit both its banks.

Tribes were successful in becoming the first beneficiary of the oil wealth, whether via a battalion of the Free Army, where most of its members came from the same tribe, or as directly as the battalion being a “branch” for this tribe. They took turns to invest in accordance with quotas unanimously agreed upon among themselves²³, then divided each share according to the tribal branch they belonged to, according to the number of male individuals in some cases, and the number of males and females in other cases. Most of the quotas between tribal members were fragile and were impacted by ambitions and rivalries and tendencies to acquire and control the oil, which led to the outbreak of bloody conflicts between these groups, those who became wounded or fell dead, and the burning of oil wells and accumulation of oil in uncovered dirt tanks.²⁴

¹⁸ From an interview with Haj Salim Al-Khaled, brigade commander of “Jafar Al Tayyar” at the time.

¹⁹ The number of displaced people from the city of Deirezzor alone exceeded 300 thousand.

²⁰ Because of the accumulation of arms and ammunition, and the constant demand for them, brought combat battalions against the Regime additional financial dilemmas, as a result of the increasing prices for military equipment. The price of a Kalashnikov reached \$ 1,500, and \$ 2 per bullet.

²¹ With rising oil profits, money transfer offices in the cities of Al-Bukamal and Mayadeen flourished and became more active.

²² Residents call the land stretching south of the Euphrates River “Al-Shamiah”, and the land stretching north of the river as “Jazirah”, a metaphor due to the fact that it lies between the Tigris and Euphrates.

²³ It was usual for tribes to invest in an oil well for a week, to transfer it to another tribe, and so forth, depending on the number of families in the quota system. As in the case of the “Ghanabzeh” tribe in the town of “Khusham”, who seized control of the gas plant «Conoco» and its oil entourage.

²⁴ In separate incidents, more than 30 death casualties occurred between the members of the “Sheita’t” tribe, whose sub-tribes

The Positions of Shari'a Offices and Associations

Despite the different shifts and changes occurring in the Shari'a bodies or their organizations, and the accompanying change in the attitudes of some members of these organizations towards oil²⁵; the activities of Shari'a bodies can be classified in three main forms, and they are:

1. Shari'a bodies and offices of some factions and military formations.
2. Shari'a bodies and offices –and judicial bodies in some occasions- that are affiliated with local councils.
3. Independent Shari'a bodies; with restricted activities in one city, town or village- or which cover villages and towns geographically relevant. In addition, small groups founded by some of the Shari'a students in the cities of Bu Kamal and Mayaadeen may be added to the above.

The Shari'a organizations had no previous fixed and unified position toward the oil issue. Some were quick to outlaw work there under the pretext of the impossibility of a fair distribution to everyone. The traditional religious nature is definitely present for most of those who say support that view, in addition to the absence of the geographical scope of where none of these Shari'a associations were to be found working. Other organizations had more realistic positions and issued fatwas on oil investment and profits subject to the public interest, both military and civilian. However, organizations with the Salafist nature did not hesitate to urge military formations affiliated with them to become involved in the oil trade. Sometimes, they even intervened directly to “organize this work”. Other Shari'a organizations

remained silent and did not issue a fatwa in this regard, but were in a weak position to only dare ask for a small share of oil imports for distribution to the poor and the needy in their areas.

The response towards fatwas issued by Shari'a experts, between military factions and formations, which included Shari'a individuals in their ranks, ranged according to the degree of revolutionary and religious commitment of these military entities. As was the case with the “Al-Assalah wal Tanmiah” front (Deirezzor branch)²⁶, when the front banned the trade of the oil in the tanks and pipes of the Station T2, after taking its control in March 2013, under the influence of a fatwa launched by their Shari'a affiliates in Deirezzor. They tied the trade of oil to difficult requirements, before the front split into several smaller brigades which changed the position of the dissident factions and its Shari'a affiliates towards oil trade. One of the wells in “Al Jazirah” was associated to “Ahl Al-Ather”, a brigade who defected from the “Al-Assalah wal Tanmiah” Front²⁷, while “Basha'er Al-Nasr” brigade remained committed to its position, in outlawing trade of oil under the umbrella of “Al-Assalah wal Tanmiah”.

The First Oil Quota for Al-Nusra Front (JAN)

During the first quarter of 2013, the map of control over wells and oil and gas facilities in the province if Deirezzor had been completed, with Al-Nusra Front controlling domestic gas filling station only, which had been seized by them middle 2012, and also receiving the revenue of half of oil profits from three oil wells in the desert of Al-Bu Kamal²⁸, which had previously been seized by the Omar al-Mukhtar Brigade. The latter asked Al-Nusra Front to partner with them in the city of Bu Kamal, with the excuse of dismissing suspicion of monopolizing resources. In addition, Al Nusra Front was successful in seiz-

seized control of a number of important oil wells in the «Jazirah» East of Deirezzor countryside. In one famous incident between sub branches, from the Baggara tribe in the western countryside of Deirezzor, 11 death casualties were reported. Also, the “Mizal” oil well- reference to the family that seized control of it-was burned due to conflict between sub branches in the “Khabur” river villages.

²⁵ Two members of the Supreme Sharia'a Board changed their position, on the benefit of the oil, when defecting to the Central Sharia'a Board. The Sharia'a judicial body of the local council of “Mayadeen” city issued a fatwa prohibiting oil work, before they made it permissible with the excuse of supporting military formations. Then one of its members , a lawyer, changed his position on prohibition while working with the Council, for the authority to finally end up with a judge from ISIS whom he pledged allegiance to as soon as ISIS took control of the city.

²⁶ “Al-Assalah amd Tanimiah” Front was founded in November 2012 as military formation that works in different areas of Syria. Its branch in Deirezzor was represented by “Ahl Al-Ather” and “Basha'er Al-Nasr” Brigades, and other factions that were united later under the name “Usood Al-Sunna” Brigade.

²⁷ Following their defection from “Al-Assalah wal Tanmiah” Front, both “Ahl Al-Ather” and “Usood Al-Sunna” Brigades were two of the factions that participated in establishing the “Ahl Al-Sunna wal Jama'a” army in October of 2013.

²⁸ They are wells known under the name of “Al-Hasyan wells”, and their average production ranges between 1000-1200 barrels daily.

ing small and temporary quotas of some oil wells, after intervention to resolve bloody clashes between factions who controlled the wells.

Al-Nusra Front's quota was considered meager, in comparison with the size of the oil wealth in Deirezzor, and defined its strength and capacity back then, for various forces that accounted for the largest share of this wealth. However, the method of victory in the management and investment of their «quota» earned them extremely important moral gains. During the control of the domestic gas filling station, Al-Nusra Front's profits came from the sale and distribution of two thousand gas cylinders a day, which was the average production of the station at the time, an average number between SYP400,000 - SYP600,000 a day (Equivalent to 4000-6000 US dollars a day, according to the exchange rate at the time).

Al-Nusra Front sold one cylinder, on average, for 500SYP²⁹, equivalent to (US \$ 5), which was a small number, which they could have increased, but wanted to invest in the propaganda in their appearance as caring for the deteriorating conditions of the population, to gain public approval, amidst the state of public anger from the oil mess and poor distribution of resources. Al-Nusra also succeeded, through the distribution of gas, in having small groups who were politically and militarily marginalized, to follow their lead, by compelling representatives of villages

and towns who visit the station to obtain the approval of the Prince (aka Ameer) of these groups in every village and town, which increased Al Nusra's presence in the daily life of the public.³⁰

The Shari'a Association in the Eastern Area

Contrary to the rumors that Al-Nusra had an embedded intention to announce Deirezzor as an Emirate, they in fact has different plans, and that is to establish a Shari'a Association under its auspices, through which it will manage military and civil activities. That was the plan it started implementing in other provinces, including Deirezzor. The establishment of the Shari'a Association was announced on 9/3/2013. Members of the Association included the following: Al-Nusra Front, Mu'ta Brigade, Al-Ikhlās Brigade, Al-Ka'a Ka'a Islamic Brigade, Ibn Al-Qaim Brigade, Rijal Allah Brigade, Yabarek Al-Nasr Faction, Al-Rahbeh faction, both as factions affiliated with the association and formed its executive power. In the first statement of announcing its formation, the Association announced the following, "To facilitate services for the public, and fill the security void, and to resolve the public's hanging issues"³¹. Out of the six departments ³²of which the statement considered a means for achieving its goals, a depart-



The main office of Shari'a Associations in Mayadeen city

²⁹ On many occasions, Al-Nusra Front offered gas for free to the people of Deirezzor, especially during the time which the city was besieged. It did the same in the neighborhood of "Ghuweiran", which was revolting against the Assad Regime at the time in the province of "Hassakeh".

³⁰ The existence of such factions contributed greatly to Nusra's rise in power, regardless of the corruption and defection phenomena. At the same time however, Al-Nusra was never the major power on the ground.

³¹ As quoted from the first statement of the commission.

³² The departments are as follows: Department of Reform and Conflict management, Department of Missionary, Department of Jurisprudence, the Executive Authority, the Public Commission, and the Relief Committee.

³³ Al-Nusra Front in Al-Bukamal was an independent entity from its central authority. Which placed the Central Sharia'a Association in a sensitive position, as it considers itself the only reference in the province and the Eastern region. The issue was resolved by Al-Shura Committee, headed by Al-Julani, to segregate Al-Nusra branch in Al-Bukamal administratively, from the Eastern emirate, and include it in the Badia (desert) emirate, without defining a clear relationship between the two entities, which many hanging issues could have been involved in the process.

ment for petroleum was not mentioned. Although Al-Nusra controlled oil wells shares in Bu Kamal³³, in addition to three factions affiliated with it, were also in control of other significant oil wells³⁴. After approximately one month of establishing the association, a new development arose and paralyzed Al-Nusra and its newly established association. The formation of the ISIS was announced and immediately many Nusra fighters transitioned into, according to many fighters at the time, “a natural progression and development of a branch, towards its origin”; when joining ISIS. However, other Nusra members were perplexed as they awaited a word from Al-Qa’eda leader, Ayman Al-Thawahiri, who determined the fact that both Al-Nusra and ISIS are different entities, contrary to what was being popularized by Al-Jolani that Al-Nusra was the Syrian branch of Al-Qae’da, originating from ISIS. As a result of Al-Thawahiri’s statement, many defectors who joined ISIS, specifically in Deirezzor, returned to their original faction affiliated with Al-Nusra, without any accountability³⁵.

Amer Al-Rafdan however, one of the most prominent Nusra leaders, remained steady in his “transition” to ISIS, along with a group of “Muhajireen”³⁶ and numerous community members, which led to the transition of the home-filling gas station, which was run by Rafdan, to the new-born state³⁷. As a result, Rafdan accused Al-Nusra of blasphemy, and established an “Islamic Court” as the sole judicial reference for those who wish to raise concerns about ISIS.

Following the stability of Al-Nusra Front post-defections, Al-Shari’a Commission was launched for the second time, benefitting from the skills and knowledge of a young physician who was newly released from the notorious Syrian Government prison of “Sednaya”³⁸.

Muthar Al-Weiss headed the Shari’a Commission in the beginning of June 2013, and reorganized the workforce in its departments, which did not achieve

any results before his tenure.

