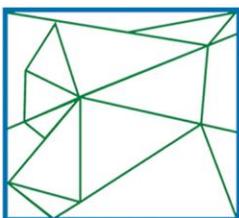


سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



March 2018



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Dishonor Inflicted on them Because of me**

Account of Rita Habib Ayoub, a Syriac Survivor from the Grip of Islamic State-ISIS

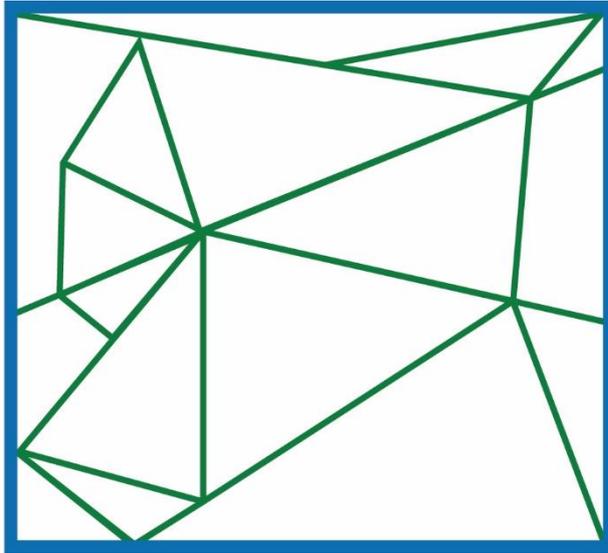
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[Syrians for Truth and Justice /STJ](#) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental, independent Syrian organization. STJ includes many defenders and human rights defenders from Syria and from different backgrounds and affiliations, including academics of other nationalities.

The organization works for Syria, where all Syrians, without discrimination, should be accorded dignity, justice and equal human rights.

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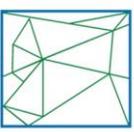
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If I Go back to my Village they may Kill me for Dishonor Inflicted on them Because of me.

Account of Rita Habib Ayoub, a Syriac Survivor from the Grip of Islamic State-ISIS



Preface

Rita Habib Ayoub, 26 years old, captivated by the agents of Islamic State, also known as ISIS¹ in 2014 in the village of al-Hamdani² south-east of the Iraqi city of Mosul, without taking into account that she may remain about three years of long and severe detention. However, with the intensification of military operations against ISIS in Deir ez-Zur province³, and in the wake of controlling the city of Raqqa by Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF⁴ on October 21, 2017, Rita survived as she managed to escape from the grip of ISIS and reach to SDF-controlled areas, specifically to the city of [Qamishli](#) on November 25, 2017. However, a human organization smuggled Rita, and in this regard, the Syriac survivor Rita detailed her tragedy for [Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ](#) in November 2017, she commenced saying:

¹ Islamic State, also known as ISIS, emerged for the first time after the conflict onset in Syria in 2011, under the name of Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham. But in April 2013 it was promoted as a result of a merger between Islamic State of Iraq on the one hand and al-Nusra Front, on the other hand, before the latter refused to do so, and asked al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri the new organization to focus on Iraq, and leave Syria to al-Nusra Front at that time.

Prior this date, the organization was active in Iraq under the name of "Jama'at al-Tawhid Wa'al Jihad" before becoming al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia after Abu Musab al-Zarqawi became the leader in 2004 and announced pledging allegiance to the former al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

After killing Abu Musab al-Zarqawi by US forces in 2006, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir became the leader, and declared after a few months formation of the Islamic State of Iraq but under the leadership of "Abi Omar al-Baghdadi" and "Abu Hamza al-Muhajir became an assistant of the leader of the organization.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "Abdullah Ibrahim", the successor of Abi Omar al-Baghdadi had proclaimed, on June 29, 2014, forming The Islamic Caliphate, called himself "Caliph of the Muslims", and assigned Raqqa, a Syrian city, the capital of the organization.

² Al-Hamdani village is east of Mosul about 25 kilometers, and about 70 kilometers west from the town of Erbil. It is a Christian majority population village and is one of the three countries that form Nineveh plain, like Sheikhan and Tell Keif.

³ On September 9, 2017, the "Deir ez-Zur Military junta", affiliated to SDF, launched the Battle of the "Island Storm", backed by international coalition forces in order to control the remaining southern countryside in Al Hasakeh province under the control of the Islamic State, in addition to eastern regions Euphrates, which administratively follow Deir ez-Zur.

