

# Former Turkish Officer's Revelations on Subversive Operations of the Turkish Intelligence Agency MIT Against Syria

By [Heba Delacres](#)

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*Currently on the run from Turkish prison system, former officer Önder Siğircıkoğlu asserts he wasn't out for money: "I took action to save my identity, my honour and my conscience."*

## **"I abducted the mass murderer Colonel Harmoush and turned him over to Syria"**

*Lt Col Hussein al-Harmoush was the most senior defector from the Syrian Arab Army early in the Syria conflict. He fled to Turkey in June 2011 where he proceeded to set up a so-called Free Officers Movement to overthrow the Syrian government. His ambitions were short-lived. He disappeared from Hatay Altınözü camp on 29 August together with Mustafa Kassoum, a gym instructor who had been passing himself off as an Army Major. Two weeks later Harmoush was on Syrian TV, [confessing](#) to his crimes and to Turkey's complicity.*

*After a frenzied investigation, Turkish security rounded up several people, and seven individuals were tried for the 'crime' of returning Harmoush to Syria. The most senior among them, Önder Siğircıkoğlu, a 19-year veteran of Turkey's Intelligence Agency MIT, was handed a 20-year sentence. After 32 months incarceration at Osmaniye prison, Siğircıkoğlu made his escape while being transferred to another facility and was able to leave Turkey clandestinely. The following is [Part 1](#) of his revelations to Ömer Ödemiş for leading Turkish news site [OdaTV](#). (Part II follows below.)*

Önder Siğircıkoğlu has harsh words for Turkey's Syria policy. He had been assigned by MIT early on to screen arrivals during the initial refugee onslaught:

"I interviewed thousands in those early days. The first group of refugees consisted of about 250 who crossed the border to Turkey's Altınözü. Their Syrian handlers were law student Seri Hammodi and taxidriver Abdusselam Sadiq. These two were in constant contact with international media, Al Jazeera and others, propagandizing and agitating that the refugees had been forced to flee Syria because of violent oppression. The tales they told were fabrications, but they were campaigning to sway public opinion and secure funding from Turkey, the U.N., Gulf countries and international institutions."

## **138 KILLED AFTER SURRENDERING TO HARMOUSH**

Siğircıkoğlu points out that the earliest arrivals came equipped with Thuraya satellite phones and with laptops. His first encounter with Harmoush wasn't long afterwards:

“In 10 or 11 June 2011 we received an MIT communique noting the arrival of a dissident Syrian Lt.Colonel in the camp. We were tasked with drawing up a report on his involvement in military operations. Upon inquiry I identified the Lt.Colonel in question to be Hussein al-Harmoush, the leader of the armed opposition in Jisr al-Shughour and instigator of the clashes there. He disclosed in the interview that he was a fundamentalist sunni, a Russia-trained explosives specialist last assigned to the engineering department of the 11th army division in Homs. Harmoush had been in constant conflict with his superiors over his strict Islamism and had played a leading part in organizing the armed opposition in Jisr al-Shughour. He recounted how they neutralized Syrian security personnel and captured Jisr al-Shughour’s post office, and how they set off an explosive device of Harmoush’s making at the premises of the military unit. Survivors of the explosion were forced to surrender to the forces of Harmoush who, in his own account, had 138 of them summarily executed.”

## **MASS MURDERERS GLORIFIED**

As Harmoush described in gory detail how he had ordered the [notorious massacre](#) that saw the River Orontes run red with the blood of untold victims, Siğircıkoğlu went cold with horror and disgust:

“I was appalled, and felt lost. The agency I worked for was coddling and glorifying these mass murderers. We were consorting with bloodthirsty thugs raising havoc in a friendly neighbouring country. We were housing and sheltering them, handing them safe phones, and helping their forays in and out of Syria.

Siğircıkoğlu put in request after request for a transfer elsewhere. But his command of Arabic language and his familiarity with the region was too valuable to his superiors. His requests were denied.

