



Press release 84/25

Judgement

11.11.2025

Press release 11 November 2025

Criminal proceedings against Amer Tarak A., Basel O., Sohail A. on suspicion of war crimes involving deportation, pillage and destruction, and membership of a terrorist organisation abroad

After an 86-day trial, the 7th Criminal Division of the Munich Higher Regional Court (State Security Division) sentenced the three defendants to prison terms of 4 years and 6 months (Basel O.), 7 years (Sohail A.) and 9 years and 10 months (Amer Tarak A.) for membership or leading a terrorist organization abroad, and two of the defendants for war crimes today.

Presiding Judge Michael Höhne first placed the defendants' actions in the historical context of the revolution against Bashar Al Assad's Syrian regime in the 2010s. The court had consulted two experts on this background.

The three defendants were members of Liwa Jund al-Rahman, an initially independent armed rebel group that joined IS in 2014. From the summer of 2013 onwards, the initially secular association began to take on Islamist characteristics. The defendant Amer A. founded the association and was its sole leader. He took all the key military decisions and also determined the ideological orientation. The aim of the group was to fight the regular Syrian army. Liwa Jund al-Rahman operated its own YouTube channel and Twitter account to disseminate propaganda content. The language used by the members became increasingly Islamist and jihadist. The statement by two of the defendants that the group did not pursue a religious ideology was refuted by various videos and the testimony of an expert witness. Regarding IS, the presiding judge noted that it is one of the most dangerous terrorist organisations in the world. The defendant Amer A. had submitted himself and Liwa Jund al-Rahman to IS with a corresponding declaration.

At the beginning of 2013, the defendant took control of an oil field in the province of Deir ez-Zor and guarded it with Liwa Jund al-Rahman. The defendant used a large

Hausanschrift
Nymphenburger Str. 16
80797 München

Telefon
089 5597-5505
Internet und E-Mail
www.justiz.bayern.de/gericht/olg/m
pressestelle@olg-m.bayern.de

Datenschutz:
Ihre personenbezogenen
Daten werden
verarbeitet. Informationen
erhalten Sie
auf unserer Internetseite unter
"Datenschutz"

part of the income from the oil field for the association, but also for himself and his family.

The defendant Amer A. also instructed Liwa Jund al-Rahman to participate in an attack on Shiites in the village of Hatlah. This action was filmed by the defendant Sohail A. on the instructions of the defendant Amer A. The defendant Sohail A. headed the association's media office. He accompanied combat missions, filmed them, edited the videos, added the association's logo and then uploaded them to the Liwa Jund al-Rahman YouTube channel. After the association was incorporated into IS, Sohail A. continued to carry out propaganda work, now for IS. The aim was to motivate more fighters to join. During a police interrogation, the defendant Sohail A. asked the detective, 'Who in Syria has not committed human rights violations?'

The defendant O. became radicalised during the Syrian civil war and joined a local militant group in September 2013. In the course of 2013, he joined the Liwa Jund al-Rahman and led a mortar company there. The defendant O. also later joined IS and appeared in a propaganda video produced by IS's own media agency.

Insofar as the defendants believed that they were engaged in a legitimate struggle for freedom, the court pointed out that the Assad regime's violations of international humanitarian law did not justify the defendants' actions. National liberation movements have no right to armed resistance against regular troops.

In determining the sentence, the Senate took into account in favour of all three defendants that a comparatively long period of time had elapsed between the commission of the offences and their current trial. In addition, the fact that they had fought against an unjust regime was also taken into account in their favour. At the same time, however, Höhne noted that IS was a particularly brutal terrorist organisation.

All three defendants had fled to Germany after the military defeat of IS.

In conclusion, the presiding judge stated: 'The struggle for freedom does not take place in a legal vacuum. The line into criminality is crossed when uninvolved third parties are killed or war crimes are committed. That was clearly the case here.'

Höhne concluded by quoting the defendant Amer A, who himself had said: 'We knew that our path would not be strewn with flowers and would claim many victims.' It had been clear to all those involved that there would be numerous victims on both sides.

The Senate finally ordered the continuation of pre-trial detention.

The verdict is not yet final. The defence and the Attorney General have the right to appeal to the Federal Court of Justice, which must be lodged within one week of today.

Dr. Laurent Lafleur
Head of the Press Office for Criminal Matters
Judge at the Higher Regional Court