

september 2018

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## Detentions against Returnees to the Syrian Regular Forces Held Areas in Idlib

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## **Detentions against Returnees to the Syrian Regular Forces Held Areas in Idlib**

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/ Tal Toqan checkpoint*

Syrian Regular Army forces arrested eleven persons including a woman and children from the countryside of Hama and Idlib when they returned from displacement areas towards their villages in the areas held by regular forces in “Tal Al Sultan<sup>1</sup>” checkpoint in Idlib during August 2018. This coincided with fines and royalty payments imposed by these forces for allowing vehicles and livestock of the returning IDPs to pass. Local activist “Manahi Al Ahmad”, who is based in Idlib countryside, told STJ on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2018 that the Syrian Regular Forces arrested eight people aged between 16 and 25 years old in “Tal Al Sultan” checkpoint on August 25<sup>th</sup> 2018. The detainees are from Aqrabat town in the southern countryside of Hama. Out of the detainees, Bilal Al Kurdi, Yasser Al Nadim, Ahmad Al Jassim, Abu Thaeer Al Marwan, a person from Al Sati family, Mussa Al Turk, Ismael Al Sati, and Ismael Al Kheder were identified.

“Those people with their families were heading to the areas of displacement in Idlib towards their town in the Syrian regular forces held areas. When they arrived in the crossing point of Tal Al Sultan, the regular forces arrested them and did not allow the rest of families including women and children to pass to Aqrabat town. They were forced to back to where they came from after they confiscated their cell phones, gold jewelry, and money”, the activist added.

According to what “Al Ahmad” narrated based on well-based sources, the eight detainees were moved to the military security branch and Al Ballon jail in Homs, where some of them were taken to compulsory military service.

Other sources indicates that the detention has a “vengeful” nature by the checkpoints members who they seem that they had enmity with villagers of the southern countryside of Hama.

In August 2018, a woman with two men were arrested in Tal Al Sultan checkpoint. The detainees are from Sarea and Al Dawadia villages in the countryside of Marrat Al Nouman, Idlib. They were heading from the displacement areas towards their villages in the Syrian regular forces held areas. The detainees are Farida Um Hasan, Musatafa Ahmad Al Ulawi, and Mohammad Khalaf Al Salem, according to “Al Ahmad”, who said that he could not know the charges against those detainees.

As for the loyalty payments and fines that are imposed by the Syrian regular forces on the people who want to pass through “Tal Al Sultan” checkpoint, from and to the areas out of their control, “Al Ahmad” quoted eyewitnesses as saying that the regular forces imposed an amount of 15,000 SYP for each animal to pass, either it was a dog, donkey, or of livestock, and an amount of 350,000 SYP for each small vehicle, and 700,000 SYP for each big vehicle. They also imposed an amount of 400,000-600,000 SYP for each tractor and 800,000 for each excavator.

The Syrian regular forces already committed similar detention actions on the same checkpoint; they arrested 14 people between May and June 2018, when they were returning from the displacement areas in the west of the province towards their villages in the east in

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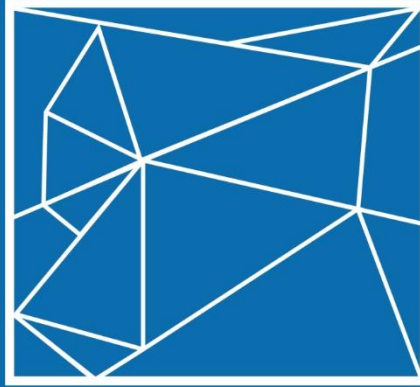
<sup>1</sup> Tal Al Sultan is located between Al Sultan and Al Toqan hills in the east of Saraqib city, Idlib. The checkpoint is held by “Faylaq Al Sham”. It is the last point held by the armed opposition forces. It is also called Tal Toqan in relation to Al Toqan town, as it is bigger and has a local council, according to what local sources confirmed to STJ.

the regular forces held areas due to the military operation<sup>2</sup> that was launched by those forces on the eastern countryside, which ended by the full control of the regular forces following the withdrawal of “HTS” and factions from the “Free Syrian Army”. STJ published a detailed report on the incidents of detention and arrests.

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<sup>2</sup> The military campaign that was launched by regime forces and Russia on the eastern countryside of Idleb province, where they were able to control on the area called “East of Train Rail”. The campaign lasted since mid-December 2017 until the beginning of March 2018 when the Russian forces opened Tal al Sultan crossing point, following the withdrawal of HTS and military groups from the entire area.

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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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