

Answer to Question

What is Behind the Rebellion of the Commander of the Russian Wagner Forces

(Translated)

Question:

On 24/6/2023, the commander of the Russian Wagner forces announced his rebellion against the Russian forces, and demanded that the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff meet with him. He launched a harsh attack on them, and his forces began advancing towards Moscow. Russian President Putin delivered a short speech on the subject and considered it treason and a stab in the back. On the same day, the rebellion was stopped, through the mediation of the President of Belarus, and it was agreed that the commander of Wagner's forces would go there. The West was surprised by the outbreak of the rebellion and how it quickly ended. Why did this rebellion take place? What are the consequences for Russia? Is there a Western or American role behind this rebellion? Apologies for the long post. Jazak Allah Khair.

Answer:

To get a clear answer, let's review the following:

1- **The Wagner Group is a Russian semi-governmental security company** founded in 2014 and led by billionaire Yevgeny Prigozhin, who is known as the chef of Russian President Putin and is close to him because he had a restaurant that prepared food for the president. The company contracts with the Russian Ministry of Defense, trains its members in its camps, and also supplies weapons from them, and carries out dirty military and security missions for the Russian state and economic work. It is similar to the notorious American company Blackwater, which played a dirty role alongside the American forces in its early years of the occupation of Iraq. It is outside of accountability and legal prosecution, it organizes killings, assassinations, arrests and torture without accountability and legal prosecution, because its missions and actions are originally outside Russia and not within it, but the Russian state used it in its war in Ukraine. Putin said during a televised meeting with law enforcement authorities on 27/6/2023, "The state paid the Wagner Group 86,262 billion rubles (about a billion dollars) in salaries to fighters and incentive bonuses between May 2022 and May 2023 only." That is why the leader of the group felt that he was strong and could do whatever he wanted, as he possessed money and weapons, commanded tens of thousands of members, and was popular with the Russians. Thus, he became powerful and could blackmail or threaten the regime. It appears that he became conceited that he thought that he was able to reach high positions, especially since Wagner's forces are deployed in more than one country; in Syria, Libya, Mali and Central Africa.

2- **The Wagner Group became famous when it intervened in the war waged by Russia in Ukraine**, especially in the Battle of Bakhmut, which lasted for months and was not resolved except by Wagner's forces, as mentioned. The name of its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, was mentioned in the news frequently, especially as he criticized the Russian Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff for not providing his forces with equipment during the battles they were fighting in Ukraine, especially in Bakhmut. He insulted them so much that he accused them of treason and demanded their removal from their positions, and accused the army of being responsible for the killing of tens of thousands of Russians in Ukraine and handing over lands to the enemy. He uses the Telegram website to launch his statements and accusations. At the same time, he criticized the war waged by Russia on Ukraine. A day before his rebellion, on 23/6/2023, he made statements on the Telegram website, in which he said, "The Russian Defense Minister wanted to obtain the rank of Marshal and the medal of the Hero of Russia, so he pushed for the invasion of Ukraine." He said, "It is not true that Ukraine was planning with NATO before the war to attack Russia. The Ministry of Defense deceived President Putin and the Russians by promoting that Ukraine had allied with

NATO to attack Russia" and said that "Russian forces are retreating in eastern and southern Ukraine in the wake of Ukraine's counterattack against it").

3- The Wagner Commander announced on Saturday morning, 24/6/2023, that he had entered the general headquarters of the army command in the Russian city of Rostov, which is a main center of the Russian attack on Ukraine and took control of military sites, including the airport. Then he said on Telegram: ("We are at the General Headquarters, it is 7:30 (4:30 GMT).") He said, "The military sites in Rostov are under control, including the airport." He said, "Large areas of occupied land in Ukraine have been lost, and many soldiers have been killed." He renewed his accusation against the Russian army. By not telling the truth about the situation on the front, he said, "The army loses up to a thousand men a day" among dead, wounded, and missing persons, in addition to those who refuse to fight.

He said: "The Russian Chief of the General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, fled from here when he found out that we were approaching the building." He said, "They wanted to dismantle Wagner's forces." He declared that his forces entered the city of Rostov, on the border with Ukraine, and then headed towards the city of Voronezh, and then towards the city of Lipetsk, which is about 510 km from the Russian capital, Moscow, until they reached a point close to it by about 200 km. However, he tried to avoid explicitly accusing Putin as a line of return for him, he said on 26/6/2023 on Telegram: "He did not target President Putin and had no desire to overthrow the regime when he announced that his forces would march towards Moscow. The group was marching to prevent Wagner's disbanding and integration into the Ministry of Defense and that he had ordered his troops to return back to avoid bloodshed").