Following that, and in relation to the oil issue, the Shari’a Commission avoided conflict with the influential owners. It did try however, to alleviate the pollution symptoms that were a result of the random and basic refinement of crude oil. It issued several policies concerning the matter³⁹, one which included a warning to blacksmith workshops to cease the production of oil refineries, or what is known as burners, holding them accountable if they do not respond to the law. Another policy was paying a fee each time a vehicle transporting oil, moved from the “Al-Jazirah” district, where the main oil wells are found, to the Shamia, via the “Ashara” and “Mayadeen” bridges. The commission also tried to keep a distance between the refineries and populated areas.

In September 2013, before the launch of control over oil sites “Ahrar Al-Sham” movement joined the Shari’a Commission, and changed its name, after the accession, to the «Central Sharia’s Commission». As a result, a new expanded charter was issued for this commission, which stressed on the inseparability of the two routes in the battles of liberation and construction, in order to avoid the «present and future undesirable results, referring to the experience of the independence from occupiers in the turn of the 20th century, where Muslims fought the battles and secularists picked the fruit»⁴⁰.

By tolerating the lack of precision in dealing with historical events, and digression in mobilizing as much surplus from doctrinal heritage quotations as possible, and that the people of the country must let «poised scholars to manage their own affairs»; the charter seemed ambitious towards the goals set by the Commission. Also using provocative statements such as «Arab Muslim tribes in the Euphrates have a prominent historical role», which «expelled the French early last century», which did not succeed in its several attempts to try and control the province’s oil, which was one of the main motives behind the

³⁴ Both “Mu’ta” and “Al-Ikhlās” brigades (whose elements mostly belonged to the tribe of “Al-Bu Kamel” in the town of “Al-Shaheel”) controlled the wells in the vicinity of the main oil field of “Al-Omar”, during the time the field was still under the control of the Syrian Government. In parallel, the “Ibn Al-Qa’im” brigade (most of its elements come from the tribe of “Shei’taat” controlled huge shares of the “Maleh” wells which produced an average of 5000 oil barrels per day.

³⁵ Following the statement of Thawahiri, in terms of defining the role of Nusra and its independence from ISIS, Abu Abdallah Nai’mi retrieved his position as a Nusra Prince for Shamia, after joining ISIS for weeks. As had happened with other leaders.

³⁶ Al-Muhajireen were headed by Abu Usamah Al-Iraqi and Abu Musa’ab Al-Tunisi, who would later play a significant role in the upcoming conflict with Al-Nusra Front and the rest of the factions.

³⁷ Some Nusra princes and elements, accused their former fellow fighter, Amer Al-Rafdan, with embezzling huge amounts of money, reaching as high as US\$5 million, the revenue of the gas station and other entities, before defecting and moving the ownership to ISIS.

³⁸ The jihadist network of Muthar Al-Weiss within the Jihadist community of “Sednaya” prison had a significant role in the speed of his integration with the Salafi community immediately after being released.

³⁹ The Commission failed in implementing those policies with the exception of only a few days, and on a small scale.

⁴⁰ From The Central Sharia’a Commission charter, page 2.

formation of the Central Shari'a Commission, despite the fact that dealing in oil affairs was limited to one branch office within the circle of services, which made up, along with 12 offices, the organizational structure of the Shari'a Commission, according to the charter.⁴¹

"Ahrar al-Sham" movement, followed by "Jeish Al-Islam" - newly formed in the province at the time⁴² – and who joined the commission in November of 2013, appended new oil sites to the its areas of control. "Ahrar Al-Sham" controlled major shares of "Al-Kharrata" oil plant⁴³ in the western countryside of Deirezzor, while "Jeish Al-Islam" receives the profit of small stakes from different locations and on a sporadic basis.

The Central Shari'a Commission controls some oil sites

Despite its early interest in the affairs of the oil, and its repeated attempts to convince the dominant groups on wells to excavate them, or share a portion of the imports; the Central Sharia's Commission did not use its power to take over the oil wells, until after the intensification of competition between Al-Nusra Front and ISIS in Deirezzor, and growing fears of the intentions of ISIS to control the oil, in conjunction with what was happening in the North

The Control of "Conoco" Gas Plant

The Shari'a Commission found in the reckless behavior⁴⁴ of tribal armed groups that controlled the Conoco gas plant and its oil annexes, a strengthened motivation to control the plant, in addition to its own agenda. A statement issued by the Commission, on 14 November 2013, regarding the lab: «It is well known that the oil wealth is the legitimate prop-

erty of the nation and everyone must obtain it by right of justice, fairness and alignment of interests. The gas plant in the "Khusham" area has reached an unbearable point of monopolization by only a few categories of the population and was tampered with, resulting in power outages for long days that caused the death of many innocent children and damage to food and medical supplies. This indicates a fulfillment of a dangerous inclination towards disregarding the slightest sense of responsibility. It is unacceptable that Shari'a duties are disrupted, such as Jihad and the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and other services due to lack of funding while some individuals engage actively with millions of liras a day. Prices have risen and the living situation has deteriorated, and military fronts are in need of support, this, as well as electricity which became a plaything in the hands of blood traders who threaten workers and staff in the plant frequently, and prevent them from doing their job. These acts and crimes are corruption on earth, and therefore based on the requirements of Shari'a, there must be a fair distribution of public funds to all Muslims to protect and prevent them from harm. Despite repeated calls to hand over the management of the plant to the Association, with no response, therefore, the Shari'a Association in the Eastern Region decided on the following:

1 To manage the "Khusham" gas plant and its annexes, so it is under the Association's watchful eye, to prevent personal disposition to it.

2 The executive power of the Shari'a Association, which is represented by the battalions that have signed the new charter, will take responsibility for the implementation of this resolution, taking all precautions to prevent the shedding of one drop of blood, according to Shari'a Laws.

3 The formation of an ad hoc committee oversees the equitable distribution of what is produced in this plant according to Shari'a, in addition to considering the situation of contested fronts and the needs

⁴¹ The organizational structure of the Central Sharia'a Commission consisted of the following: The Judicial Office; The Call and Guidance Office; The Forensic Office; The Education and Sharia'a Courses Office; Rukyah (Incantation) Office; Services Department; Information Office; Finance Office; Executive Authority; Military office; General Court; Public Relations Office; Women's Commission.

⁴² At the end of the October of the year 2013, and after the visit of Zahran Alloush, commanding general of Jeish Al-Islam in Syria, to Deirezzor; the following factions announced the formation of the Islamic Front in Deirezzor, it consisted of the following: Ja'afar Al-Tayyar Brigade; Islamic Brigade (a faction originally affiliated with Alloush); Dare'a Al-Ansar Brigade; Fa Istakim Kaman Umirt Brigade. The brigade commander of Ja'afar Al-Tayyar, Salim Khalid, formed with Ahrar Al-Sham, the Islamic Front branch in Deirezzor. They were represented as a single entity within the Sharia Commission, before Al-Nusra expelled Jeish Al-Islam from the gas plant and Al-Omar Oil Field, and preventing its Sharia'a members from entering into Mayadeen City.

⁴³ The battalion in control of the "Kharrata" oil field was independent financially, to a large extent, from the Ahrar Al-Sham Movement, despite the formal accession to it. It posed to be one of the recurring problems for Ahrar Al-Sham in Deirezzor.

⁴⁴ As a result of clashes between the temporary controllers at the plant, some angry individuals of them blew up the gas lines. The staff themselves did not escape from the humiliation and the threat of weapons.

of people in accordance with the order of Shari'a laws, away from partisanship and cronyism interests.

4. The residents of "Khusham" have the priority for being compensated for, regarding services and relief distribution, considering they are the front liners and are directly surrounding the plant.⁴⁵

Without a lot of resistance by tribal groups in control of the plant, the attacking forces succeeded in expelling them the day after the issuance of the statement.

This move achieved a good disposition in the public opinion of the population of the province, which saw control of the gas plant an example of tribal groups who are only focused on their own self-interest. In addition, the supporters of the Shari'a Commission benefitted from the process of it gaining control over the "Conoco" gas plant as an important step towards attaining justice. Members of the commission spoke of four reasons that led them to expelling «looters and thieves of public funds»⁴⁶ of the gas plant, which are as follows:

1 Ensure equitable distribution of resources to all Muslims, and taking into account the legitimate interests of jurisprudence.

2 Ensure the use of these resources to the satisfaction of God in the service of Muslims.

3 Ensure the continuation of electric power in the region.

4 Concern for the safety of workers in the lab.

Previous justifications, nor the description of the Shari'a Commission to thieves as «a few tribal families from Khusham», was sufficient to mitigate the sense of humiliation felt by most of the people of that town. Tribal aggression is initiated and cannot be calculated accurately or contained, although the Shari'a Commission attempted in its own methods or via official negotiations, to confirm that the target is not «Al-Anabizah» tribe, but a few cliques of them, which account for the wealth off of the gas plant.

Most groups who were expelled from the gas plant,

belonged to "Al-Anabizah", a branch of "Al-bakkeer" Tribe, which expanded as an independent competitor which caused a fragmentation to a large extent, contrary to the "Al-Bukamal" Tribe, which remained working as one entity from its headquarters in the city of "Shaheel" in the countryside. However, what contributed even more to the complexity of the scene was the tribal characteristics to the fighters of Al-Nusra Front, the main aggressors in the attack on the plant. Most of the military leaders descended, in addition to a large number of its fighters, from "Al-Bukamal Al-Shaheel, in which it was perceived by "Al-Anabizah" as a complete tribal take over process.

A third party was watching avidly the happenings at the time, that third party was ISIS, who was settled in its headquarters in the town of "Jadeed Al-Ukeydat" near "Khusham". The ISIS "Prince, Amer Al-Rafdan, was a blood relation to "Al-Anabizah", a sub-branch of "Al-Bakkeer" tribe. Al-Rafdan took advantage of these links to manipulate the members of "Al-Bakkeer" against the Shari'a Commission, and appear as the defender of his tribe. Some had partially responded to Al-Rafdan's attempts, although the commission was keen on avoiding such tensions, and limited its control over the main gas plant site, without approaching nearby wells to the north of it, which were under the control of other families and groups of the Bakkeer tribe. It also tried to ease the tension by appointing security guards who were members of the Bakkeer tribe, and tried to appease to ISIS as well by offering them 30% of the plant revenue.

This offer was rejected and met with almost daily provocations from ISIS to the executive power, in its movements on the roads leading to the plant. In order to avoid the development of these provocations by ISIS, the Central Shariah Commission, and affiliates, appealed in a joint statement to the «Shura Islamic Council of State» and «The Emir, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi» to intervene «To deploy a representative to resolve the conflict, to avoid sedition, and to obstruct the way of instigators, for the matter cannot handle any more delays »⁴⁷, as was mentioned in the statement. Nevertheless, and although the language and tone of the statement was friendly and full of respect and appreciation,⁴⁸ it did not seem to have an impact on Al-Baghdadi, or his Shura Council. ISIS continued harassing the

⁴⁵ A decision made by the Sharia'a Commission in the eastern region concerning gas field in the village of "Khusham".

⁴⁶ From a video report captured by the agency "Humam", (closely affiliated with Al-Nusra Front) on the Internet, after the Sharia'a Commission took control of the plant.

⁴⁷ From the joint statement from each of the Shariah Commission and Al-Nusra Front and Ahrar Al-Sham and Jeish Al-Islam, issued on 11.28.2013.

