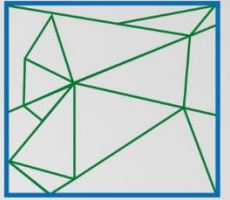


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سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



Ongoing Arrests against Former White Helmets in Homs and Daraa

Despite Signing Settlements, the Volunteers are Taken to the Unknown from their own Houses

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*Despite Signing Settlements, the Volunteers are Taken to the
Unknown from their own Houses*

Syrian security services launched wave of arrests against former White Helmets volunteers who already “settled” their status with the state. 11 former volunteers and a civilian from Ar Rastan besides a former volunteer in Daraa were arrested from their houses despite the fact that the six months allotted to them for reconciliation has not yet over.

Mahmoud Abu al-Majd¹ told STJ in September 14, 2018 that security services in Ar Rastan stormed the houses of seven former civil defense volunteers and a civilian’s, who used to hire his warehouse as a parking for the White Helmets vehicles and took them with 4 other former volunteers from the surrounding villages to an unknown destination on 12 and 13 September 2018.

All the former White Helmets volunteers in Ar Rastan were brought to the security services offices for questioning only a short time ago, and now many them are being arrested including a nurse who works in Ar Rastan hospital and has no ties to White Helmets, as the activist Wael Jumaa² reported on September 14, 2018.

Some sources³ stated to local media in Ar Rastan:

“Heavily armed men raided houses of the volunteers and get them into vehicles after covering their heads with black cloths and drove them to Homs, though holding settlement proofs.”

It’s worth mentioning that the forces present in Ar Rastan city include; the Military Intelligence, Political Security, State Security, Suheil al-Hassan foces and the Iranian Quwat al Ridha militias, some of which base in damaged hospitals and schools. There are also active government departments including Ar Rastan region directorate.

In a similar incident, the former civil defense volunteer Ali Saud al-Hamad was arrested from his house in Lajat, Daraa on August 22, 2018, for unexplained charges, and taken to an unknown location, as STJ was informed from a source, asked for anonymity⁴, on September 13, 2018.

The same source added that the former civil defense volunteers who are still in Daraa, feared detention on accusations like cooperating with Israel, though resolving their status.

¹ A media activist from Homs northern countryside, displaced to Aleppo northern countryside after the regime controlled his city. The information he provided obtained form local sources in Ar Rastan.

² A media activist from Homs northern countryside, displaced to Aleppo northern countryside after the regime controlled his city. The information he provided obtained form local sources in Ar Rastan.

³ “The Assad Forces Arresting former White Helmets northern Homs”, Horrya Press, September 13, 2018; <https://horrya.net/archives/75091> (Last edit: September 14, 2018).

⁴ The identity of the witness concealed for his safety.

Raed Saleh, head of the White Helmets, warns the volunteers, living within "reconciled" areas of possible reprisals and arrested from the government, but, however, they chose to settle with it and terminated their contracts with the White Helmets willingly:

“We have information that the state media filmed those former volunteers holding arms in charade scenes with the use of their vehicles and equipment.”

Violations by members of the government and allied forces have been documented in all the “reconciled areas”, where people are subjected to different abuses including arbitrary arrest.⁵

⁵ “Arrests and Forced Recruitments by the Syrian Regime, Southern Damascus”, STJ, September 13, 2018; <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/742> , (Last edit: September 15, 2018).

“Arrests in Yarmouk Camp after Being Taken Over by Regime Forces”,STJ, June 9, 2018; <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/566> ,(Last edit: September 11, 2018).

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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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