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Damascus: Syrian Regular Forces Launch First Call-up of Defectors in Beit Sahem

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The Syrian regular forces started the first operation of calling up defectors in the city of [Beit Sahem](#), Southern Damascus, as to send them back to the military divisions from where they dissented; they also continued drafting young men, required to join the compulsory military service, though the six-month-respite, granted to these young men under the area's control agreement, is not yet due.

In May 2018, the Syrian regular forces managed to control the cities and towns of southern Damascus, after they concluded several deals, under which they evacuated militants of the armed opposition groups and some civilians to Idlib. The regular forces, additionally, conducted a deal with the organization that refers to itself as the Islamic State/IS, according to which the latter left the region to the As-Suwayda province.

In an interview with Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ on September 24, 2018, the media activist Qais al-Shami¹ said that a member of the Reconciliation Committee, called Abu Abdou al-Hendi, summoned to a meeting, conducted on September 12, 2018, the town's young men and ordered them to hasten and enroll in the compulsory military service over a week at maximum, warning them of the consequences of evasion, namely detention and prosecution by the Syrian security services.

Al-Shami added that the town's young men started registering their names at the Municipality, while the first batch of defectors and military service evaders were called up on September 20, 2018, for, on the same day, activists posted a video of 15 young men on board of a bus, waving goodbye to other young men. Regarding the video, the activists said that these young men were recently and forcibly recruited and are heading to the al-Qutayfah military camp.

Mattar Ismail,² another activist, told STJ on September 24, 2018, that enlistment for the Syrian regular forces targeted only the persons who defected from their ranks in the city of Beit Sahem, while the number of the young men listed was not known for sure.

He pointed out that the town is a home for hundreds of defectors from the Syrian regular forces.

About the first call-up in the town, Ismail said that it took place on September 20, 2018, and 18 young men were forcibly recruited. The recruits were transported to the following security branches: The Patrols Branch 216, the Investigation/Administrative Branch, affiliated with the Military Intelligence Department in Kafr Sousa, known as Branch 248, and finally Branch 291. There, the young men underwent a regularization of status and were taken back to the town of Beit Sahem, with a 24-hour-respite to join the military divisions from where they defected.

¹ The activist is from southern Damascus and is currently based in Turkey. He obtained the information cited here from local sources residing in southern Damascus.

² The activist is originally from southern Damascus and is currently based in Turkey. He obtained the information provided to STJ from local sources in southern Damascus.

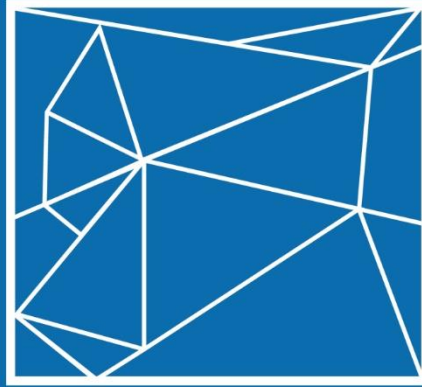
The activist added:

“The regime’s intelligence, particularly the Military Security Service/Military Intelligence Department, manipulated the six-month-respite after they announced approving the regularization of the status of all young men except for the defectors. The announcement was made by the sheiks of the towns of Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahem during the Friday sermon on August 24, 2018, providing that a respite of six months is to start from the announcement’s date and that a special committee is to be formed concerning the defectors as to regularize their status. However, the regime’s intelligence forces, without further notice, informed the reconciliation committee of Beit Sahem that the granted period has ended, while the defectors’ special committee was not formed, for the regime has counted the past months as part of the granted respite.”

Several of the Syrian government’s security services and regular forces have conducted raids and arrests in the towns of southern Damascus, targeting a massive number of the young men who underwent a reconciliation/settlement deal, a regularization of status. Covering these incidents, STJ published a number of detailed reports.³

³ “Arrests and Forced Recruitments by the Syrian Regime, Southern Damascus”, STJ, September 13, 2018, last visit: February 10, 2019. <https://stj-sy.com/ar/view/742>.

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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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