⁴⁸ This language was surprising given the differences in number and strength between the two parties; In return for more than a thousand fighters in the ranks of Al-Nusra Front alone, and an even greater number of factions allied with it, the number of ISIS members in Deirzozor did not exceed two hundred, at the time.

Commission, a harassment that would evolve into a grinding war after a few weeks.

Regardless of the flexibility and patience that al-Nusra had shown ISIS, it did not hesitate from taking violent steps in cases when expelled groups from the plant vented their anger through reckless attacks, or set up roadblocks and cut off roads, or abducted some brigade/faction members belonging to the commission. These reckless acts were classified as «Harabah»⁴⁹, which required harsh punishment. However, and after the success of Al-Nusra Front and its allies in taking control of the town of «Khusham», and enabled them to capture «Juju» (Howaidi the Hyena)⁵⁰, one of the most prominent militants in town who were in constant clash with the Shari'a Commission; the Shari'a Commission however, chose not to apply any kind of punishment according to the charges against him, but released him in response to a tribal mediation and guarantees that he would loosen up and stop the violence, which is what happened later. This resulted in a relative stability to the conditions of the gas plant, but only for a few months, under the control of Al-Nusra Front, or the Central Shari'a Commission, before ISIS infiltrated and occupied the province. After its control of the gas plant, Al-Nusra Front reduced the times of power outages, because of its commitment to the convention on gas for electricity with the Syrian Government. It tracked down the gas pipe attackers and kept a close eye on them, expressing the highest degree of responsibility towards the public interest, despite the personal gains achieved by imports of gasoline or Red gas «Alcondensat», which were difficult to estimate because of the conflicting testimonies between members of the Al-Nusra Front and associates in the gas plant.⁵¹

Control of Al-Omar oilfield

After a heated debate led by Abu Maria Al-Qahtani, General Shari'a Commissioner of Al-Nusra Front at the time, with the active military and tribal actors in the geographical perimeter of the Omar Field; the majority of the actors agreed on the need to preempt «ISIS» by placing their hands on the field first, at all costs. Al-Nusra Front sent a firm warning to

Assad forces stationed in the field, insisting on the need to evacuate, while ensuring that they will not get in the way of their withdrawal, and this is what exactly happened on 23.11.2013.

The Central Shariah Commission formations took over the main site of the Omar field without causing any bloodshed, in a process of «delivery and receipt». With this, a strange story ends, summarized in the staying of more than three hundred soldiers of Assad's forces, along with dozens of military intelligence members, to protect the field, corresponding with thousands of militants belonging to different factions, who were able, for more than a year, to crush those garrisons, but did not. In fact, some of them defended the site in addition to defending Assad's soldiers, which was justifiable, during times in which they were attacked by other militants. However, the degree of hostility from those militants who were defending the gas field was not alleviated per se, but was rather a response to a number of inter-related factors which were the reason behind this unique «alliance». Some brigade leaders who have contributed to the protection of the field have given the following reasons for the alliance:

1 The desire to protect buildings and facilities from theft, looting and vandalism, was very important, as it has happened numerous times, and on a large scale, every time the Regime lost control of the oil facility.⁵²

2 The response to the request of the public, to neutralize the field from the conflict, to ensure the continued operation of generating electric power that feeds dozens of villages near the field station and towns.

3 The lack of confidence in the ability to manage the fields, and to convince the engineers and technicians to resume their work under the new authority.

In addition to the previous three factors, and as was revealed in a meeting between the General Department of Petroleum⁵³ and the Management of the Euphrates Company, who was the operator of the Omar Field, there were certain actions taken by the company after the Regime lost control of the field. Among those actions and as stated literally

⁴⁹ A jurisprudential term meaning an armed group that causes chaos and banditry, murder, looting and destruction in «Dar al-Islam» (House of Islam).

⁵⁰ Jojo led the «Abdullah bin Zubair» Brigades, which were fiercely fighting Assad's forces on the fronts of the city of Deir ez-Zor on a sporadic basis. However, the priority had always been to maintain the gas plant under his control, with other groups from the town of «Khusham».

⁵¹ The average daily production of the gas plant of Red gasoline was more than two thousand barrels, at the time. At a price of almost 30-40 dollars per barrels

⁵² The main site of the Omar field includes major units for processing and producing oil and pumps, and a gas station and electric power generators, as well as large warehouses for valuable spare parts, and hundreds of vehicles, equipment and supplies.

⁵³ The General Department of Petroleum is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Oil, and oversees the work of the various oil companies.

in minutes of the meeting: «To reduce the special protection contracts by 25%. These contracts must be reviewed periodically to determine their feasibility and to eliminate unnecessary ones. »⁵⁴

The latter raises doubts from some and tribal and military figures and parties in the nearby villages and towns from the field, who participate in their efforts to protect it, in the form of contracts during the previous term in which the field ceased to be under the control of the Government of Syria. Also, the 75% of the remaining contracts, raise further doubts about the continuation of some of the previous parties, and perhaps the emergence of new actors, of which the Government of Syria will be keen to “sift” carefully this time, to protect what needs to be protected regarding the plants, which would potentially ensure the amount of oil flow to areas under its control in different ways.⁵⁵

In the early days during which the Shari’a Commission controlled the Omar field, several looting incidents occurred for many of its assets, mostly concentrated in the automotive, heavy and technical office equipment. However, production units and large warehouses for spare parts remained in a safe position, as a result of a successful agreement between the field engineers and Al-Nusra Front, as long as it did not affect Al-Nusra’s will in the continuation of the oil flow without interruption and with the highest possible rate.⁵⁶ Under the agreement, the functions of the Euphrates company was defined, represented by its employees who worked in Al-Omar oilfield, to carry out the work on the technical and operational side, and the functions of Al-Nusra Front was identified, represented by «the Field Emir» designated by it, to carry out the following actions:

- The protection of spare parts warehouses for maintenance work.
- The protection of field staff and ensuring their safety and safe movement.
- Monitoring the entrance and exit movements to the field.

- The general protection of the location from looting attacks outside the field.

The sale processes of the extracted oil from the field wells, and other operations associated with them, was obviously to be handled by the «Field Emir» and his private entourage.

Some engineers and technicians testified about the disappearance of more than three hundred thousand barrels of oil filled in huge tanks, which some leaders succeeded in emptying them at an extreme speed in convoys of tanks and sold them to dealers at a price of not less than 4,000SYP per barrel. Liquefied natural gas was also added to the inventory, which was produced earlier in the Omar gas plant – which stopped functioning later-, yet quantities were estimated as more than two thousand tons. Already word was spreading in the villages and towns nearby about the display of heavy machinery for sale, by some leaders or militants who belonged to the factions controlling the field. Other equipment was for sale as well, as industrial electricity, engines and pumps, generators and other equipment.

The Omar field experience proved to be a tough one for the Shari’a Commission, which failed to portray itself as an institution through this experience, but rather appeared as a weak subsidiary to Al-Nusra. As a result, this weakened the image of the commission⁵⁷ in the eyes of the forces that belonged or did not belong to it, as it did not implement many of the decisions and directives it issued, and some faction leaders did not even respond its inquiries or its questions about the public thefts in the field. Moreover, the Commission failed sometimes in collecting its share of oil imports, whether as running oil or stored oil, and had to buy three cars from the market, for its offices service in the city of “Mayadeen”, despite the hundreds of cars that were looted by many factions belonging to it.

It is difficult to separate between the Shari’a Commission and Al-Nusra Front, except in cases where Nusra wished to do so. This unity, compounded by the difficulty of identifying features and analysis roles of multiple centers

⁵⁴ From the minutes of the meeting held on February 4, 2014.

⁵⁵ Former employees in the oil sector confirm that the varying amounts of oil, were almost always, distributed in the Regime controlled areas and under its auspices, by tanks filled by collaborators with traders, and with the knowledge of the dominant militant parties that were controlling the oil wells of Deirezzor, which noted that the cash packages used in such deals were wrapped with papers issued by State-owned banks, which some traders used to buy the oil.

⁵⁶ According to a testimony of a former field engineer, who participated in the completion of this agreement.

⁵⁷ The commission realized that only 100 elements were under its direct authority, in what was called the Executive Police force, who will not be able to represent its presence as required, prompting it to seek to increase this number by opening a special camp for new volunteers.

of power and influence in it, along with chaotic allies and narcissism, disintegrated the dreams of its chairman Muthar Al-Oweis, and his principled Salafis, who are all university-educated and considered prominent activists in the revolution. None of their indoctrinations in the Charter of the Commission that «oversee the oil and gas department» on oil resources located under the control of the Mujahideen was able, in a few times, to secure domestic gas to the public.⁵⁸

The «Mujahideen» were accusing each other of theft, and carried some responsibility for the fiasco which involved everybody. Without any of them revealing the full story, which would show the fate of money, or to announce the amount at least.

However, the productivities confirmed, according to the lowest margin of revenue of the wells in the main site for the field, was estimated with 5,000 barrels per day at a minimum, in addition to 7,000 barrels from the vicinity of the site, which were sold for 4000 per barrel (US \$ 30-40 at the time). This meant that 360- 480 thousand US dollars a day, was poured into the funding of the factions controlling the field, or into the pockets of its commanders. Added to this figure were the profits of Red gasoline, and quotas of varying size from intermittent partnerships from oil wells that were distributed in different areas. All of which was under the control of the commission, which some former employees insisted that the commission's authority was to be described as a nominal control, purged of any possible affiliations.



Al Nusra front Gas distribution point in Altayyanah

Apart from the «Conoco» and «Al Omar», both Nusra and the Commission failed to control other oil facilities, except on a limited and temporary scale. Most of the forces and tribes refused to hand over the authority of their wells, citing that they also, are fighting the regime, and spending part of the profit for the public interest, and that it is not against the project of a Central Shari'a Commission unifying control, but concurrently do not want to be the first to hand over their wells.⁵⁹

Some tribal groups and families took things even further, to establish private “free” army factions, Shari'a commissions and revolutionary fronts and armies and Mujahideen gatherings of their own. They also worked to expand the circle of beneficiaries of the oil inside the tribes, and unite against any potential threat that may be posed by the Central Shari'a Commission.



Fighters from Al Nusra front in front of Al-Omar oilfield gate

⁵⁸ The function of oil and gas in the Charter of the Office of the Commission, Cit., P. 16.

⁵⁹ The responses of the tribes to the requests of the Dentrul Sharia'a Commission were similar: The tribes of Tayyanah would say “Take the Theban wells first” and the tribes of Theban would say: Take the Shaheel wells first, and everyone says: When will you take Al-Shaitaat wells?

Experiences in Public Administration

We are monitoring three entities here affiliated with revolutionary forces and associations in the oil business, without taking tribal or religious character.

Taym oilfield

The moment the Regime withdrew, end of 2012, the Taym oilfield⁶⁰ was immediately subjected to looting during January and February 2013, before founding a special committee of its administration, a result of the efforts of several parties notably the military junta and civil council of the city of Muhassan and its towns⁶¹ and some of the Free Army Brigades leaders and activists, and revolutionaries of Muhassan and towns namely Al-Mreiyeh; Albuamr; Tabueh Shamieh; Al-Bu Leil; Al-Tob, which are geographically closest to the field site.