⁴ Syrian Democratic Forces: also known as SDF forces, a coalition of Arab, Kurds, Syriac, Turkmen and other combatants, announced forming on October 11, 2015. The People's Protection Units YPG form the backbone of SDF, consisting of 27 military factions (Special Task Brigade 45, 99 Infantry Brigade, Lewa al-Qaqa, Kurds Front, Seljuk Brigade, Sultan Salim Brigade, Ein Jalot Brigade, Aleppo Ashaar forces, Tajamouh alweat al-Jazirah, brigade of al-Jazaa Martyrs ' Brigade, Tal Hammise Martyrs , Brigade Martyrs of Tal Brak , Karhok Martyrs Brigade , the Martyrs Brigade of Mabrouk and al-Hasakah Martyrs Brigade, Rawia Martyrs Brigade Tajamouh alweat alFurat, Tajamouh Al Furat Jarablus Brigade, Ahrar Jarablus Brigade, Euphrates Martyrs Brighade, al-Sad Martyr Battalion, al-Sanadid forces, Lewa alTahrir, the Syriac military junta, the North Sun Brigades, Jabhat Thwar Raqqa, People's Protection Units/YPG/ and women's Protection Units/YPJ/). It is mainly supported by the International Coalition leading the war against ISIS in Syria and Iraq, led by United States of America.



They ruined my life, but all I wish right now is to stay free and go on my life as a human being. As for my community, what happened to me is a "shame", and if I go back to my village, they may kill me for "dishonor" caused to them because of me, so I made a decision not to return, enough what I suffered from ISIS.



Image of Rita Habib Ayoub, the Syriac survivor.

Photo credit: STJ

First: ISIS Controlling Al-Hamdani-Bakhdida Village

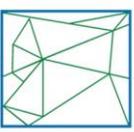
When clashes intensified between ISIS and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in al-Hamdani/Bakhdida, Rita had just arrived from Turkey, where she resorted in July 2014, to take her father out of al-Hamdani and return with him to Turkey, but she did not know that ISIS fighters were at the entrance of the village or what was going on there.

All that Rita wanted was to smuggle her father who lived alone in the village, so they could be safe in the refuge country away from war and its horrors, and in this regard, she spoke to STJ saying:

"On the exact day I arrived at the village, ISIS troops were able to control al-Hamdani in the late of August 2014, and all I can recall that the organization was rapidly advancing through controlling areas, and after controlling Sinjar and Mosul they could reach our village and surround an entrance, while the Kurdish forces were controlling the other one. Anyway, all I remember was that the village was filled with guns and arms; I also recall that violent clashes lasted for a whole day and caused casualties among villagers, and after that the Kurdish forces withdrew from the village, ISIS fighters controlled and surrounded the entire area."



Satellite image showing the geographic location of al Hamdani-Bkhdida village



Rita said that many villagers⁵ managed to flee, prior ISIS controlling the village, to the territory of Iraqi Kurdistan as only elderly and sick, who were unable to flee, stayed in the village, she continued:

"It was night, and we did not know at that time that the Kurdish forces withdrew from their points in the village. Anyway, in the early morning we heard sounds of cars and shouts of "Allahu akbar" so I looked out from the window to see what was going on, I saw ISIS fighters wandering around the village, people were very terrified, and what I can recount well that the elements of the organization destroyed churches in the village including the statues and crosses, and burned all copies of the Bible and other Christian books , and then turned those churches into headquarters for of their elements, knowing that al-Hamdani is a village of majority Syriac and some Arabs Muslim, but they are 10%."

When the organization fighters began entering houses looking for spoils, they noticed that numbers of civilians were still in the village, so ISIS agents asked them to gather in the morning in front of the sole village mosque threatening with slaughter if they didn't gather, concerning that Rita went on:

People were frightened and terrified of ISIS, so we all gathered behind the mosque in the village dispensary garden, then they started separating women from men, and they checked all of us seizing money, telephones, personal documents, even watches and glasses, and then they put old men on a bus to take them to Erbil, because they are useless, as ISIS elements said, but older women, over 35 years, were transferred by another bus to Erbil as well, so I and another woman, her name (Rana), remained along with a girl child, two and a half year old, and a boy 11 years old, and on the other side of the dispensary, there were about 35 young men aged between 18 and 30, but we didn't know what happened at the time ."

⁵ According to the [Middle East newspaper](#), about 50, 000 people lived in the village , before ISIS control it which led to the exodus of the majority to Erbil the capital city of Iraq's Kurdistan region.



Rita was (26) years old at that time, and her companion Rana was two years older, and whenever they inquired about their fate, ISIS agents said that they are prisoners and they will be exchanged for prisoners held by Kurds. Anyway, after almost two hours of standing up in the village dispensary garden, a bus transported Rita and Rana along with the two young children to headquarters in the city of Mosul, Rita continued:

"In Mosul, ISIS agents took the children to an unknown destination that we knew nothing about it, they also transferred me with Rana from one headquarters to another without knowing what is happening. I still remember how I was locked up with Rana for four days in October 2014, in one of ISIS agents house, they told us then that we are Sabaya of the organization, but we did not even know the meaning of the word, and they did not explain its meaning despite our continuing question, until one of the them came and took Rana to his house as Sabaya, as for me I was been given to one of the elements in Mosul, where I stayed for almost a year and a half ."

