



Arrests Continue in Daraa Despite Reconciliations

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Introduction

None of the points contained in the 'reconciliation deal', signed in July 2018, were upheld in Daraa¹. Shortly after government forces retook the province, they conducted waves of arrests among civilians in the towns of al-Harrah, Atman, and al-Meliha al-Gharbiya, during August and September 2018, and began forcibly recruiting the local men into military service contrary to the six-month delay included in the agreement for recruitment of men of fighting age into the armed services. Some of those detained, including three women from Al Musayfrah town, released later under the mediation of Russian military police members, on 20 September 2018.

The Syrian Security forces handed over the body of Abdul al-Malawi Mahmoud al-Harraky, from al-Meliha al-Gharbiya town, whom they arrested on 17 August 2018, to his family. He was the first to die in regime's custody, on 20 September 2018, after signing the reconciliation agreement in Daraa.

Fear prevails in Daraa. Civilians, as well as former rebel fighters, were arbitrarily arrested by both; the regular and the Reserve Forces (al-Quwat al-Radifa), as reported by STJ's field researcher.²

Earlier, in August 2018, the Syrian air force intelligence arrested 26 youths from Dael town, which was the first to reconcile with the regime under Russian guarantee³, besides, at least, 25 youths from the al-Lajat area for anonymous reasons.⁴

The regime forces signed settlement agreements with women and youths in Daraa in cooperation with the personal status department of the Syrian Interim Government.

¹ The agreement, guaranteed by Russian military police, was conducted in two stages. The first stage covered northern Daraa and al-Lajat area, while the second stage included the rest of the province except the Yarmouk Basin (Hawd al-Yarmouk), which the Syrian army controlled in early August 2018. The agreement stipulated that Syrian forces would not enter the villages ahead of the Russian military police or without conducting agreements. It also said that the Syrian army would not expose to any of the residents, according to STJ's field researcher.

² The Reserve Forces (al-Quwat al-Radifa) are members of the opposition factions who conducted "settlement/reconciliation" with the Syrian army under an agreement between both sides to end the hostilities in Daraa province. It contains hundreds of fighters from "Liwaa Ahrar Tafas, Mu'taz Billah Army, Jaysh al-Ababil, Alwiyat Qasioun, Jaysh al-Thawra, the Headquarter Operation of "Watasimo", al-Harrah Military Council, Tasil Military Council, Swords of Truth Room, Liwa Ahrar Qita, Manifest Victory Operations room, and other factions from the east area of the province." The source mentioned in this particular report the names of some commanders who participated in storming Dael and they are Faeq Jamous, Osama al-Asmi, Abu Basil Abu Zed, Mashhour Kanakri.

³ "Arrests of 26 Persons in Dael, Daraa Countryside Despite Russian Guarantees", STJ, August 13, 2018, <https://stj-sy.com/en/view/676>.

⁴ "Daraa Province- Syrian Regular Forces Arrest Youths in Contrary to the Agreement Concluded", August 4, 2018, <https://stj-sy.com/en/view/660>.

I. The first death of a detainee from Daraa following the settlement agreement

Abd al-Mawla Mahmoud al-Harraky, from the town of al-Meliha al-Gharbiya, eastern Daraa was detained for a month and died while in custody. His family received his body on September 20, 2018. Mohammed Jamal⁵, a resident from the same town testified:

"On 17 August 2018, agents of the air force intelligence branch raided several houses in the town and arrested three cousins; Abd al-Mawla al-Harraky who was born in 1980, Yousef al-Harraky, and Adel al-Harraky, in a breach of the settlement agreement reached between the Syrian army and armed groups under Russian guarantee, which included promises from the regime not to arrest any civilians except on a personal complaint.⁶

However, on September 19, 2018, the air force intelligence branch contacted Abd al-Mawla's family and ordered them to come and take his body in order to promptly bury it. Indeed, the victim was buried the next day, while the fate of his two other cousins and the allegations against them have been unknown so far."