The committee consisted of 12 members, represented by two members in each town. Since its inception and until the last day of its work (from March 18 until May 7, 2013) The Taym Committee's first function is the sale of crude oil from the collection depots in the field site, which was stored previously during the time the Regime was in control - and then deliver the financial imports into the Civil Council which is distributed to the committees of ammunition and weaponry. During almost 50 days of the Commission's work, the total revenue 94 million SYP (1 million US\$, at the time), was spent mostly in the purchase of ammunition (72 million), and the rest was distributed as salaries to the guards / battalions and expenses, and benefits to families of martyrs, and some discrete expenses in the service sectors, such as health and others.⁶²

The Committee fell into, since the beginning of its founding in a series of cumulative errors, which allowed operations of theft in a direct manner⁶³, or in quantities of bottled production, causing financial chaos, and of one of the members of the Committee predicts, more than 35% of the presumed revenue.

In addition to limiting the mission on the oil sales, without any attention to technical aspects abiding by certain standards and field equipment, or restarting the production and maintenance of the wells.

Despite all the notes and the serious errors that have occurred in the work of this committee, regardless of the chaos that hit the Deirezzor oil industry, it was nevertheless an interesting experiment, for the following reasons:

1. Taym oilfield was not subject to the control of a family or tribal group, but for an institution that took into account the diversity of the tribal and territorial composition, and was accountable to the popular Revolutionary General opinion, who insisted on breaking it up, as we shall see shortly.
- 2 It spent a fair amount of revenue in the field of public benefit, although some aspects of the administrative and financial were corrupted.
3. The ability of members of the Committee to settle disputes that broke out with various parties on the share of military ammunition or salaries.

Amid resentment that growing among the public opinion of the population in the region because of the way the Taym oilfield functioned, in addition to the frequent errors which occurred, and under pressure from the youth revolutionary groups; military and civil chambers decided to dissolve the Committee and create a new formation, taking into account the selection of its members to be rebels and at least university educated or possessors of a secondary school certificate⁶⁴, and to be reputable in the community. Taking the previous conditions, a new selection members of the committee was chosen, which consisted of 12 members in the same way as the previous representation. It limited the Commission's work in the first few weeks on the sale of the remaining oil in the reservoirs. Before founding, by more than 100 activists, of the «Protection Authority revolution in the city of Muhassan», which will have a key role in a series of important changes in different aspects of the business, most notably in the management of the Taym oilfield.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Located 15 km southeast of the city of Deirezzor. ⁶¹ Founded in August of 2012. Represented by two members in each town.

⁶² From an interview with one of the participants who established the committee, and is one of its members.

⁶³ Such as free mobilization of tanks for traders in exchange for bribes they pay to some influential figures in the field, or to some guards in times of rotation.

⁶⁴ The new committee included 12 members, including eight university graduates, an Institute graduate, and 3 who held a high school baccalaureate.

⁶⁵ From an interview with Abdul Rahman Imran, one of the founders of the Protection Authority Committee, and one of the members of the Second Committee of oil.

The Protection Authority succeeded in its moral authority, resulting in high number of affiliates⁶⁶, in dealing with military and civilian leaders which were influential in public affairs. It was the first work carried out by the civil council and the establishment of an alternative called «Revolutionary Council in the city of Muhassan», which was composed of six soldiers and the same number of civilians, each one elected in their hometown.⁶⁷ The Council of the Revolution was like the executive branch, while the Protection Authority took the supervisory oversight role. The Protection Authority and the Council of the Revolution worked on the development work in the field Tim, create, along with the Committee on the sale of oil, a section for production, financial management, and the Department of Security.

The number of engineers working in the production and maintenance section wasn't reduced (3 engineers who were former employees of oil companies) during the last ten months⁶⁸, in addition to more than 7 skilled technicians, and 10 workers. They work alongside a contractor who was being paid taking a monthly lump sum fee for operating the field through the department of production.

Technical accomplishments

1. After the sale of the remaining quantities of oil in the reservoirs, at the end of August 2013, 3 automatic pumping wells and 2 mechanical pulling wells were functioning, at the rate of production of 700-1100 barrels per working day.⁶⁹
2. By taking advantage of the technical equipment and the machinery available in the field site, engineers have succeeded in refining the oil at a very low cost compared to the cost of

other similar refineries⁷⁰. Thus widening profit margins and providing oil derivatives to residents of the region with good quality and reasonable prices.

3. Improve the quality and output of oil, based on scientific methods and in accordance with the available resources.

Administrative successes

1. The establishment of an administrative system where employees know their duties and their terms of reference in the sequence and clear job environment.
2. To provide a high level of financial performance and transparency, accuracy and concern for the public money.

The institutional atmosphere gave staff, traders and drivers, a sense of confidence and safety, which created a marketing attraction which compensated for the relative decline of the quality of the Taym oil, which is the "old well"⁷¹, compared with other oil wells.

Revenue

Revenue amounted to, from the sale of oil extracted from wells or derivatives from the refinery, starting from 21/08/2013, until the control of ISIS on the field at the end of June 2014 to a total of 384 million SYP. 65% was allocated to finance combat⁷², and could be increased if necessary, and 10% of the expenses went to the injured and families of martyrs, and 15% for services and relief and humanitarian activities, and 5% to administrative and operational expenses, and 5% to emergency savings in the financial management fund.⁷³

⁶⁶ In light of the fragmentation in the military scene, 100 revolutionary activists uniting in the civil commission created a strong impact.

⁶⁷ The appointment of the members of the Council were selected by civil and military events in every town, and with the direct participation of the Protection Authority.

⁶⁸ The Taym Committee worked for more than a year, from May 2013 to the end of June 2014.

⁶⁹ As a result of its location near the military airport, the scarcity of the inventory of oil delayed work in the field for days or weeks some times.

⁷⁰ 50 barrels per day. The average for the cost of a refinery of this size is almost US\$ 100.

⁷¹ Commercial production of the Taym oilfield began in 1985, as the first among the AFPC fields, before working in the fields of Omar, Ward and Tanak.

⁷² The purchase of ammunition, weapons and paying salaries to fighters and feeding them on the fronts and all expenses associated with military action.

⁷³ From an interview with a member of the financial management.

Provincial Council refinery

With the total cost of more than US\$ 220, the Council of Deirezzor⁷⁴, purchased in October 2013, an oil refinery. ⁷⁵The refinery was installed in the Ward field site (110 km east of Deirezzor). The Council agreed with the Brigade of Jaafar Al-Tayyar⁷⁶ that it protects the territory against 20% of the profits. The Council formed a special committee for the refinery consisting of a president and technical director and director of administration and a financial manager, in addition to a director of sales. Revenue varied each month for the committee, especially after running out of oil remaining in the field reservoirs, and then the committee was forced to purchase crude oil from wells⁷⁷.

Besides the main aim of strengthening the role of the Council and earning it a legitimacy and audience amongst the population, the provincial council had the following objectives:

1. Finding self-generating resources.
2. Reducing the phenomenon of pollution caused by the work of basic burners.
3. The reduction of prices of petroleum products in the market.

The refinery experience formed a successful initiative for the provincial council, and gave it the self-confidence to do serious projects, and enhance its participation in community affairs. Experience has shown a definite possibility that local councils will have a bigger role in determining major issues such as the issue of oil. The weaknesses were the Council's failure to reduce pollution because of the high prevalence of hundreds of small basic burners, and failing to reduce the prices of petroleum products due



to weak competitiveness with other refineries, especially those owned by military battalions which seized most of the wells also. Al Nusra Front took over 2 refineries, and Ahrar Al-Sham 3. And the following namely the Hamzah Brigades, Abna'a Al-Qayyim, Qaqaa, and Allahu Akbar, each had its own oil refinery. In addition to some tribal groups who controlled some of the wells independently.

The Provincial Council was unable to convince any of the well authorities to allocate part of their production to the refinery, to be able to distribute its products to hundreds of schools in the upcoming cold season, or on the water treatment plants in the province.⁷⁸ It was unable to get the oil at a discount from one person who single-handedly controlled a well not far from 200 meters away from the refinery⁷⁹.

A fire ignited in the refinery due to a technical mistake following the control of ISIS, the summer of 2014, to be included with other refineries, which were mostly destroyed by coalition airstrikes.

⁷⁴ Founded in January 2013, as an umbrella for all senior local councils in the sub-province.

⁷⁵ A refining capacity of 200 barrels per day.

⁷⁶ Jafar Al Tayyar forced Assad's brigades out of the area in November 2012.

⁷⁷ Profits amounted to, during the first three months of the refinery work to 15 million to SYP

⁷⁸ Maintain the fuel needed for the work of the Council for the water treatment of plants at a discount of 25%.

⁷⁹ A man from a nearby village, called Assaad, took over one of few productive oil wells. He refused to give up part of the production of his well for the refinery. He even led a tribal group to demand a share of the existing oil in the oilfield.

The wells of the Rural Council in Jerthi

The Rural Council of the town of Jerthi (80 km east of Deirezzor) succeeded⁸⁰ in controlling three adjacent wells,⁸¹ after the expulsion of the battalion that were previously controlling the area, with the help of battalions of the Free Army and important figures of the town. That was at the end of 2013, but problems arose by the landowners who owned the land in which those wells were located, were not resolved until they ended by the landowners receiving a share of the revenue, and still stirring up trouble for the Council from time to time. As was the case with some of the Free Army battalions which were recently formed, in coordination with the rural council, such as the military council of Jerthe, who received a share of the profits and distributed them.

Administrative infrastructure and the distribution system

Despite the short duration of the actual control of the Council of wells (4 months only)⁸² the results looked encouraging, to a large extent. As the Council completed the establishment of the necessary offices and committees to suit

the distribution of revenue system; and formed a special committee to distribute 30% of the profit specifically to help the rebels in Syrian cities and towns outside the province⁸³, and a technical committee headed by an engineer to operate and maintain wells, in addition to the military council which distributes 30% of the profits assigned to the battalions of Jerthe. The services offices, in health, education and agriculture, received 10% of the revenue via the rural council. The population of 18 thousand people, received 25% of the profit⁸⁴, and landowners received 5% of the profit shares, where the wells are located.

Projects carried out by the Council

This was one of the few experiences which mostly served the public good; the Council carried out projects to install electric pumps to irrigate agricultural land, and maintain an automated oven and turn it on and secure the bread at a subsidized price⁸⁵, and run schools and pay the salaries of teachers, and operating the health center and paying the salaries of employees, in addition to contributing to the Municipality Council for the promotion of hygiene, and provision of drinking water and electricity.



⁸⁰ The Rural council was established in January 2013.

⁸¹ The production of these wells ranged between 1,000 to 2,000 barrels a day.

⁸² Ended with ISIS taking over the province.

⁸³ On many occasions, military and humanitarian officials received over 70million SYP as support.

⁸⁴ In the first distribution, every individual in Jerthe received 4 thousands SYP, and a thousand SYP in the second time.

⁸⁵ Bread was sold for 60SYP a bag.

ISIS and the Oil of Deirezzor

Diwan Al-Rakaz

“Rakaz” is a jurisprudential Islamic term, which is used to describe wealth buried in the ground. Due to the nature of work in the oil industry, and what it requires of planning and administrative division of what ISIS calls the «States»; “Diwan Al-Rakaz” oversees the functioning of the oil industry through four divisions, which are: “Al-Kheir” (comprising the larger part of Deirezzor); “Al-Furat” (parts of Syria and Iraq); “Al-Barakah” (Hasaka); and Raqqa. Diwan Al-Rakaz reports to a higher hierarchy, which in turn oversees other offices of “Diwan Al-Rakaz” for oil sites in Iraq.