## **NOT FOR MONEY**

In two more years Siğircıkoğlu would have made it to senior rank in the agency. But his mind was made up. “I planned out the abduction of Colonel Hussain Harmoush, and asked for help from a few trusted contacts. Once they agreed, I put Harmoush in my car and handed him to friends who delivered him to Syria. The murderer had to stand trial in his home country and answer for the hundreds of innocents he massacred. I wasn’t out for money. To smear my name they are spreading rumors that I was paid \$100,000 for this action. In fact I was receiving nearly TL 7000 monthly salary at the time. I owned a house, a car; I had a good life. I’d never ruin all that for just \$100,000. Besides, there’s no truth to the claim that Syrian government had put out a reward for Harmoush. Nothing of the sort. I took action to save my identity, my honour and my conscience. I acted out of my convictions against AKP’s policies. I feel no remorse. Turkish government’s policies constitute a betrayal of the Syrian people and I stood up against it. Supporting murderers against a country that had been a historical friend was not my lawful duty.”

## **THOUSANDS OF JIHADIS SET UPON SYRIA**

As the campaign against Syria expanded, planes brought in thousands of murderers and jihadis to Hatay from where they were dispatched over Yayladağı and Reyhanlı to Syria to commit further massacres, says Siğircıkoğlu: “It was a daily routine. Thousands were brought to Turkey illegally, without passports, from undisclosed points of origin; and they were helped across the border into Syria. Some of it I witnessed, some I was directly

involved in. An agency charged with upholding security was working to undermine security in another country. I had lost all faith in my job. Shiploads of weapons arrived at Iskenderun port, were loaded in containers and transported by trucks to Reyhanlı to be slipped into Syria. I didn't want to be a part of it. So I took a stance regardless of personal consequences."

### **"CHRISTIANS TO BEIRUT, ALAWITES TO THE GRAVE"**

Siğircikoğlu's Arabic accent hinted at his Alevi origins, and that immediately put Harmoush's hackles up. "Harmoush and his men were Sunnis and very sectarian about it," says the former agent. "When I called them in for an interview, they declared they wouldn't be ordered around by an Alevi. Carrying out my duty was a constant struggle. They frequently put up the inflammatory chant '**Christians to Beirut, Alawites to the grave,**' and attempted provocation saying '**keep Alevi doctors and nurses away, they will only mistreat us.**' These men were trying to carry their sectarian bigotry over into Turkey. I requested to be transferred from Hatay with a report that explained all these problems, but I was turned away."

### **TRAITORS TO BE REVEALED**

Siğircikoğlu is firm in his stance against AKP's Syria policy. Determined to name the informers and the secret witnesses who testified against him, he is also prepared to expose in detail where and how jihadi murderers are given passage into Syria, how the weapons are transported, and what instructions he was given by his superiors pertaining to these dark operations.

*Interview conducted by Oda TV; Translation: @Alamet0*

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## **Part 2 of the interview with Turkish Intelligence Agency MIT veteran**

By [HEBA DELACRES](#), March 1, 2015 Al-Masdar Al-'Arabi (The Arab Source)

*Sentenced to a 20 year prison term for handing mass murderer Lt. Col. Hussein al-Harmoush back to Syria, Turkish Intelligence Agency MIT veteran Önder Siğircikoğlu escaped prison and fled from Turkey. This is [Part 2](#) of the interview he gave to Ömer Ödemiş for leading Turkish news site [OdaTV](#).*

### **MURDERERS WERE TRANSPORTED BY OFFICIAL VEHICLES**

From March to August 2011 Önder Siğircikoğlu interviewed over 4 thousand Syrians, drawing up fact sheets on each for his agency. He was tasked with keeping regular contact especially with the renegade military residents of the camps set up in Hatay. However the officer corps that was being put together included pretenders as well.

"Mustafa Kassoum whom I seized together with Harmoush was not of military origin. But he was adept at feeding a stream of lies and fantasies to international backers to collect money," says Siğircikoğlu. "An instructor in Syria in his earlier life, Kassoum became a leader of some significance in the course of the revolts and played an outsized part in the chaos that gripped the country. We suspected he was connected to certain Arab intelligence agencies all along. We also knew that he was pocketing the donations he

collected on behalf of the militants.”