II. The arrest of former head of the local council in al-Harrah town among others

According to STJ's field researcher, the arrests conducted occasionally across Daraa on the pretext of alleged personal claims filed against those arrested, or accusations of being ex-fighters of IS. A civilian and a former opposition fighter were the last to be arrested in al-Harrah town by agents of the Syrian Political Security, on 19 September 2018.

Abu Basel, a resident from al-Harrah, recalled to STJ:

"After reclaiming Daraa, the Syrian government raided the city repeatedly by its political security and air force intelligence forces, and arrested civilians as well as militaries, during August and September 2018, over alleged personal lawsuits filed against them. The arrested people are:

The former director of the local council of the opposition, Mohammed Dawood ad-Dahi.

Mahrn Munir al-Kod, a civilian.

⁵ All of the witnesses' names are pseudonyms, for security purposes, because most of them are still living in the province. The interviews were conducted via the Internet.

⁶ "Homs: Illegal Detentions Based on Personal Claims", September 19, 2018, <https://stj-sy.com/en/view/764>.

The former rebel fighters: Suhaib al-Qawarit, Yousef Riyad Faroukh, Basel az-Zarqzn, Ahmad Mohammed al-Faroukh, Mousa Saed az-Zarqan, Ziyad Mohammed al-Kod, Bilal Bassam as-Safadi, and Omar al-Khalil, who was arrested while attempting to smuggle towards northern Syria with his wife and son."

The civilian Ahmad al-Mawal, and the former opposition fighter Nael as-Safadi, were the last ones arrested by the political security, on 19 September 2018, knowing that Nael was released the following day, while Ahmad, along with all of those arrested, were transferred to Syrian detention facilities in al-Sanamayn city, Ahmad added.

III. The Arrest awaits returnees to Athman

Shortly after returning to their home village in August 2018, which they fled on 14 February 2015, following fierce battles between the government and its opposing forces, several civilians of Athman village were arrested, according to the local Hussein Al-Rifaei who spoke to STJ saying:

"Athman's locals were allowed in the village to check and renovate their houses, with the Syrian government permission, and promises by the Russian police promised, not to be arrested or harassed. However, that was not what really happened. The Syrian army raided the town several times, the last of which was on 5 September 2018. Approximately 13 people were arrested since the returns started, five of them freed after one week, who are:

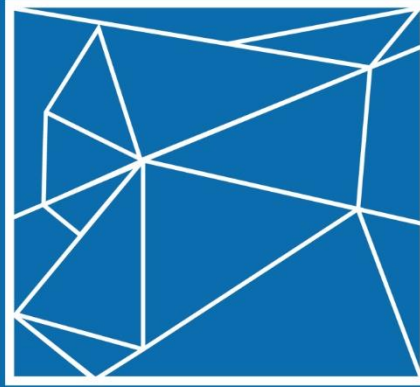
Sharif Nayf al-Mesri, a nurse, the 60-year-old Abdulmajeed al-Mesri, and the three former rebel fighters; Ahmad Ghalib al-Mesri, Mohammed Tayl al-Mesri, and Raslan Nayf al-Mesri.

While the fate of Khalid al-Awad al-Hari, Wahab Ghalib al-Mesri, and Khalid Ayman as-Sbeihi, other arrested former fighters, remained unknown.

Similarly, the fate of five others who were known to be IS militants is still unknown, they are: Kamal Awad al-Mesri, and his son, Mahmoud Othman al-Mesri, Bahaa Yaser al-Hari, and Ameen Nayf al-Rifaei."

STJ's field researcher reported that the Russian military police usually intervene to release detainees who had conducted settlement agreement with the regime, as in the cases of Nael as-Safadi from al-Harrah and the three women, Khawla Yousef al-Bayoumi, Kifah Ibrahim al-Kurdi, and Fatima as-Slim from Al Musayfrah, who were arrested for being relatives to persons linked to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS, and released after only one week.

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About Syrians for Truth and Justice:

STJ is an independent, nongovernmental organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (females and males) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

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