The oil facilities in the “Welayet Al-Khair” is run by its own private management, where most of the offices are concentrated in the main site of the Omar field. Offices and departments according to the latest reports (end of the May of 2015) are divided as follows:

1. The Management of Production: It is responsible for the management of production processes in different locations according to the following:

A. The main site of the Omar field and nearby wells connected to its main station.

B. Wells that are located between the Khabur River and the borders of “Tanak” field (connected to the main station and other separate entities), and wells of the Izba station, West of Khabur, which was previously a part of the Omar Oil Field.

C. The main site of the Tanak field and nearby wells connected to its main station.

D. Wells (connected to the main station and other separate entities) that were previously a part of the Tanak field.

E. Wells that were previously a part of the “Al-Asharah” station.

F. The Conoco gas plant and nearby wells plant in Jufrah field, and the field “Atalah” and other small fields, which were formerly a subsidiary of the Deirezzor Petroleum Company.

G. Wells that were formerly a part of the «Dero» field project.

H. Both “Al-Rasheed” wells in the area of Kisra in the Western countryside of Deirezzor.

I. Wells belonging to the “Kharrata” gas plant.

J. “Al-Taym” field.

K. Wells that formerly belonged to the field of Roses (aka Al-Ward).

Add to that that gas production department, which is responsible for the Conoco gas plant (along with a team of Syrian Government staff), as well as for operating the unit which separates the gas from oil at sites and stations that the system is able to run.

2. The Maintenance Department: It is extremely important to the oil industry in general, and its importance is even more magnified with ISIS managing the industry due to the complex and isolated working conditions that defy the norm in the oil business.

The major maintenance workshops, which perform the main and fundamental duties, are concentrated in the main site of the Omar field. Their daily work is derived according to a specific system and changing contexts, and in cases where small sub-workshops are unable to fix the damage in its own designated oil site.

The maintenance department, consists of, according to business type, of the following sections: Maintenance of wells; Maintenance of pipes and reservoirs; Mechanical maintenance; Electrical maintenance; Instrumentation, pumps and small maintenance; Maintenance mechanisms.

3. Financial Management: Responsible for the financial revenues from the sales of oil, and the

operation, maintenance, and wages and expenses of workers and staff.

It is subdivided into finance departments distributed on a geographical basis, which operates as a network of accountants at each site selling oil, in addition to specialized workers who determine the capacity of the tanks, or what is known as «Al Mukayilleen», who work in individual wells, as well as the staff who issue receipts and cards associated with the oil sales.

4. Machinery section: The section runs light and heavy machines between the various work sites.

5. Civil Works Department: is responsible for excavation and manufacturing concrete and other various construction elements.

6. Security Department: is responsible for the distribution of various guards in oil fields and sites.

In addition to the above, there is also a Fire Department.

Human Resources

There has to be a differentiation between 4 kinds of staff working in the ISIS Oil system in the “Welayet Al-Khair”, and they are as follows:

1- Al-Muhajireen: ISIS ensures that Muhajireen are appointed in leadership and crucial positions, without paying attention to their technical expertise, with the exception of Abu Walid Al-Masri, the former director of the Maintenance Department in the “Welayet Al-Khair”⁸⁶. There are no education qualifications or potential skills among the Muhajireen, although most of them introduced themselves as engineers. The truth is, that none have received any kind of education in relation to petroleum, and all their public relations, if found, were from their former course of work in an oil company.

Abu al-Abbas Al-sudani, Director of the Maintenance Department for example, was a former technician in an oil company. So is the case with Abu Abdul Rahman Al-Jizrawi (Saudi nationality) whom many doubt his engineer status.

2- Syrians who have pledged allegiance:

There were no engineers among the Syrians who pledged allegiance to ISIS, as is the case with skillful technicians, which a meager number of them (less than 10) pledged allegiance. Most of those who pledged allegiance to ISIS were mediocre workers with limited experience in the oil industry.

3- Contracted Syrians: They are the most important group in the ISIS Oil System, and they carry the burdens of operating and maintaining the oil machinery and entities. There are 40 contracted engineers with ISIS, according to close estimates. Each one is paid between 200,000 – 300,000 SYP, while technicians do not exceed 80 in number, and are paid between 120,000-200,000SYP per month. There is an increase in staff recruitment⁸⁷ in concurrence with the expansion of ISIS in the oil industry. As for the junior workers, who vary between laborers, accountants and guards, they are 700 in number, and receive between 75,000-10,000SYP per month.

4- Syrian Government Employees: Dozens of staff in the Furat Company of the Omar field are still paid by the Government of Syria. They are mostly engineers and technicians and did not pledge allegiance to ISIS, and are content with the salaries they are still receiving from the Ministry of Petroleum of the Government of Syria. They receive merits on a sporadic basis from ISIS, usually not exceeding 10,000SYP. The same case applies with the Conoco employees.

Although ISIS depends greatly on the last 2 types of staff mentioned above, they try to push their Muhajireen staff to learn from their “superiors” and try to copy their skills as their continuity in working with ISIS is not guaranteed.

⁸⁶ The defection of Abu Waleed Al-Masri (65 years old) is merely a rumor, except that he did get into a conflict with the Emir of Rakaz, Abu Sayyad, who was recently killed, before the dispute turned into a complaint raised in Mosul by Abu Walid, in which he accused Abu Sayyaf with theft. So to conclude, Abu Walid was discharged from his position and moved to Mosul.

⁸⁷ At the start of the maintenance of the Tanak field, more than 500 applications for employment were received.

The Most Important Accomplishments of the ISIS Oil System

ISIS was successful in implementing modern techniques in oil refinement and drilling, rather than the older basic techniques that were used previously by other entities that were controlling the wells in Deirezzor. Two accomplishments by ISIS may be determined, one in the technical field, and the other in the financial and administrative field, and they are as follows:

The technical accomplishments

a- The maintenance and operation of the Central Production Facility in both Al-Omar and Al-Tanak Oil Fields.

b- The maintenance and operation of the following sub-stations: Al-Ghalban, Al-Shahel, Al-Tayyaneh, Al-Asharah, Al-Izbeh. Technicians are continuing to operate those stations and more stations are expected to operate in the coming months.

c- Connecting more than 50%⁸⁸ of the independent wells which were segregated from the secondary stations due to vandalism for the random excavation of oil.

d- Reusing the water injection technique in the main stations of Al-Omar and Al-Tanak oilfield, and all work in relation to the latter, such as the maintenance of injector wells, and operating the pumps and maintenance of the pipes and stations.

e- Operating the gas units and compressors, and gas separators from crude oil and investing in it, in each of Al-Omar and Al-Tanak oilfields.

f- Extending an HV Overhead Line, 11km long, between the Al-Tanak site and Al-Ghalban station.

g- The maintenance of gas and oil pipelines between the Tanak and Omar fields, which run more than 30km long, with a diameter of 16 inches for oil pipelines and 8 inches for gas pipelines.

h- Operating dozens of wells that were out of service.

i- Using a reverse suppression system to put out well fires.⁸⁹

j- Increasing the daily average of gas distribution to almost 5000 discs in the station.

k- Improving the quality of produced oil in general, and that is by refining crude oil excavated from the operating wells

Administrative and Financial Accomplishments

a- Regardless of all the mishaps in their oil system, ISIS was successful in creating an organized working environment to a great extent. They established managements and divisions strikingly similar to those that were already operating in the existing oil companies.

b- They organized the sales process and cancelled dealing with the Syrian currency and confined sales to the US dollar, and reduced the extreme contrast in prices between one oil field and another.

c- They ensured yielding experts and local qualified individuals who worked for oil companies.

d- Regardless of the waste phenomena represented in the corruption of accountants from independent wells and far from their oil centers, ISIS was successful in reducing the waste phenomena regarding wells, to a great extent.⁹⁰

The challenges and threats in the ISIS Oil System

1- Issues of maintenance and spare parts: Until now, technicians were able to overcome the issues of maintenance by using stored spare parts in the storages of Al-Furat Oil Company, which are massive, especially after additions of annexes of other private oil companies. The total spare parts in the storages were enough to maintain more stations, pipelines,

⁸⁹ A common technology in the oil industry, which ISIS successfully implemented depending on 3d technology and sometimes even making them for this particular task.

⁹⁰ Waste resulted from the carelessness with traders who sold great amounts of oil.

pumps and machinery, except that those storages unit will run out of their spare parts eventually, and some technicians who are currently working in the facilities are predicting a period of 6 months when that will happen, a prediction the oil facilities management of ISIS is aware of. Therefore, some specialized workshops have started since 4 months to rehabilitate some of the used spare parts, which are usually not re-used in the oil industry⁹¹ but because of the expected need for them, the process was a necessity.

2- The impossibility of exporting the oil and selling it outside the “ISIS borders”, unless it is smuggled which had become more difficult due to the strictness of some countries in the region. In fact a counter-phenomenon of oil smuggling emerged in some parts of Iraq, where oil was sold from the region of Kurdistan⁹², for less prices than what was being sold by ISIS.

3- Coalition Airstrikes: until now, and on average, these airstrikes do not pose a direct threat to the oil sector in the “Welayet Al-Khair”. ISIS was successful in adapting to the airstrikes through the following:

a- Alienating the sales site almost 5km away from the main oil facilities, by connecting them to buried pipelines in the ground⁹³, which branch out into 24 smaller off shoots from the main site of the Omar oil field, and 12 pipeline offshoots from the main site of the Tanak oil field. As is the case with other oil sites, according to the amount of oil sold in each one. So the maximum impact of any airstrike would be to stop sales for a short period of time, during which the fire department would succeed in extinguishing the fire caused by the airstrike⁹⁴, then the maintenance workshops would follow to prepare the site for functioning again in record time.⁹⁵

b- ISIS abandoned the idea of refining oil and operating the huge refineries, leaving it to the

local population to do that job through small “burners” distributed in vast areas of the province, especially after the coalition airstrikes destroyed the refineries that were under the control of other military actors pre-ISIS.

It is important to note that most human casualties that take place during the coalition airstrikes are of civilian nature, whether they were workers in the oil stations or pedestrians or traders, or motorists and others who happened to be at the site during the time the strike occurred.⁹⁶

4- Most ISIS members, and specifically the Muhajireen, harassed the actual experts from contractors or government officials into trying to outtake their authority. This did not only lead to personal resentment and frustration, but led to the committing of many practical errors, while the Muhajireen insisted on the implementation of a decision, with the little experience he has, while the local experts say it’s wrong.

5- The natural decline in the production of wells, due to class issues in the province, and the running out of spare parts stock for investment purposes.

Production and the Financial Resources of ISIS

It is difficult to identify an accurate number on the production of oil in the State of “Al-Kheir” because of the following reasons:

1- The discreetness on the total amount of figures of production and confining that kind of information to high management responsible for the oil system.

2- Fluctuation in production from one day to another, and one week to another, according to the working conditions.

3- Coalition airstrikes, which imposed temporary stoppages and interruptions of production in the targeted sites.

⁹¹ Because of radiation risks, and other technical considerations.

⁹² As told by a source working the ISIS oil system

⁹³ The Civil Works department is putting great efforts in maintaining and strengthening pipelines so that they would withhold coalition airstrikes

⁹⁴ The amount of oil waste in every strike does not exceed 100 barrels.

