

september 2018



Preventing Youths from Leaving Accommodation Centers and Some Arrested by Syrian Security Forces

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Eastern Ghouta: Preventing Youths from Leaving Accommodation Centers and Some Arrested by Syrian Security Forces

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Syrian security forces still prevent Eastern Ghouta young men from leaving accommodation centers, established during the last military campaign¹ against Eastern Ghouta in March 2018, besides investigating and arresting dozens, according to testimonies obtained by STJ.

Eastern Ghouta IDPs are distributed on seven accommodation centers in Damascus and its surroundings, which are supervised mainly by the Air Force Intelligence Branch agents along with forces affiliated to other security services including the Military Intelligence and the Political Security Directorates. There are: 8,000 IDPs in the “schools center”, Adra, 19,000 in the “electricity company center”, Adra, about 40,000 in “Dweir center”, 50,000 in “Herjelleh center”, 5,000 in “al-Nashabiyah center”, 6,000 in “Najha center” and 4,000 in “al-Fayhaa center”.

All youths between 17 and 45, estimated tens of thousands, are under house arrest by the security services who detain and recruit dozens, according to Osama al-Omari².

Mohammed al-Khouli³, from Hamouriyah city, residing a housing center in Adra since March 15, 2018, stated that the Syrian security services summoned all the men in the center to sign settlement agreements after being investigated by the Air Force Intelligence branch and the security branch, located near the Blood Bank in Mezzeh area, as it started issuing daily lists, with 50 names in each for the men who would be taken. Only few of them returned while the fate of the rest still unknown.

About 1000 defectors from the Syrian regular forces, were the last to be taken for questioning, on September 7, 2018, and their fate still unknown, the witness added.

A local news agency⁴ published information claiming to be based on (unknown) local sources from Harasta city quoting "the Air Force Intelligence branch is investigating all the city residents, men and women, forcing them to sign on settlement agreement, and no arrests have been recorded so far."

¹ The Syrian regular forces and their allies managed to control the entire Eastern Ghouta after a military campaign launched against it, lasted from February 18 to April 8, 2018, under an agreement reached with Jaysh al-Islam in Douma on the same day, which provided for the release of all abductees detained by the latter in exchange for allowing its fighters along with their families, who did not want to settle with the regime, out to northern Syria. This agreement was preceded by other similar ones, the first of which was on March 21, 2018 with Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya, provided to move its fighters with their families and willing civilians, to northern Syria. A further agreement signed with Faylaq al-Rahman and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) on March 2, 2018, provided for the same, included towns of Irbin, Zamalka, Ein Tarma, and Jobar.

² An activist from Eastern Ghouta, resides in Aleppo northern countryside, obtained his information from local sources in Eastern Ghouta and testified to STJ on September 10, 2018.

³ Using a pseudonym for his own safety. He testified to STJ on September 10, 2018.

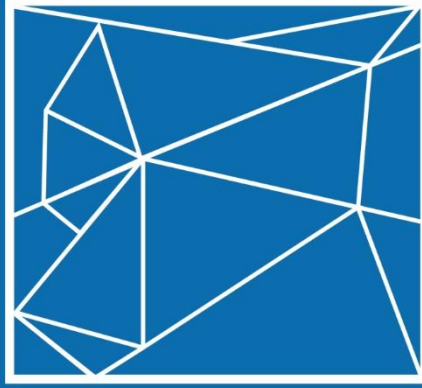
⁴ Mohammed al-Haj, “The Air Force Intelligence investigating those who are signing settlements in Harasta”, Smart News Agency, September 12, 2018; <https://smartnews-agency.com/en/wires/325430/> (Last visit: September 13, 2018).

Arrests and recruitments among Eastern Ghouta residents have been recorded previously, in contrast to the agreement reached between the Syrian regular forces and the opposition forces. STJ has published detailed news on such incidents.⁵

Eastern Ghouta had witnessed one of the worst and most violent military attacks launched by the Syrian regular forces supported directly by Russian warplanes along with foreign militias and local battle groups (fighting on Syrian regime's side) on the ground. Military operations resulted in the death of at least 2000 civilians as well as the injury of thousands, besides the pro-government forces' full control on Eastern Ghouta following concluding several agreements with the opposition factions there. STJ published a [84-pages report](#) concerning the incidents that occurred between February 18, 2018 and April 8, 2018 entitled [The Unprecedented](#).

⁵ "In contravention to the Agreement Concluded Syrian Regular Forces forcibly Conscript Number of Duma Sons and Use Others for Looting Operations", STJ, date of publish June 17, 2018; <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/584> (Last visit: August 15, 2018)

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