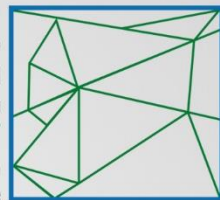


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سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  
Syrians  
For Truth  
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## Idlib: Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Arrests no less than 38 Persons

The arrests were conducted in December 2018 and January 2019, targeting both civilians and militants of armed groups

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On various charges, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS conducted arrests against no less than 38 persons, including civilians, a number of whom are women. Lately, it also arrested persons belonging to armed opposition groups in Idlib province, some of whom were released, while the destiny of a number of civilian detainees remains unknown to the date this report was written, according to testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ.

STJ's field researchers in Idlib province monitored several of the arrests witnessed by the region in December 2018 and November 2019, undertaken against six civilians, two persons, affiliated with armed groups, and 30 other militants of the National Front for Liberation.

- **Arrests of Civilians for Different Reasons:**

On December 26, 2018, HTS arrested Hussam al-Raya from the village of Ma'aret Hurmah, Idlib province, charging him with the indiscriminate shooting during his brother's wedding. Al-Raya was released two days later after pledging to refrain from repeating the act. In addition to this, his weapon, a Ross rifle, was confiscated.

On December 27, 2018, an HTS armed militia arrested Hussam al-Taweel, from the town of Sarmada in Idlib province, and released him three days later. A relative of Hussam recounted the incident:

**"Hussam was arrested while visiting his paternal cousin, detained at one of HTS prisons in the city of Harem. He was held for three days. Hussam is the owner of the Syriona Company for telecommunication and internet services. He was released after he made a deal with HTS, providing for a raise in the tax that Hussam pays it. The tax increase is estimated with an additional 25% of the revenues that Hussam used to pay previously. I think that the sum that Hussam now has to pay as a monthly tax is about \$ 5000."**

On December 28, 2018, elements of HTS arrested five civilians, including a woman, on separate arrest cases and on the charge of "sharing intelligence with the regime." The arrestees are Ulfat Kareem from the city of Idlib, her brother, an officer of the Syrian government-affiliated Political Security Service, Anass Ramadan, a civilian from the village of Qah, Rakan Abdullah Ali from the village of Tall Ammarah, Abdulkareem al-Musarie, a civilian from the village of Barissa, and Abdulqader Elaiwi from the village of Qah.

Recently, HTS released a civilian, whom it held captive for four months on the charges of conspiring against it with armed groups in Idlib province. A relative of the released civilian narrated to STJ the details of the incident:

**"On September 10, 2018, HTS arrested the young man Mustafa Hijazi from the village of Kafr Oweid and led him to its affiliate al-Oqab prison. He was released on January 10, 2019. Mustafa did not reveal the details of his detention or what he was exposed to during the four months. He told us that he was released when the investigations ended**

and no proof was found to his involvement in the charges passed against him, including dealing with armed groups in Idlib against HTS.”

- **Arrests of Armed Opposition Groups’ Former Militants:**

On December 30, 2018, elements of HTS arrested the young man Asaad Thabet Qasas in the city of Idlib, while both the charges on which he was arrested and his destiny remain unknown to the date this report was written.

**STJ’s field researcher in the region reported that Qasas is a former militant of Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya. He abandoned military life about two years ago, and since then he joined none of the military factions. It is worth mentioning that Ahrara al-Sham is one of the key armed groups that were in a state of war with HTS.**

On January 14, 2019, elements of HTS arrested the young man Abdulsalam al-Aahi from the town of Maarrat al-Nu'man. He is a former militant of Division 13, under the Free Syrian Army/the Syrian Armed Opposition, which also was in a constant state of war against HTS in the past four years.

Al-Aahi’s brother narrated to STJ the details of the arrest incident:

**“On the morning of December 14, 2019, my brother Abdulsalam was driving his car to the town of Ghadqa. Upon passing the al-Na’aura checkpoint on the International Highway, HTS checkpoint arrested him on the spot. He was detained for four hours, after which they released him. When he returned home, he showed clear bruises, beating and torture marks. We did not know why.”**

The witness added:

**“My brother was a militant of Division 13. But he entirely relinquished military action more than two years ago and opened a shop in Maarrat al-Nu'man, where he lives with his family. My brother is a civilian today and he has not been involved in any military action with any of the armed groups.”**

- **Arrests of Armed Opposition Groups’ Militants:**

In January 2019, Idlib province endured confrontations and exchanged shelling between HTS on the one hand and the armed groups dissolved in the National Front for Liberation on the other. Against the background of these confrontations, HTS arrested no less than 15 militants of the National Front for Liberation in the city of Saraqib and other 15 militants in different regions in Maarrat al-Nu'man. In retaliation, the National Front for Liberation arrested up to 20 militants of HTS on January 20, 2019.

According to STJ’s field researcher, the two sides to the fighting conducted a prisoner swap deal and all the militants, who were arrested during the confrontations which ended with HTS full military control over several regions in western rural Aleppo, northern rural Hama and all of Idlib province, were released. STJ published a detailed report on the incident.

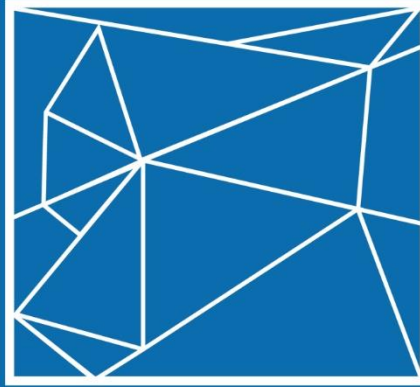
- **Detention Centers in Idlib Province:**

In Idlib province, STJ's field researcher monitored five principal detention centers, which HTS runs as prisons, in addition to other detention sites, regarded as confidential.

The prisons monitored by STJ's field researchers are the following:

1. The central prison in the city of Idlib: It is divided into two sections; one is run by the Ministry of Justice of the Salvation Government, affiliated with HTS, and the second is directly run by HTS, which is also divided into several sections, containing both civilian and militant detainees.
2. The central prison in the city of Harem: It is a central prison constructed by the Syrian government; HTS took it over and is directly supervising it. It similarly contains both militant and civilian detainees within its several sections.
3. The Tamiko Prison: It is located in the al-Muhandesin region, western rural Aleppo. Originally, it was the headquarters of a company and medicine factory, which HTS confiscated and turned into a prison.
4. The Safar Prison: It is located near the Bab al-Hawa border crossing; it is a civilian building with a cellar. HTS seized the building and turned it into a prison.
5. The al-Oqab Prison: It is made of two separate parts, located near the village of Kansafra in Mount al-Zawiya, Idlib. The two parts were originally caves in a mountain; one of them was expanded through digging. This prison was constructed in 2014 after it used to be in a poultry farm in the Mount al-Zawiya.

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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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