⁹⁵ On many occasions, the fire department succeeded in re-operating the site in less than 24 hours.

⁹⁶ ISIS members do not exceed 10% of those who actually work in the coalition targeted sites.

Therefore, we have adopted the testimonies and accounts of researchers who have questioned workers in the wells and oil fields of Deirezzor in the past months, and the most reliable of engineers and technicians that have worked previously in the oil facilities.

We have adopted in this census, former employees/staff who have formerly worked in the oil wells, stations and fields in Deirezzor province, except for two oil facilities which are a subsidiary of the Syrian Petroleum Company, we found that it is to categorize them with the Furat Oil company, due to the overlapping of their position in a "deal" with the Furat company. The same applies to a subsidiary of Al-Bukamal facility, which began its work a year before the outbreak of the revolution. A small facility and is influential in the census results.

Fields and installations of the AFPC

1. Al Omar oilfield: an average daily production for the main station-Omar field is 12 thousand barrels per day. In addition, and intermittently, thousand barrels of other oil wells located south of the Iraqi city of Qaim, carried by tankers to be mixed with the Omar field oil as a pre-treatment in the main station. This amount will not be counted in the final total average.

The average total production of wells and other stations of the Omar Field, which are concentrated, mostly, in the vicinity of the Khabur River areas are around 5000 barrels. In addition to the production of the Izba station wells with a total average up to 2000 barrels per day.

2. Tanak oilfield: the average daily production of the Tanak station -After field maintenance and re-run and connect a range of near and far wells - 10 thousand barrels. The rest of the production wells are distributed as follows:

- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Barghout station: 1500 barrels.
- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Abu Hardan station: 4000 barrels.

- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Sarheed station: 1000 barrels.

- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Tayyanah station: 1200 barrels.

- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Al-Asharah station: 3000 barrels.

- Nearby wells formerly belonging to the Younis station: 500 barrels.

- Other scattered wells group: 1500 barrels.

3. Al-Ward oilfield: Before the revolution, the production of this field well dropped to minimum limits.⁹⁷ And its importance stems from being an assembly plant for export tubulars coming from the fields of al Omar and Tanak, then pumping into the second station of T2. But the share of wells previously a subsidiary of the Syrian Petroleum Company in Al-Bukamal strengthens the Ward Oil Field, due to the geographical proximity to it, to get the average production of up to 1500 barrels per day.

4. Al-Taym oilfield: The average daily production is 800 barrels. And it was able to add the production wells of Al-Shula to him, because of the geographical proximity. The average daily production of 200 barrels for these wells.

Fields and facilities of the Deirezzor Petroleum Company

Of the average for the production of wells, previously, a subsidiary of the Deirezzor Petroleum Company in Jufrah, Al-Atalah and Al-Kahhar, produce and average of 8000 barrels a day, in addition to 2000 barrels of gas condensate known as the Red gasoline, resulting from gas treatment of the Conoco plant near the field of Jufrah.

Fields and facilities of the Syrian Petroleum Company

1. Groups of wells, previously a subsidiary, to the Dero field: The average daily rate for its production is 1,000 barrels, in addition to the well of the Rasheed Company in Kasra which

⁹⁷ 200 barrels a day

produces at a rate of 400 barrels per day.

2. Field wells group or Kharrata station: an average daily production of 1000 barrels.

Financial Resources

The price of an oil barrel ranges between \$ 20 for lower quality oil, or non-refined, and \$ 45 if produced at the Omar and Tanak fields. A barrel of gas condensate, or red gasoline, about \$ 50. In addition to the gas filling station, which has a daily production of 5 thousand discs.

The following chart shows the production of oil for certain sites, and the total revenue, from each of these sites:

| The Site | Producing | Daily Amount (barrel) | Price of barrel \$ | Daily Revenue \$ |
|--|-----------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Al-Omar oilfield | | 12,000 | 45 | 540,000 |
| Wells formerly subsidiaries to Al-Omar | | 7,000 | 30 | 210,000 |
| Al-Tanak oilfield | | 10,000 | 45 | 450,000 |
| Wells formerly subsidiaries to Al-Tanak | | 12,700 | 30 | 381,000 |
| Al-Ward oilfield | | 1,500 | 30 | 45,000 |
| Al-Taym oilfield | | 1,000 | 25 | 25,000 |
| Wells formerly subsidiaries to Deirezzor Petroleum Company | | 8,000 | 30 | 240,000 |
| Wells formerly subsidiaries Syria company for Petroleum | | 2,000 | 20 | 40,000 |
| Gas Condensate or Red Gasoline | | 2,000 | 50 | 100,000 |

*Total: 2,031 million US\$, in addition to the gas revenue, which is an average of 10,000US\$ per day.

The Oil relationship with the Assad Regime

There are two sides to discuss about the obscure and contradictive relationship between ISIS and the Assad Government in the sectors of oil and gas; the first is the continuity in which ISIS is exporting gas to the sites under control of the Assad Government, to the highest extent, and providing the best conditions possible so that the gas plant may function, in accordance with the “gas for electricity” deal which was previously discussed in this study. Although many significant changes took place since April 2015,

the Syrian Government reduced the capacity of the current passing through Deirezzor network, in concurrence with the expansion of its military

targets to include the main electric transition station⁹⁸, before a complete power cut to the province was applied. With this happening, one would think ISIS would immediately stop its gas export or reduce its amount as a natural reaction, however, things were still functioning as normal, which confirms suspicions that both parties-the Assad regime and ISIS- have struck deals beyond electricity.

It may be hypothesized that the power cut to the province is a temporary situation, caused by technical problems or the inability of the power plants to function under the regime’s control, a reasonable assumption, had it not been for the electrical work done by ISIS ⁹⁹in the recent weeks, which indicates an adaptation with the electricity cut. All the above analysis is not enough therefore, in an attempt to avoid purely analysis one must go to the second aspect of the partnership, or the exchange of the potential benefits between ISIS and the Assad regime, which is oil. It is necessary to explain the connection between each of Conoco gas plant and the main site of the Omar Field.

The electricity generating station in the Omar field, provides the Conoco plant with the electrical energy needed to operate its different production units. The Conoco plant in turn, provides the Omar field with the gas it needs for the electricity generating station, therefore both facilities go hand in hand, and one cannot exist without the other. That was before ISIS succeeded separating the gas facilities of the oil processor in their main station, by operating one production unit or the Omar field gas plant. This in turn, substituted for the gas being produced in Conoco, and reduces, or even eliminates, the regular dependency on the plant, and now areas under ISIS control do not benefit anymore from the electricity system generated by the Regime gas¹⁰⁰, but rather by ISIS, espe-

⁹⁸ Al-Assad airstrikes destroyed the Dweir transition station, East of Deirezzor.

⁹⁹ Connecting electricity to the Omar Field station and other sites that weren’t covered by the station previously.

cially with the success of operating three turbines –and lately a fourth one-, which produces way above what is necessary to operate the oil installations in Conoco and the Omar.¹⁰¹

Any work done by the Furat company, represented by the field and formal staff¹⁰², who take their orders and directives from the Ministry of Petroleum when it comes to raising discretionary statements and proposing substantial maintenance work, does not give any details about the previous relationship between the Omar field of (a subsidiary of the Syrian oil Corporation) and the gas plant of the Syrian gas Company (a subsidiary of the Syrian Gas Company); is work in favor of ISIS only, since gas is the only benefit left for the Assad regime in terms of fossil fuels in Deirezzor. Any contract or project maintenance work for oil or gas is a free service provided by the Regime to ISIS, the enemy it wrestles with on fronts, in Deirezzor Airport, and within the city. That is through the commissioning of the ENESCO services contracted oil company, on multiple tasks in which the sole beneficiary was ISIS. In fact, with the development of events, ENESCO stopped working with representatives of the Ministry of Petroleum, on many occasions, and worked directly with ISIS.

Pre-Revolution, ENESCO was one of the private oil companies that were contracted with government establishments (specifically those who worked with foreign companies). One of these private companies was Kanamah, and its storages were looted in the summer of 2012, and is located within 10km away north of Deirezzor. Also, Sureen Company, which succeeded in smuggling its machinery and equipment to areas under the control of the Regime. Asas Company, another private entity, raised suspicions when it kept paying its staff for several months who were committed to attending a full day at work regardless of the fact that ISIS has taken complete control of the main Omar field site, before it eventually fell apart and fused into the ISIS system. The ENESCO

Company however, resumed its normal functions, and adapted to the conditions and data of the new tasks quickly, to resume technical and workshop mobility of projects for ISIS in the «Welayet Al-Khair» to projects for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in the Homs desert.

ENESCO specializes in the maintenance of oil and gas wells, as well as its ability to carry out other technical jobs. Working with various types of wells, is a complex job that requires sophisticated techniques and equipment, and cannot be organized by ISIS alone, at least not in the current circumstances. ENESCO on the other hand, has the expertise and the necessary equipment, which are three vehicles for the maintenance of the wells (Well Maintenance Trucks), which are very important and expensive vehicles, in addition to its own warehouse in the Omar main field site. They were all used in favor of ISIS, in the work of many projects, most notably:

1. Restart the closed wells, open internal safety valves (Sub-Surface Safety Valves), planted at a depth of not less than 40 meters from the well head. ENESCO has opened dozens of closed wells¹⁰³, especially on the perimeter and inside the main wall of the Omar field, and in the field of Tanak. Thereby producing thousands of increased barrels per day at a regular pace.
2. Help organize ISIS with oil apparatus to re-apply oil wells with water injection technology through special Injector Wells, to increase the reservoir layers of oil pressure and raise the productivity of wells invested. Both in the main sites of Al-Omar and Tanak, and after the maintenance of ENESCO to the water pumping stations in each of the cities of Abu Hammam and Shaheel, part of the two fields mentioned above, in addition to the maintenance of water pipes extending from two stations until the two oil sites.

¹⁰⁰ The energy stations controlled by the Regime feed Deirezzor with about 130mw per hour, and this feeding was reduced, before it was completely cut last April.

¹⁰¹ The 4 turbines in the Omar field generate 60-80 megawatts per hour, only 5 mw are needed to operate the gas plant and other similar facilities.

¹⁰² Dozens of Al-Omar staff are still employed, which is only a formality since they are paid from the regime, so is the case with the Conoco gas plant, which employs 170 staff.

¹⁰³ Before the regime lost control of the wells, some technicians closed the deep valves of some of them.

3. Help ISIS in the application of gas injections device technology in special gas-injection wells in some wells of the Omar field. To do what is necessary for the maintenance of the necessary gas pipelines extending between compressors in gas separation units and the main treatment plant (CPF) and even injector wells.

4. ENESCO entered in a partnership with ISIS in the Iraqi territory, in the project maintenance and operation of four gas wells in the Ukaz field¹⁰⁴ almost 40 km south of the city of Qaim, to extend gas pipelines from the field to a power plant in the vicinity of the city. This project began five months ago, and work is in place according to opportunities that may arise for both ENESCO and ISIS that would comply with their policies.

Until today, more than 60 employees who works in ENESCO, in «the “Welayet Al-Khair”», are still fully linked to the company’s management and its offices in Damascus. And from time to

time the company deploys in secret, a visit to meet with ISIS officials.

