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## **IRAQI POPULAR FORCES REJECT AMNESTY WAR CRIMES ALLEGATIONS**

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Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), known as Hashd al-Shaabi, have dismissed a recent Amnesty International report that accused them of using foreign arms to allegedly commit war crimes, urging Baghdad to file a legal case against the organization over slander.

Speaking at a news conference aired by state television on Thursday, PMU spokesman, Ahmed al-Assadi, said the report was no surprise as the UK-based group has a history of distorting facts.

It is very clear in this report that it is purposefully slandering an official government institution, which has in fact spearheaded the fight against terrorism and liberated the cities and neutralized the terrorist groups, Assadi said.

He further called on the Iraqi Foreign Ministry and the related parties to sue this organization \* and prevent it from issuing such reports that will lead to more bloodshed in Iraq and the region.

The remarks came after Amnesty International claimed that the PMU forces were using weapons provided to the Iraqi military by the US, Europe, Russia and Iran, for summary killings, enforced disappearances and torture.

The group further claimed that its report was based on nearly two and a half years of field research, including interviews with dozens of witnesses, former detainees, survivors, and relatives of the victims.

Hashd al-Shaabi was formed after the rise of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group in Iraq in 2014.

In the early days of the Daesh terror campaign, the volunteer fighters played a major role in reinforcing the Iraqi army, which had suffered heavy blows amid the lightening advances of the extremist militants.

Currently, they are actively cooperating with the military and allied groups, including Sunni and Christian volunteer forces, in the large-scale operation to free the northern city of Mosul, the last remaining Daesh foothold in the Arab county.

On November 26, 2016, the Iraqi parliament recognized Hashd al-Shaabi as an official force with similar rights as those of the regular army.

A total of 208 members of the Council of Representatives voted in support of the legislation, which recognizes Hashd al-Shaabi as part of the national armed forces, places the volunteer fighters under the command of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, and grants them the right to receive salaries and pensions just like the regular army and police.

The legislation, tabled by the National Iraqi Alliance, also stipulates that Popular Mobilization Units report directly to the prime minister.

Abadi welcomed the law in a statement, saying Hashd al-Shaabi incorporates members of all Iraqi ethnic and religious groups.

Hashd al-Shaabi reportedly numbers more than 100,000 fighters. Iraqi authorities say there are between 25,000 and 30,000 Sunni tribal fighters within the forces ranks in addition to Kurdish Izadi and Christian units.

Fighters from Popular Mobilization Units have played a major role in the liberation of Daesh-held areas to the south, northeast and north of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, ever since the terrorists launched an offensive in the country in June 2014.

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Kaynak/Source: