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US-Backed Syrian Rebels Accused of Torture, Summary Executions

By Jason Ditz
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While most of the reports on war crimes in Syria center on either ISIS or the Syrian government, they are by no means the only ones committing such crimes, as a new report from Amnesty International details “chilling” abuses committed by a number of different groups, including several US-backed rebel factions.

The report singles out three US-backed groups, the Nour al-Din Zanki Movement, the Levant Front, and the Free Syrian Army’s 16th Division, as being involved in torture and abuse of minorities and peaceful activists, along with carrying out summary executions of captured pro-government fighters.

The details of the abuses greatly resemble those the US has railed against ISIS over, accused of kidnapping Christian priests, killing people accused of being gay, and torturing journalists for reporting in ways seen unfriendly to their factions.

Amnesty’s Middle East Director Philip Luther noted that the civilians had initially “welcomed an escape from brutal Syrian government rule,” but that those hopes for a better future quickly failed as the rebels started adopting the exact same policies of abuse.

The US often brags about how well it vets the various rebel factions it chooses to subsidize, but more than once those groups have ended up siding with al-Qaeda or ISIS when push comes to

shove, and this reports suggests that even the groups that have managed to remain in America's pocket are war criminals.

This reflects what many analysts have said about the US arms smuggling and subsidy programs for years, that "moderate" armed factions are scarcer than hen's teeth in Syria, and that the administration has been backing some very unseemly groups and passing them off as "moderates."