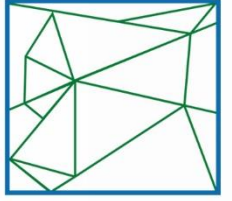


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## Raqqa: The Increasing Use and Sale of Illegal Drugs in al-Tabqah and its Surroundings

of al-Tabqah children are victims of using and dealing 20% drugs, according to local sources

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*20% of **al-Tabqah** children are victims of using and dealing drugs, according to local sources*

Using and dealing drugs spread widely in [al-Tabqah](#), Raqqa, especially among children in a proportion estimated at 20%, locals and displaced. Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF agents and officers along with some civilians are likely to be involved, according to information received from the city.

Muhab Nasr, activist, told STJ on August 29, 2018, that the kinds of drugs spread in al-Tabqah and its surroundings are Heroin, Fenethylline (Captagon pills), Zolam, Baltane, and Hashish, sold either by leaders and agents of SDF or by own-account civilian traders backed by Syrian regular forces-pro militias, who help them smuggle drugs they buy from outside SDF controlled areas via private vehicles or public transportation. Women and children are used in promoting and selling drugs in exchange of getting them for free. Deals are usually go down in the dealer's house or at a cigarette cart in the street. Women are instrumental in bringing drugs into the city. SDF arrested a drug mule, coming from Damascus holding 100 gram of Heroin, on one of its checkpoints, in al-Tabqah southern countryside, adjacent to Syrian regular forces areas.

An estimated of 30% of al-Tabqah and its surroundings local and displaced residents, use drugs, 10% of which are children. Prior to SDF's control on Raqqa, drug abuse was thinly spread, only tens of people were addicted, but lately it has grown rapidly because of poverty, according to the same activist who goes on to say:

Regarding the procedures taken to stop the wide-spreading drugs trade, Muhab Nasr reported that SDF arrested several drug suppliers and users and to be brought before justice, but they were released on bail after only a few days to go on with their illegal practices.

"Drug dealers who are close or relate to SDF agents don't be arrested although they are clearly involved", he commented.

Several civil society organizations in al-Tabqah conducted campaigns raise awareness of the dangers of drugs, but they were small-scale, limited to only few neighborhoods, according to the activist.

Local media reported that on August 24, 2018, the Asayesh Forces of Kurdish Autonomous Administration in al-Tabqah arrested three children in al-Masbah Café on drugs charge, (taking Afghani Hashish<sup>1</sup>). On August 17, 2018, four dealers were also arrested in the nearby al-Jarniyah village.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammed Alaa, "Asayesh Forces Arrest Three Children for taking Drugs in al-Raqqa", Smart News Agency, published on August 24, 2018. <https://smartnews-agency.com/en/wires/319278/asaiysh-forces-arrest-three-children-for-taking-drugs-in-alraqqa> .(Last visit: August 30, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Hasan Burhan, "Kurdish Autonomous Administration Arrests Four Drug Dealers West of Raqqa", Smart News Agency, published on August 17, 2018. <https://smartnews-agency.com/en/wires/317996/kurdish-autonomous-administration-arrests-four-drug-dealers-west-of-alraqqa> . (Last visit: August 30, 2018).

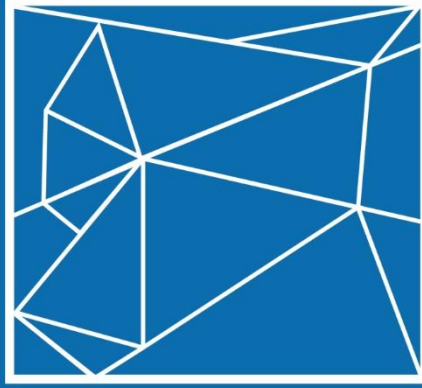
Al-Tabqah and its countryside residents experience lower standards of living besides the unemployment of 60% of them. Moreover, the city housed approximately 150,000 IDPs from eastern countryside of Hama and Homs, Deir az-Zor countryside, east Aleppo countryside, and Afrin, Nasr added.

In the same context, drug trade is also increasing in Raqqa amidst the locals' discontent and the lack of serious steps to stop it. STJ had earlier published a detailed report regarding this.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Raqqa- Spread of Phenomenon of Selling and Promoting for Narcotic Pills in the Absence of Serious Steps to Prevent Them", STJ, published August 14, 2018. <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/693> (Last visit: August 30, 2018).

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## عن منظمة سوريون من أجل الحقيقة والعدالة:

هي منظمة سورية مستقلة، غير حكومية وغير ربحية، تضم العديد من المدافعات والمدافعين عن حقوق الإنسان من السوريات والسوريين على اختلاف مشاربهم وانتماءاتهم، كما تضم في فريقها المؤسس أكاديميات أكاديميين من جنسيات أخرى. تعمل المنظمة من أجل سوريا/سورية التي يتمتع فيها جميع المواطنين والمواطنات بالكرامة والعدالة وحقوق الإنسان المتساوية.

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