The Fatemiyoun Division

**Logo:** The name “Fatemiyoun” with AK-47 rising and globe in the background, similar to the IRGC logo

**Flag Text:** “If God should aid you, no one can overcome you” (Quran 3:160)

**Founding:** 2013

---

**Key Leaders:**
- Former leader Ali Reza Tavasoli, aka Abu Hamed (d. 2015)

**Size:**
- Estimated between 6,000 – 8,000
- Frequent claims of 12,000 – 14,000 or even 20,000

**Political Wing:**
- None

**Ideological Allegiance:**
- Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei

**Atrocities:**
- Has recruited Afghan boys as young as 13 to fight in Syria

**Weapons:**
- Soviet light weapons, vehicles, and tanks

**Connections to Other Militias:**
- Lebanese Hezbollah assists in training
- Fought alongside Iranian-backed militias in Syria, including the Zeynabiyoun Brigade

---

**Background and Analysis**

The IRGC has raised a militia of Shiite Afghans to fight on its behalf in Syria, organizing them into the Fatemiyoun Division. Put on the front lines with as little as 25 to 35 days of training, the Fatemiyoun have taken very heavy casualties.\(^1\)

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has met personally with the families of slain fighters, for whom there have been more than 800 documented funerals; a militia commander recently said the actual total number is 2,000, with 8,000 injured.\(^2\) The tombstones of Afghan boys as young as 14 have been identified.\(^3\) Survivors have claimed they are used as cannon fodder.\(^4\)

Now dead, the Fatemiyoun’s first Afghan leaders originally fought as auxiliaries for the IRGC during the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet-Afghan war. When the number of Afghans grew, the IRGC formed the Fatemiyoun brigade in late 2013, later designating it a division.\(^5\)

The Fatemiyoun recruit heavily from the poor Afghan migrant community in Iran, which numbers roughly 3 million, most of whom are undocumented. There is also direct recruitment in Afghanistan. Incentives include salaries of $500 to $700 per month, legal residency permits, and housing. Fighters report being subject to coercion and intimidation, including threats of deportation. Their training includes extensive ideological indoctrination.\(^6\)

After the IRGC declared “victory” against the Islamic State in November 2017, IRGC media published a statement attributed to the Fatemiyoun Division, in which the militia vowed its readiness to fight anywhere the IRGC orders it.\(^7\)

---