ENESCO belongs to the group of oil companies owned by businessmen George Hasswany, previously mentioned in the study, whose name appeared in earlier times as a partner and mediator between ISIS and the regime of Bashar al-Assad, and is explained in more detail in «Ain Al-Madina» magazine in its special report published in its 38th issue on the Tweinan gas field project in the desert of Levant¹⁰⁵.

It is difficult to predict the future of cooperation or exchange of benefits between the regime and ISIS, as both of them are in a relationship of extreme uniqueness and may be affected by changing conditions. But, in the current level of conflict, this cooperation does not seem threatened by any of those 2 parties.



ISIS Gas plant in “Welayet Al-Khair”

¹⁰⁴ A massive gas field which was in construction before ISIS took over in the province of Anbar.

¹⁰⁵ [://www.3ayn-almadina.com/?p=4864](http://www.3ayn-almadina.com/?p=4864).

Al-Miza'al Well Profile

The Miza'al family did not appear to be interested in the oil well located within the land it owned, in the village of "Al-Hurayji", 60 km north-east of the city of Deirezzor in the summer of 2012. However, when other parties started fighting over the well, this awakened a possessiveness for the property during fall of that year.

It began when six young men tampered with the well in order to sell oil from the leaking valves, sparking the attention of Al-Nusra Front, who drove them out and took over their little "business". This had upset some relatives of the Miza'al family in nearby villages, although most

of them enjoyed the ownership of «private wells». As a result, Sulaytih from Namliyah village, rushed to demand from Al-Nusra Front a share of the revenue, but was refused, and based on that, Sulaytih burned the well out of spite for Al-Nusra, which in turned, initiated an attack on the village of Namliyah, killing one of its members. It later withdrew, due to the wise impact of Abu Musa'ab, the uncle of the deceased and a prominent Al-Nusra figure, which counted the slain a «Son of Al-Nusra Front, and will avenge him at the time it deems appropriate.» In this position, Abu Musa'ab was keen on keeping Al-Nusra Front in cohesion, since many of its fighters belonged to the tribe of "Bu Kamel" – mainly in the city of "Shaheel" - to which both victim and his killer belong as well, so he insisted on calming the conflict to ward off sedition.

The fires were still burning in the well when Al-Miza'al family decided to take the matter into their own hands. They negotiated privately with brokers at the Furat Petroleum Company, and reached an agreement that the family pay the amount of 18 million SYP in return for sending

a technical team to put out the fire. With that ending, the family started its acquisition of the well, known for its name, like most cases of the Deirezzor oil wells.

Since that time, the production of the well settled at an 1800 - 2000 barrels per day rate, and revenue was distributed to members of the Miza'al family (male and female). The average per person was distributed at four thousand Syrian pounds a week (US\$ 45 at the time). The latter was considered a large sum in "Al-Hurayji", which was classified in a previous government study, as among the poorest 13 villages in the province.¹⁰⁶ Despite the need of some families for assistance, they refused to receive any money from the well's profit, impacted by a religious opinion, which deprives taking personal advantage of the oil. In a similar situation, Abu Khattab Al-Miza'a'¹⁰⁷, the military commander of the Shaykh al-Islam battalion, refused receiving any amount of revenue of the well, despite the need of battalions urgently for ammunition and weapons in their battles with Assad's forces on both the "Ummal" and "Rusafa" fronts in the city of Deirezzor.

The Family Hands Over it's Well

With the beginning of 2013, and due to several factors such as the impact of young men from the Miza'al family who belonged to the Murabiteen Brigade/Liwa'a Al-Islam¹⁰⁸ military factions, and following a fatwa issued by the Sharia'a office of the Brigade –in Eastern Ghouta- allowing the conditional benefit from oil money, after they receded from it; in addition to the insistent requests of religious and military figures within the "Bu Kamel" tribe, most notably Abu Mou'az Hussein Al-Hejer,

¹⁰⁶ A study prepared by the Directorate of Planning in Deirezzor in 2009, which included the coverage of 128 villages in the province.

¹⁰⁷ Osama Ramadan Mezal: He was a pharmacist before the revolution, and left the profession after the start of the revolution to engage in peaceful activity then armed, to be one of the most prominent military commanders in the Free Army factions in the province. His conscious behavior and sincere management was inspiring and turned him into a role model for the children of his family and many of the free army fighters, before he was killed in the battles with ISIS in April 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Murabiteen battalions joined Liwa'a Al-Islam in central Damascus in the month of October 2012. It functioned under that name in Deirezzor before the formation of Jeish al-Islam, as was mentioned in the study.

a Salafi activist and former member of the Supreme Sharia'a Commission and later, the Central Sharia'a Commission, and the leader of the "Haq" battalions at the same time, which prompted his Miza'al cousins to «form a good example, and be the first to hand over the well for the welfare of the public»; so in turn, the Miza'al family handed over their well, on the condition that the other families who claimed ownership of wells, would hand over theirs in 10 days.

A special committee ran the well after its hand over from the Miza'al family. It divided its revenue between key military formations of the "Bu Kamel" Tribe, represented in Al-Nusra Front, was given 8 shares, and Al-Murabiteen/Liwa'a Al-Islam received 6 shares, and 4 shares for each of Al-Mu'ta and Ikhlas brigades and Al-Haq battalions, and 2 shares for the brigade of Jafar Al-Tayyar. The number of personnel stationed on the fronts was the criteria adopted for this distribution, which was unfair for the Jafar Al-Tayyar Brigade, but that was because of the brigade's massive numbers, which included many battalions from outside the tribe of Bu Kamel, in addition to some members of the brigade who were already controlling the wells.

The family retrieves the well

AI-Miza'al family's patience was running out after the expiration of the ten days' notice, then another ten, then two months without fulfilling their condition which stated that other families also hand over their wells, including families whose members are the majority of the members of the coalitions formed that benefit from the well, forcing Al-Miza'als to retrieve it and start operating it to their advantage again. The conditions of the well went excellently during March and April and part of May 2013 while under the control of the Miza'al family, except for the drawbacks caused by the families of Dahash and Za'al, fraternal entities of the Miza'als¹⁰⁹, who demanded a share each.

Al-Miza'als rejected the demand, and fought in a series of arbitrary hearings which succeeded in placing «exclusive rights» in profits of the well, because of its location on a land they owned. During that time, Al-Murabiteen brigades were locked in fierce battles on the fronts with Assad's forces, and were in urgent need of financing this fight, during which its military commander, Abu Khattab, and his entourage of the Miza'al members, offered to rent the well for 4 million SYP a day, to be paid to the Miza'al family, who agreed to it.

Dr. Ali Miza'al, a physician and prominent activist in the health and relief and administrative sectors, gave details on the distribution methods of the well revenues to battalions during the 20-day period during which the well was hired. The net profit amounted to 22 million SYP, six million of them were given to poor battalions of the Free Army, while the rest was spent on the Murabiteen combat operations, from buying weapons and ammunition to paying fighters¹¹⁰, and other expenses such as amounts of money paid secretly for some men of the Miza'al family to silence them in return of discontinuation of stirring up trouble.¹¹¹

Dr. Ali Meza'al stressed on the clear and effective impact of these profits in improving combat capabilities in several battles waged against Assad's forces with Al-Murabiteen. Were it not for the dangerous development, in the escalation of conflict between Al-Miza'al, Al-Dahash, and Al-Za'al, the experiment of renting the well would have created an appealing phenomenon, especially with the high level of transparency and integrity shown by their financiers in ensuring the fate of where every lira went.

More bloodshed

It was a surprise for the Miza'al family the attack of the Dahash family on the well and then taking control of it, the surprise was also about the ease in how it happened, and was mostly embarrassing for Abu Khattab; so the Miza'al

¹⁰⁹ The Miza'al and Dahash and Azaaal families, residents of the village of Al-Hurayji, in addition to six other families who inhabit Al-Shaheel, belong to Al-Addad, affiliated with "Al-Saleh Al-Ahmad", one of the main branches of the "Bu Kamel" tribe, which make up, with the tribes of "Al-Kamal" and "Zamil", the core of the Aekadat tribe, one of the major tribes of Deirezzor province.

¹¹⁰ Of the amount of 16 million SYP which was received by the Murabiteen brigade, the following was bought: Anti-Aircraft with a four-wheel drive truck for carrying it, one mortar cannon, 10 Kalashnikovs, 5000 Russian bullets, 3000 PKC bullets, a minibus and the distribution of salaries to about 100 Murabiteen fighters.

¹¹¹ From a dialogue with Dr. Ali Miza'al

family decided to take the matter into their own hands again, and launched an offensive to retrieve the well from the Dahash family. The result led to two deaths in the Dahash family, in addition to dozens wounded on both sides. The Shariah Commission in the eastern region, as the executive entity of Al-Nusra Front and other powers, intervened and calmed the conflict to a large extent during which a temporarily freeze followed, and that is after the Miza'al family got away from the scene as they have become a party wanted for revenge. The well became under the control of the Sharia'a Commission for about ten months, from mid-summer 2013, punctuated by some coarse disputes between parties belonging to the commission, and especially among Al-Nusra Front and Al-Mu'ta brigade, but without casualties.

million dollars back then) of oil value, according to the Miza'al family who estimated the value the accumulated oil, in one of the craziest and most careless scenes.

After the flames of foolishness went out, feuding crowds consented to a bit of sanity advocated by some, and sought the drafting of a new quota agreement, which expanded the circle of beneficiaries within the Bu Kamel tribe, especially the members of them in scattered villages along the Khabur River. The well was functioning again based on this agreement, which continued to work until ISIS cut the oil trade routes to the North of Syria and Aleppo province, before taking over the whole province in June and July 2014.

The Angry Sharia'a Judiciary that burned the Well

Conflict between the tribal and military beneficiaries of the well, namely Al-Nusra Front and Al-Mu'ta Brigade, stopped the selling of oil until both sides agreed to share the new quota formula, which would be defined as increasing the share of Mu'ta, and their affiliates of family and battalions, on the account of Al-Nusra, and their affiliates of family and battalions. In parallel, the Miza'al family succeeded in holding special agreements with Mu'ta, as they also belonged, like the majority of the Mu'ta fighters, to "Al-Saleh Al-Ahmad brigade", one of the main branches of the "Bu Kamel" tribe. The control of the well was considered a victory for Al-Mu'ta over Al-Nusra Front, and damaged its image which did not suit its fighters, thus created the atmosphere of serious developments which would violate the military formations of the Sharia'a Commission.