Second: The Journey to Syria

At the beginning of 2016, ISIS issued a decision to transfer all "Sabaya" to Syria, so ISIS agents sold Rita to a Saudi element in Raqqa city, in order to serve his pregnant wife, Rita stayed there about seven months before being sold to another Saudi agent, Rita added saying:

"ISIS agents did not have explicit names to call them, as for the first Saudi who bought me called Abu Hamad and he was (30), the other Saudi, 40, was calling several names such as Abu Khaled, sometimes Abu Omar and Abu Ibrahim. I recall well how a church in Raqqa had transformed into headquarters by ISIS fighters, after breaking their crosses and all contents indicating Christianity, I also recall how they beheaded somebody in Na`em Roundabout in the center of Raqqa. "



Rita added that she stayed for about a year and three months at "Abu Omar" house, the other Saudi man who had bought her to serve his family for four months in Raqqa, and then moved with them to Mayadeen city in Deir ez-Zur, under a mission assigned to "Abu Omar" by the organization, Rita went on:

"ISIS agents were eccentric, we did not understand their behaviors, and we thought that one of them was in favor of something, but he hated it, they forbid watching TV, listening to songs, or men to wearing jeans, and as for women they forced them to cover their bodies completely. There was no market for sale women in the streets, out of fear that people may uncover them, especially since they were convincing people that they are applying God's religion, so there was the so-called "slavery" market, a market for the sale of women, but it was promoted just on the Internet pages. "

Rita said that locals and immigrants princes/Amir in Mayadeen were running the "state Bureaus/Dewan", as about (10) Amir worked in every Dewan such as Dewan of Health, Zakat and others. She noted that when SDF advanced toward Raqqa and its countryside at the beginning of October 2017, the shelling intensified on Mayadeen, the matter that prompted ISIS agents and their families to leave and go to the villages of Sheitat⁶ in Deir ez-Zur, where they stayed there for about four months, she continued:

"After ISIS fighters, in Sheitat villages, were tightened and besieged, they resorted to smuggling their families, wives and children, to their countries, where they come from, they always changed their names, identities, and passports to be able to go through checkpoints and borders, but many of them remained in their strongholds in Deir ez-Zur, as they had only the three villages of al-Sheitat, Al-Graneej, kishkia and Abu Hammam, and when the siege tightened more and the shelling intensified, they got red off their weapons and burned their

⁶ Sheitat is one of the Arab Sunni tribes in the eastern countryside of Deir ez-Zur; there are also villages of Graneej, kishkia and Abu Hammam. The Sheikh of the tribe was Ali Aukla Al-Rjo who announced his pledge to the organization, but the tribe members soon revolted against the organization and got it out of its areas in July 2014, but after that the organization controlled the entire region after fierce battles with the Sheitat people, hundreds of them were executed, estimated at about 700, and the fate of 1,800 members remained unknown so far.



identities and passports and made new identities and forged passports, so that they could flee after shaving their beards. "

Rita along with a Yazidi girl, Samo were servicing ISIS fighters at one of their headquarters in the villages of Sheitat. However, the majority of these headquarters elements were Saudis, and whenever one of them came to the headquarters; he stayed for two or three days **waiting for a forged passport.** Rita also said **that ISIS agents changed their shapes frequently, either by shaving their beards or wearing new clothes and then they fled.**

Third: Wives of ISIS Agents

According to Rita, "Sabaya" were used for servicing ISIS families, and also for "sexual pleasure", their wives were aware of that matter without interfering, besides knowing about capsules and contraceptive needles given to them, and in this regard, Rita went on:

"ISIS wives always excused that they were betrayed and that they didn't know the reality of the organization, but if that's true, then why they didn't have mercy on us for four years, why they didn't try to flee or smuggle us at least, and why they were so violent with us. Anyway, they didn't stop torturing, beating and insulting us, they were not deceived, but they do lie to get away clean. They used to relax as they had slaves and Sabaya to serve them, what would they want more?"