4- But his attempt to avoid accusing Putin failed, as the Russian president threatened to strike the rebellion hours after it took place, he said on Russian television on 24/6/2023: "The armed rebellion of the private military group Wagner is treason, and anyone who takes up arms against the Russian army will be punished... The security services have received orders to declare a state of combating terrorism... The battle that Russia is waging requires us to unite to confront external plans. Last night, I communicated with all military leaders in all axis, and our responses to this threat will be strict and harsh. What happened is treachery and a stab in the back. There are those who have been dragged into a criminal adventure through the rebellion at a time when Russia is at war with Nazism... Any internal unrest is a mortal threat to the state and is tantamount to a blow to the Russian people." He accused Wagner's Commander of having "personal ambitions." The response of Wagner's president was ["Putin was very wrong when he called them traitors," and he was quoted as saying, "Putin chose the wrong path, and soon Russia will have a new president." (Telegram 6/24/2023)].

5- And so, matters worsened, especially with the circumstances of the war in Ukraine are extremely difficult for Russia, and it is exhausting it and depleting its material and human forces.

It has made little progress, rather it cannot advance, as it is in a state of defense of its positions, but rather in a state of retreat from some positions. This rebellion comes and it is a fatal issue for Russia, especially for President Putin, who has fallen into the dilemma of a war that will decide his fate and the fate of his country. At this critical stage, the Russian President moved his Belarusian counterpart to mediate to stop the rebellion and solve the problem peacefully. The Belarusian presidency statement said that "President Lukashenko informed the President of Russia in detail about the results of the negotiations with the leadership of the Wagner Group, and that Putin thanked him for the work he had done".

A proposal was submitted to resolve the crisis, including granting security guarantees to Wagner's president. The talks took place in coordination with President Putin. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov revealed the most important points in the agreement between Presidents Putin and Lukashenko, which are: "some of the Wagner fighters who refused from the beginning to engage

in Prigozhin's campaign will have the possibility to join the ranks of the Russian armed forces and contract with the Ministry of Defense. They will not be subject to any legal prosecution." ...the return of the Wagner Company forces to their camps...those who do not wish to return to headquarters and camps sign agreements with the Russian Ministry of Defense...the criminal case against Prigozhin is closed and he will leave for Belarus" (Russia Today 25/6/2023). Thus, Putin was able to deal with the rebellion, which saved him and Russia many losses and clashes.

6- It seems that Wagner's leader was taking improvised steps that he drew for himself. If he succeeded in reaching Moscow, and received support, and the state was unable to strike and eliminate him, he would aspire to remove Putin and replace him. It appears that he did not have the courage to continue his path and feared his failure, and that Putin's threats reached him through Belarus, in addition to Putin's offers to pardon him and let him go to Belarus, as if he preferred safety over risk. Following the aforementioned agreement announced on 25/6/2023, the Wagner commander said on the Telegram: "His forces will return to their camps to spare blood... We are very happy that we have so far been able to avoid bloodshed. We set off on June 23 in a march for the sake of justice, and in one day we reached 200 km from Moscow.")

7- Thus, Putin avoided the crisis, even if temporarily, and said on his country's television on 26/6/2023: ("We were able to avoid a catastrophe in Russia by thwarting the Wagner rebellion. We appreciate the role of Belarus in reaching a peaceful settlement to the Wagner rebellion crisis... The organizers of the armed rebellion in Russia betrayed their homeland, and the recent events showed that any extortion is doomed to failure." He renewed "his offer to the Wagner fighters to join the army, and whoever wants to go to Belarus may do so." He said, "The West and Kiev wanted a civil war to break out in Russia, and the security services kept their oath to preserve Russia.") This means that the rebellion threatened the Russian state and caused a shake-up in the regime and in the reputation and power of President Putin, and affected Russia's international standing, as this rebellion showed that its internal situation was worrying and unstable.