## **INCURSIONS INTO SYRIA CONTROLLED BY MIT'S ADANA OFFICE**

Siğircıkoğlu explains that all incursions of jihadi murderers from Turkey to Syrian territory was organized by the Adana regional office of MIT. “The office was given advanced notice on groups preparing for a raid. Once the order came down, agency workers were assigned to facilitate the passage in utmost secrecy. I gather Hatay office has been boosted recently to take on most of these dealings. We usually borrowed non-military official vehicles. Most of the time we got the vehicles from AFAD – the Disaster and Emergency Management Department. When we were short of official cars we rented some, again in AFAD’s name. Great care was taken to avoid a military display and to put a civilian face on all this activity.”

## **ABANDONED FACILITIES USED FOR LOGISTICS**

The outskirts of Reyhanli town is dotted with scores of abandoned buildings and facilities almost all of which are used as logistic centers for militants’ supplies, says Siğircıkoğlu. “The old Monopoly Administration warehouse within Reyhanli proper also serves the same purpose,” he notes. “Supplies brought over from other regions were collected in these centers until they were transferred to final destinations over Reyhanli, Yayladag or Kilis borders. Again, the military nature of the shipments were carefully kept under cover.”

## **HATAY TEEMING WITH SPOOKS**

It’s no wonder that the region has become a magnet for intelligence operatives from all over the world. “American, British, Jordanian, Saudi, you name it,” says Siğircıkoğlu. “Hatay is teeming with spooks from all of them. In fact we determined that Turkish journalist and academician Mehmet Y. who made regular trips in and out of Syria was working for German intelligence. Hatay became the spook capital of the world. Every intelligence agency you could think of opened up shop in Hatay. Some are involved in public relations while others work to shape events, contacting and trying to steer various terror groups to their own purposes. Many of these are based in Kusakli village which has become out of bounds for civilians.”

## **WEAPONS FROM ALBANIA AND FORMER YUGOSLAVIA**

Weapons were primarily brought in by ship. Siğircıkoğlu remembers seeing a lot of armament that had previously been used in Libya. “There appeared to be a preference for brands from non-EU countries. Weapons of Albanian or former Yugoslavian origin were brought in, for example, and were dealt out to salafi terror gangs.” Indeed, I personally saw reports that mentioned I.K.86 bullets. I.K. is the acronym for Igman-Konyits, former Yugoslavian weapons and munitions factory in present-day Bosnia.

“All transportation and transfers were organized by MIT Adana Regional Directorate, under full knowledge of the then regional director Nihat B. and his deputy Mücahittin K. But there have been occasions when Ankara bypassed the regional directorate and carried out some operations over one-to-one connections with figures on the ground,” Siğircıkoğlu states.

## **DIRECT PHONE LINES FOR KEY PLAYERS**

“Beginning from early August 2011, departmental managers and senior employees from MIT

Strategic Intelligence Department and Counter-Espionage Department came to Hatay for private meetings with high level opposition organizers, particularly with the founders and top names of the Free Syrian Army. Figures they met included Harmoush, Riad al Asad and Ahmed Hijazi among others. I found out about this from the grapevine as well as some of their written exchanges. Ankara was now bypassing us and establishing direct connections. The Ankara team also gave their contacts special mobile phones so they could communicate over a hotline. When these guys neglected to check their phones, Ankara prompted us to go and warn them to respond to the calls.”

## **HEYSEM TOPALCA LONG AN MIT CONTACT**

Asked about the notorious Heysem Topalca, Sığircıkoğlu replies he has known this criminal for years. “Topalca used to be a cab driver and smuggler who operated between Turkey and Syria. He had long been an MIT contact, but not a figure of any significance. My superiors blew him out of proportion. He was one of the leaders of the Bayir Bucak Turkmen group, a radical. From what I gather, he has gained more importance after my time.”

## **PREPARED TO TESTIFY IN INTERNATIONAL COURTS**

Önder Sığircıkoğlu has no regrets for his daring feat. He insists he would take the same action today if he was faced with the choice:

**“I acted out of conscience... I couldn’t be an accomplice to the massacres... Handing a mass murderer back to his home country is not a crime in my view. I was betrayed by some of the friends I set out with. The identities of the secret witnesses are known to me. I was sentenced, and now I’m a wanted man with a red notice over my head. So be it. I am prepared to testify in international courts of justice, to state in full detail everything I did, witnessed, or know about. AKP government has defied international law to support terror networks against Syria. I am ready to do anything to expose the malignant support and to see those responsible pay for their crimes.”**

Translated by: @Alamet0

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