Rita noted that the wives of migrant ISIS agents, who had come with their husbands, used to say that the aim of their coming to the territory of the "Islamic State" was not for marriage/Nikah⁷,

⁷ According to several sources, the case of the Jihad al-Nikah was raised in Syria in early 2013, following an advisory opinion of the Saudi Islamic religious "Mohammed al-Arefe" he called women to satisfy the sexual desires of the mujahideen/fighters and to encourage them to fight against the Syrian regime and consider it a jihad for the sake of Allah. As a result, many girls and women from various countries of the world migrated to Syria to join the ranks of the mujahideen, the organization of ISIS fighters, in order to satisfy their sexual desires.



but for "jihad for the sake of Allah", and Rita wondered if that's true, and why they kept on marrying one after another when their husbands were killed in combat, she added:

"They always used aliases and get married to Syrians, Saudis, Egyptians and others, as for the ISIS men were marrying them on the pretext that they would be responsible for orphan children, However, majority of " ISIS" wives were immigrants from the Arab world, especially Jordan, Egypt and Morocco, and some European countries as well, and their families abroad financed them, but Syrian and Iraqi women were poor."

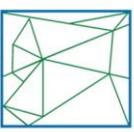
Rita and her companions, Sabaya, served ISIS families, clean houses, wash pots and prepare food, concerning injecting them with drug needles, Rita said:

"The organization agents kept on giving us drug injections, and the last time they tricked me and gave me a drug needle as a contraceptive needle, I felt then with intense fatigue and dizziness and speed in heart palpitations, as well as constant tension and pain in all my body, these effects lasted for a long time. They were injecting us against our will, and when we refused, they tied and inject us."

Fourth: Ending the Tragedy

While Rita was in one of Sheitat villages, which she did not know it, smugglers, who had been appointed by a humanitarian organization to free her and her Yazidi friend Samo, claimed that they were members of the organization and that they wanted to buy them, they had to pay \$10, 000 to buy Rita and Samo, in this regard Rita continued:

"The humanitarian organization had an agreement with the smugglers to reach us to the Turkish territory through the smuggling route, since I and Samo have no personal documents. Indeed, we reached Tell Abyad area, where other smugglers waiting us to pass the Syrian-Turkish border, but our smuggler handed us over to the Kurdish forces that brought us to Qamishli on November 25, 2017.



Despite the salvation from ISIS, which is now coming to an end in Iraq and Syria, Rita is still terrified from them, she described them as a cancer disease existing everywhere citing one of the phrases they often say in front of them, which indicates that they have sleeper cells everywhere."

Rita has no brothers or sisters in al-Hamdani village, and she had no one but her old father who she doesn't know if he is alive or dead, so she doesn't want to go home in Iraq, and in this connection, she said:

"They ruined my life, but all I wish right now is to stay free and go on my life as a human being. As for my community, what happened to me is a "shame", and if I go back to my village, they may kill me for "dishonor" caused to them because of me, so I made a decision not to return, I suffered enough from ISIS."

Rita was not forced to convert to Islam explaining that by saying that the elements of the organization were not interested in it, even those who had become Muslim they called them infidels, explaining that their only care was their sexual pleasure, she continued:

"They did not force me to pray and fast, only Yazidis were forced to do so, because they believed that the Yazidis worship Satan/Devil. Yazidi women were very stubborn, so they were beaten and assaulted by ISIS agents, and few of them obeyed the orders without obstinacy. One of the most horrible cases are still in my memory, when the organization agents enslaved from the Sinjar region, including young girls less than 10 years old, and how they raped them, we have seen this in our eyes."

During her detention at ISIS, Rita had not met other Sabaya of her Christian religion except for Rana, that girl who was transferred along with her from al-Hamdani to Mosul, and when Rita tried to inquire about her, no one knew anything about her.



It is worth mentioning that the union of "Bethnahrain Women⁸" in Qamishli took care of Rita Habib and ensured her protection, according to Nazira Goriye, the Official of the Syriac Women's Union in Syria, that they were following Rita Habib's news at first noting that her news had been interrupted after transporting her to several places, and she confirmed that there were many Syriac women who had been detained by ISIS and whose fate remained unknown so far and no information about them.

The official of the Syriac Women's union denied that they had sought to smuggle Rita Habib from ISIS- controlled areas in Deir ez-Zur countryside, while Rita asserted that the organization that oversaw her smuggling was a Jewish organization with the name "Shalom", which means peace.

STJ had published a [report](#) lists terrifying testimonies of the Yazidi survivors, who were able to flee recently from the grip of ISIS, it also published a [lengthy certificate](#) for a woman spent four years of detention of ISIS.

⁸ The " Bethnahrain Women's Union" was founded in Syria on February 28, 2001, a women's organization that emerged from the Syriac Women's Union and aims to enable the role of Syriac women and working with women's organizations of other components because they have a common case, the case of women, the organization also seeks to assist all women.

It is active in both Syria and Iraq, with branches in Europe and other country, and after the arrival of Rita; the Federation has adopted its case and has ensured its protection and care.