8- As for the Western positions, it appears that they were surprised by the rebellion and how quickly it ended, and they wanted it to continue. Therefore, they all directed most of their interests towards what is happening in Russia, and contacts and phone calls began between officials in these countries, because such a rebellion would have affected the course of the war in Ukraine and turned things upside down for Russia, and the West may achieve what it wants. America revealed its position on what happened, and its president, Biden, said that "The West has nothing to do with the Wagner Group rebellion in Russia, and that the events in Russia are part of the struggle for power." He said, "He directed the national security team to closely follow developments in Russia," and its Secretary of State Blinken said "We haven't seen the last act. We're watching it very closely, but having someone inside challenge Putin's authority and directly question the reasons why he launched this attack on Ukraine is very powerful. Although the conflict was resolved almost as quickly as it began, it is a blow for Putin's leadership. The current crisis in Russia raises major questions and shows the existence of real cracks"... (US CBS, Reuters 26/6/2023).

US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said: "The rebellion of Wagner's armed forces is an internal Russian affair and we did not participate in it... We had channels of communication with the Russians "through the American ambassador in Moscow" on Saturday during the rebellion of Wagner's forces. It is new to see Yevgeny Prigozhin directly questioning the rationale for this war and declaring that the war was waged mainly on a lie. (Saudi Al Wi'am and Reuters 26/6/2023). The foreign ministers of the European Union issued: "The rebellion that was thwarted in Russia at the beginning of the week showed that Moscow's war in Ukraine is causing internal instability and undermining its military power," and European Union foreign policy coordinator Josep Borrell said, "Weaknesses appear in the political system in Russia and the military force is cracking." (Saudi Al Wi'am 26/6/2023). NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said: "The events in Russia are an internal matter" and he said, "We do not see any

indication that Russia is preparing to use nuclear weapons” (Sky News, 26/6/2023).

9- Thus, the Americans and Westerners confirmed that they had nothing to do with the rebellion. However with these assurances, they, especially the Americans, it is not ruled out that they encouraged Wagner's leader to carry out such act by one means or another, otherwise it would be difficult for him to undertake such action while he owns militias made up of people with criminal records! He is like the first Russian president after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin, who was encouraged and directed by the Americans to come to power and overthrow the Soviet Union, and this was later revealed. In this regard, the Washington Post published on 15/5/2023 that the Wagner commander met with Ukrainian officials in an African country and prepared to give Kiev information about the Russian armed forces in exchange for the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces before him in Bakhmut. It said it relied on leaked US intelligence documents and unnamed US and Ukrainian officials, but did not mention their names. But on his Telegram account, he categorically denied this and considered it funny. The official spokesman for the Kremlin, Dmitry Peskov, said, "The information published by the Washington Post is misleading news" (France Press, 16/5/2023).

However, despite his denials and the Kremlin's denial of this information, his criticism of the Russian military operation and his attack on the Minister of Defense and his accusation of misleading President Putin, knowing that the decision to wage war on Ukraine is not the decision of the Ministry of Defense but rather the decision of President Putin himself, and this appeared in the meeting in which Putin gathered all the pillars of his rule two days before the war on 22/2/2022 and it was published directly on Russia Today channel. So, the war decision is the decision of President Putin and not the Minister of Defense, so the Wagner leader's criticism of the war decision referring it to being the decision of the Ministry of Defense knowing that it is not its decision but rather the president's decision, these criticisms are intended to avoid criticizing the president and being attacked by him for fear of retaliation, especially when he declares that he does not believe in war and that it is not true. This is what satisfies the West, especially the Americans. It is not excluded that they contacted him through the Ukrainians or with their presence and encouraged him to do so, but when he saw Putin's threats, it is as if he retreated and lost trust in himself, and preferred to survive with his head and live in exile in Belarus.

10- This rebellion is the biggest challenge to Putin since he came to power in 1999. It is not ruled out that he would encourage others to revolt, as the leader of a militia whose forces consisted of criminals, and he was at their head, was able to shake Putin's prestige and power! This shows that Putin is a weaker person than it is perceived and that he is in trouble, and has preferred to compromise with a rebel! This incident was a slap in his face and shook confidence in his leadership and his state. Thus are the colonial kaffir states, East and West, are seen standing firm only because there is no one to shake them. Perhaps history will repeat itself, and the earth will shine with the Khilafah (Caliphate) again, destroying the new Persians and Romans. Russia and the West have conspired against Muslims, past and present, and each of them is an evil no less evil than the other in their war against Islam and its people. Allah (swt) will thwart their work, afflict them with each other, and support His Deen in order to save humankind from their evil.

﴿إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ﴾

“Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand” [Ghafir: 51]

13 Dhul Hijjah 1444 AH

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