Almost two months after the ceasing of sales due to the rivalry between Al-Nusra and Mu'ta, an angry sharia'a judiciary, threatened through wireless radio, that he will burn the well if the conflicting parties do not come to an agreement within a specified deadline. The deadline was not met and the parties did not reach any agreement, which led to the break out of fire on February 21, 2014 in the oil lake along the well, and burned more than 500 million SYP (3.35



Documents



إحصائية مبدئية للتخريب والسرقات الحاصلة في الحقول منذ عام 2011 حتى نهاية 2013

| Theft / Sabotage | Number of Incidents | Materilas & Repair Cost in \$ |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| ESP wells | 40 | 2,130,500 |
| BP wells | 59 | 1,220,000 |
| Pipeline / Flowline+ Wells | 947 | 32,580,835 |
| Overhead Line Poles | 24 | 1,277,970 |
| Stations | 24 | 52,223,000 |
| Vehicle's (304 stolen) | 319 | 10,279,194 |
| Other incidents | 24 | 6,638,799 |
| Security Contracts | currently 8 contracts | 2,500,000 |
| Total | 1,437 | 108,850,298 |

| Line | no. of incidents |
|---|------------------|
| Omar Export line 24" | 289 |
| Thayyem T2 - 20" | 82 |
| Ward T2-16" | 102 |
| Tanak El Ward T2-12" | 85 |
| Tanak -Omar 16" | 50 |
| Esba Omar 12" | 146 |
| SGC 24" to OGP Gas line | 8 |
| Omar Isba 20" Gas line | 6 |
| Isba Thayyem - 10" | 4 |
| Omar Gas Plant 18" | 18 |
| Tanak Omar (OGP) 12" Gas line | 50 |
| Omar - Sijan (16") Water Injection Line | 27 |
| Flowlines between wells | 45 |
| Total | 912 |

- Materials + repair cost
- Oil lost (burned, stolen) 3.6 mln bbl
- Gas (lost, burned) 73 mln m3

= 109 mln USD
 = 386 mln USD
 = 19 mln USD

Total value of all incidents including oil & gas lost

513.7 mln USD

Note: Total cumulative oil deferment 22.4 mln bbl, Gas Deferment 512 mln m3
 FPC estimated the stolen oil by 5,000 barrel till end August 2013 9000 -10000 bbl/d afterward

BOD Meeting 7/1/2014

Slide 1

* Document 1: Technical report about the attacks on the petroleum pipes of Al Furat Company

واقع شركة الفرات الحالي



- تم بتاريخ 23 تشرين الثاني 2013 الاستيلاء على حقل العمر من قبل المجموعات المسلحة
- حالياً يتم السماح لعمال شركة الفرات بالدخول إلى حقل العمر ولكن ليس لبقية المناطق مثل التنك.
- يتم الاتصال مع إدارة الحقول لمعرفة المستجدات اليومية و توثيق مختلف أنواع الحوادث حسب ما يرد من الحقول.
- الجهود مستمرة للحفاظ على استمرارية العمل في معمل غاز العمر ومحطة توليد الطاقة الكهربائية رغم وجود بعض الصعوبات الفنية والتي يتم العمل على معالجتها بشتى الوسائل المتاحة مثل صعوبة تأمين الزيوت اللازمة لتشغيل العنفات
- تم إغلاق بعض الآبار داخل السور منعاً للسرقة عن طريق وضع سدادات ميكانيكية.
- السرقات ما زالت مستمرة وخاصة من حقل العمر وقد طالت معظم السيارات والآليات بأنواعها والكمبيوترات مع تخريب المكاتب
- المخازن مغلقة بشكل محكم و لم يتم سرقتها لغاية الآن ويتم العمل على حمايتها للحفاظ على قطع التبدل الرئيسية والضرورية الموجودة فيها لتشغيل وصيانة العنفات الغازية والتي تضمن استمرار تشغيل معمل الغاز والطاقة .
- من الأفضل عدم لفت الأنظار إليها وعدم إخراج محتوياتها خارج الحقل،
- تم بصعوبة التوصل لاتفاق مع المجموعات المسلحة بإمكانية استعمال القطع التبدلية المهمة حين الضرورة داخل الحقل حصرياً
- تم تخفيض عدد الحراس المياومين من 200 الى 100 ابتداءً من 1/12/2013 وفقاً لحاجة العمل.
- تم تخفيض عقود الحماية الخاصة بالمحطات بنسبة 25% ويتم مراجعة هذه العقود بشكل دوري لمعرفة جدواها وإلغاء غير الضروري منها.

BOD Meeting 7/1/2014

Slide 1

* Document 2: Minutes of meeting between Al Furat Petroleum Company and the Syrian Petroleum Company

«وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعاً وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا» سورة آل عمران 103

بيان هام:

إلى أهاليينا في المنطقة الشرقية, انطلاقاً من قول الله تعالى:

«الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ» [سورة الحج: 41]

نحيطكم علماً بأن الله جل وعلا قد امتن على غالب الكتائب الإسلامية بتشكيل «الهيئة الشرعية للمنطقة الشرقية» والتي بدورها ستقوم بتسيير شؤون الناس وملئ الفراغ الأمني وحل قضايا الناس العالقة وذلك من خلال المكاتب التالية:

1- مكتب الهيئة الشرعية للإصلاح وفض الخصومات.

2- مكتب الهيئة الشرعية للدعوة والإرشاد.

3- مكتب الهيئة الشرعية للفتوى.

4- القوة التنفيذية «شرطة المنطقة الشرقية».

5- الهيئة الخدمية.

6- اللجنة الإغاثية.

فكونوا- حفظكم الله- عوناً لها على إنجاح هذا العمل المبارك انطلاقاً من قوله تعالى «وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ» حتى تحفظ الحقوق لمستحقيها وتؤدي الأمانات إلى أهلها ويردع الظالم عن ظلمه ويضرب على يد الفاسد حتى يرجع عن إفساده ويؤخذ للضعيف المظلوم حقه من الغني الظالم, وتصان الأعراض عن العبث بها, وهذه, وهذه أمانة جسيمة, ومسؤولية عظيمة وحمل ثقيل.

نسأل الله عز وجل أن تكون هذه الهيئة المباركة لهذا أهل, وأن يبسر الله أمورها ويفتح على أيديها إنه ولي ذلك والقادر عليه «وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ».

والحمد لله رب العالمين

الهيئة الشرعية في المنطقة الشرقية

السبت 9-3-2013



الهيئة الشرعية في المنطقة الشرقية
المكتب الشرعي
مكتب التحكيم وفض الخصومات الشرعي

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله وحده والصلاة والسلام على من لا نبي بعده

قرار صادر عن الهيئة الشرعية في المنطقة الشرقية : بخصوص حقل الغاز في قرية خشام

يقول الله عز وجل: " إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ جِلْدٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ جِزَاؤُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ فِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ "....المادة- ٣٣

إن من المعطوم شرعاً أن الثروة النفطية هي ملك لجميع الأمة ولا تستأثر بها مجموعة دون أخرى بل لابد أن يتال الجميع منه حقوقهم حسب العدل والإنصاف وترتيب المصالح.

لقد وصل الأمر في حقل الغاز في منطقة خشام حداً لا يطاق من استئثار فئة قليلة بمقدرات الأمة ثم العبث بها مما أدى إلى انقطاع التيار الكهربائي لأيام طويلة تسبب هذا الأمر في وفاة العديد من الأطفال الأبرياء وتلف الكثير من المواد الغذائية والطبية ، وما هذا إلا نتيجة لرغبات جامحة دون أدنى إحساس بالمسؤولية .

فمن غير المقبول أن تتعطل الواجبات الشرعية كالجهاد والأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر وخدمات العباد نظراً لعدم توفر المال الكافي ثم يلعب بعض الناس بملايين الليرات يومياً ، والغلاء قد عم والوضع المعيشي قد تدهور ، والجبهات المفتوحة بحاجة إلى دعم ، هذا فضلاً عن الكهرباء التي أصبحت العوية بأيدي تجار الدم الذين أخذوا يهددون العمال والموظفين في المعمل ويمنعونهم من أداء عملهم .
إن هذه الأفعال والجرائم ترقى لدرجة الحراية والإفساد في الأرض ، ولذلك وبناء على مقتضيات الأوامر الشرعية في وجوب التوزيع العادل لأموال المسلمين العامة ومنع الضرر عنهم .
ورغم النداءات المتكررة بتسليم هذا المعمل للهيئة الشرعية دون استجابة .
لذلك فإن الهيئة الشرعية في المنطقة الشرقية تقرر مايلي :

- ١- وضع اليد على معمل الغاز في خشام وما يلحق به ليكون تحت نظر الهيئة الشرعية ومنع التصرف الشخصي به.
- ٢- تقوم القوة التنفيذية للهيئة الشرعية والمتمثلة بالكتائب الموقعة على ميثاق الهيئة بتنفيذ هذا القرار مع أخذ الاحتياطات كافة منعاً من إراقة قطرة دم واحدة ، وذلك وفق الأصول الشرعية
- ٣- تشكيل لجنة مختصة تشرف على التوزيع العادل لما ينتجه هذا المعمل وفق آلية شرعية تراعي وضع الجبهات المشتتة وحاجات الناس وفق ترتيب المصالح الشرعية بعيداً عن الحزبية والمحسوبية .
- ٤- يراعى أهل خشام المحيطين بالمعمل في الأولوية بالأعمال الخدمية والإغاثية كونهم الأقرب إليه ، ويقدمون في هذا الموضوع على من سواهم .
- ٥- يوزع هذا القرار وينشر أصولاً.

يوم الخميس ١٠ محرم ١٤٣٥
الموافق لـ ٢٠١٣/١١/١٤

والله ولي التوفيق
الهيئة الشرعية في المنطقة الشرقية



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

بيان مشترك موجه إلى

مجلس شوري "الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام"

و أميرها الشيخ أبي بكر البغدادي وفقهم الله

الحمد لله وحده والصلاة والسلام على من لا نبي بعده وعلى آله وصحبه :

يقول الله تعالى { فلا وربك لا يؤمنون حتى يحكموك فيما شجر بينهم ثم لا يجدوا في أنفسهم

حرجاً مما قضيت ويسلموا تسليماً } النساء ٦٥

بعد أن تمت السيطرة على حقل الغاز (كوتكو) في منطقة خنثام وانتزاعه من أيدي اللصوص وتجار الدم حصلت بعض الإشكالات مع الإخوة في " الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام " علماً بأن الحقل لم يكن أصلاً تحت يد أي فصيل أو تشكيل من الفصائل أو التشكيلات المقاتلة في محافظة نينوى الزور- بما فيهم الدولة الإسلامية - وإنما كان تحت أيدي اللصوص والحرامية. إننا نحذر من الانجرار وراء أي صدام قد يجر الساحة الشامية إلى ما لا يحمد عقباه ، كما أنه يهدد بانقطاع الكهرباء عن المنطقة بأسرها .

ولقد حاولت كثير من الأطراف السعي إلى إيجاد حل للإشكال لكن دون جدوى . وعليه فإننا ننشد الإخوة في مجلس شوري "الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام" وننشد الشيخ أبا بكر البغدادي ونأمل منهم إرسال مندوب عنهم والنزول إلى حكم الشرع وفض النزاع وفق

حكم الكتاب والسنة ' امتثالاً لقوله تعالى: { إنما كان قول المؤمنين إذا دعوا إلى الله ورسوله ليحكم

بينهم أن يقولوا سمعنا وأطعنا وأولئك هم المفلحون } البقرة ٥١

إن النزول إلى حكم الشرع هو الحل الأسلم والأحكم لهذه الأزمة وبهذا تحقن الدماء وتحمي الثغور ويوحد الصف ، وإلا فإن الأمر يلذر بسوء . وإبنا نظن أن الإخوة في الدولة الإسلامية هم أهل لذلك وهذا هو الظن بهم ، ونأمل منهم الإسراع في تلك لواء الفتنة وقطع الطريق على المعرضين فإن الأمر لا يحتمل التأخير .

الموقعون على هذا البيان :

- الهيئة الشرعية المركزية في المنطقة الشرقية
- جبهة النصرة
- حركة أحرار الشام الإسلامية
- جيش الإسلام





الدولة الإسلامية
محمد بن عبد الله

الدولة الإسلامية
جديد عكبات