

“The Godfather of Internal Trade between Assad and ISIS”

Hussam Ahmad al-Katerji



- ❖ [Hussam Ahmad al-Katerji](#) is a powerful businessman and member of the Syrian People’s Assembly (Syrian Parliament). He mediates and brokers deals between the Assad regime, Kurdish militias, and ISIS.
- ❖ Katerji is a central cog in the illegal trade between Assad and ISIS. Through this position, he exploits Syrian suffering and the food crisis by undercutting the prices of local merchants and in periods of shortages, supplying food and goods at exorbitant prices.

ISIS and Deir ez Zor

- ❖ As ISIS suffers defeats and its territorial control is shrinking, Deir Ez Zor is becoming the organization's last major foothold and is slated to be the final frontier in the struggle against ISIS.
- ❖ Deir ez Zor, located in between Raqqa and Mosul, functions as ISIS's military and supply hub. It also contains Syria's richest oil reserves.
- ❖ ISIS has empowered local Syrian and Iraqi tribal leaders and therefore enjoys critical support from parts of the population.
- ❖ Deir ez Zor is absorbing an influx of ISIS fighters and their families fleeing from territorial defeats.
- ❖ In an effort to maintain local support, ISIS is using oil profits, taxes, and other trade revenues to invest in the population.

Katerji and the ISIS Emir of Deir Ez Zor

- ❖ According to a December 21st 2016 article on the Egyptian news website, [Al-Mourabitoun](#):
- ❖ Al-Katerji enjoys good relations with the Zakat Bureau and Emir of the ISIS- controlled Deir ez Zor Province.
- ❖ Al-Katerji's local agents and brokers deposit money from the transactions directly to the Zakat Bureau.
- ❖ His network transfers around 2000 barrels of oil per from Raqqa to the refinery in Homs.

Oil Smuggling

- ❖ According to a January 1, 2017 report on the news website, [All4Syria](#): The Security Office at the Military Council in Marea, located in the northern rural areas of Aleppo monitored a convoy of tankers loaded with crude oil, heading from areas under the control of ISIS to the Homs refinery, located in areas held by the Assad regime.
- ❖ The convoy passed through areas controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Syria militias. One of the drivers admitted, in a videotape released by the Security Office in Marea, that Katerji's trucks were heading to the Homs refinery.
- ❖ Sources disclosed that this is not the first instance of cooperation between the regime and the Kurdish units.
- ❖ A January 16, 2017 article from the [MadaSyria](#) website reported on similar activity in Homs: The "[Local Coordinating Committees](#)" relayed that local sources named Katerji as the mediator between ISIS and the regime. They explained that the oil is transported through by small convoys that carry loads of up to two thousand barrels.
- ❖ Every day, they come from Raqqa through Badia Al Sham to reach the refinery in the province of Homs.
- ❖ According to an agreement between the regime and the organization, the regime avoids bombing tankers and maintains control of some parts of Deir ez Zor and ISIS is ignoring the violation of its dress code and the ban on smoking in its territory of Deir ez Zor.
- ❖ In addition to the agreed price of oil, agents and local brokers pay extra for each tank to ISIS's Zakat Bureau.

Oil Smuggling Continued

- ❖ According to a March 17, 2017 report on Watan.fm Syria News: Watan FM received information that Katerji is acting as the intermediary for a newly signed deal in which the Assad regime will buy 400 barrels of crude oil from ISIS per day. The Watan FM reporters independently verified the information below.
- ❖ Watan FM communicated with a local source, a driver for an oil tanker from the province of Raqqa who identified himself as Abu Imad. The source said: ISIS handed over the oil field in the province of Deir ez Zor and several oil wells in the province of Raqqa to Katerji through a one year contract.
- ❖ Abu Imad explained that the oil is transported by tanks from the al-Omar field, which is under ISIS control in Deir al-Zour, to the city of al-Tabqah, which is 50 km west of Raqqa, and then to Homs via the Salmiya-Raqqa road. This road is closed to civilian traffic.
- ❖ When Abu Imad was asked if the Assad regime's checkpoints or militias were on the road, he said: Among the tank drivers are those who are wanted by the regime for abandoning their duty, but the regime will not pursue them as per the agreement with ISIS.
- ❖ The source added that under the terms of the agreement brokered by Katerji, ISIS paid \$500,000 to ensure that drivers are not harassed by regime forces.

Wheat Deals and Food Deliveries

- ❖ According to the aforementioned March 17, 2017 Radio Watan FM investigation: Katarji purchased large amounts of wheat from ISIS in the Provinces of Raqqa, Deir ez Zor and Hasakah.
- ❖ Radio Watan FM communicated with a person named "Abu Ahmed" from the province of Raqqa who works in the wheat trade. He said that Katerji bought large quantities of wheat from the Zakat Bureau of Raqqa and transported it through regime-controlled areas in the city of Hama.
- ❖ Abu Ahmed said that ISIS seized the wheat from the farmers and traders in the name of Zakat.
- ❖ He added that Katerji brought food and supplies from regime-controlled areas for sale in local markets in ISIS-controlled territory.
- ❖ Abu Ahmed described an incident in which Katerji - in coordination with ISIS - sold large amounts of vegetables, sugars, and food supplies at high prices during a food and resources crisis in Raqqa. ISIS took a percentage of Katerji's sales.

Food Deliveries Continued

- ❖ According to an August 22nd, 2016 report on news website DeirEzZor24.net: Katerji owns a company operating in the Syrian regime-controlled neighborhoods in the city of Deir Ez Zor. This unnamed company is delivering food and commodities to civilians and Assad's forces in the areas besieged by ISIS.

- ❖ The company enjoys a near monopoly on food stuffs and is exploiting its relations with the regime in order to amass huge profits.
- ❖ It provides prices on, for example, onions and potatoes, that are slightly more competitive than those of local small shops.
- ❖ The report claims that Katerji has exclusive permission to transfer material from the regime's Air Force Command and the company's headquarters and warehouses are guarded by elements of the Air Force Command.
- ❖ The article also claims that criminal elements within the regime's security forces raided a commercial store in the neighborhood of Joura and confiscated food items on behalf of Katerji. Then Katerji's company sold the goods to Damascus, after which they were distributed as part of the air drop food aid to civilians. Heads of Assad's security services were looking into it.

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