



Raqqa- Spread of Phenomenon of Selling and Promoting for Narcotic Pills in the Absence of Serious Steps to Prevent Them

Drug Promotion Targets Children from 14 year old with Very Paltry Prices

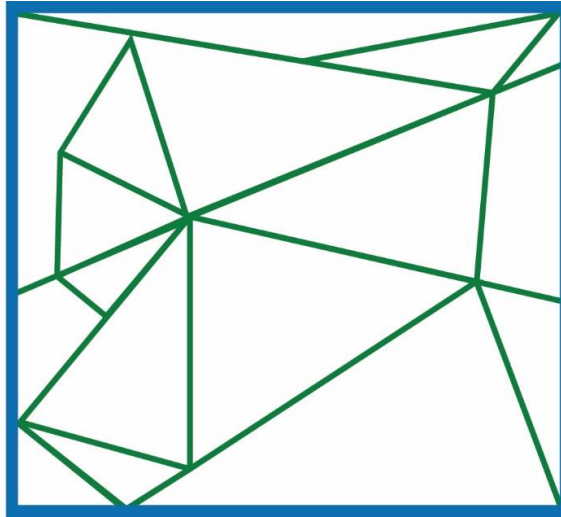
About Syrians for Truth and Justice-STJ

[Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#) is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities. It also includes members of other nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (males and females) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

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The phenomenon of selling and promotion for narcotic pills among children and youths in Raqqa city eastern Syria is burgeoning gradually. The pills are sold for trivial prices in the city that has been recently held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) with the absence of effective steps to prevent them, according to the locals, amidst accusations and signs of the involvement of some officers and leadership of the SDF in the promotion and selling process, according to testimonies by STJ.

Abu Imad¹, 40 years old a civilian from Raqqa who works in a shop near the industrial region (al-Mantiqa al-Sinaiya), told STJ on August 14, 2018 the following:

"The narcotic pills are spread among the children from 14 years old and among the youths who are in 20 years old. There many types of drugs such as Zolam, Sudafed, Captagon, Baltane. Each single pill is sold for SYP 50 to SYP 100 according to the weight, in addition to the spread of hashish. The pills are sold in some pharmacies and on some carts that sell cigarettes. It is common that elements of the SDF are involved in this matter."

Khalid², 31 years old a civilian from Raqqa who works in a workshop for repairing cars in the industrial region (al-Mantiqa al-Sinaiya), said in an interview with STJ on August 14, 2018,

"I have seen a group of young men aged 16 years old carrying Baltane pills, and when I enquired about the source of the pills they replied that they got them from Abu Janim, an element of the SDF who is at al-Mohafaza Checkpoint. I asked how they use this pill, they said that it makes the man happy all over the day (...) I have not seen elements of the checkpoint selling the pills directly but I have seen persons selling them on some carts that sell cigarettes and in some pharmacies."

For his part, Mohammed Othman the local activist who comes from Raqqa and lives there, said in an interview with STJ on August 12, 2018, that a commander in the SDF identified as Abu Jasim ar-Raqawi, who hails from Ein al-Arab/Kobane is one of the main promoters and importers of the narcotic pills and hashish. Moreover, the narcotic materials are mainly sold at al-Itfaiya Checkpoint that he runs. Elements of the checkpoint are promoting for the drug pills and sell them for a portion of profits. At this checkpoint, kinds of drugs are sold such as Captagon, Zolam, and Afghan Hashish among others. Each single pill is sold for SYP 400 to SYP 500, according to the weight, but 5 grams of hashish is sold for SYP 2500.

There are some individual vendors who work for their own without the auspices of any element or commander in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); they buy the narcotic materials and sell them by themselves in different parts of the city where the trade is obviously active at al-Itfaiya Checkpoint from 10:00 pm to 4:00 am, in addition to neighborhoods of the squatter areas like ad-Dariya, Nazlat Shihadeh, and al-Mokhtalata. The trade is also spread in al-Garajat region (garage) and on the carts that sell cigarettes, Othman said.

¹ An alias to preserve the safety of the witness.

² An alias to maintain the safety of the witness.



Concerning the way of selling the drugs, Othman added "I asked some children who are drug abusers about the way of getting them and they answered that it was easy" just go to the checkpoint and say "give me the X... and the element wraps the pills in paper and gives them to you."

It is difficult to count the number or the rate of the children who are drug users and who promote for using them although the narcotic pills are so widespread in the city because the process all take place at night and in a secret manner. What contributes in the growing of drug trade is that the majority of children who are 14 years old and above are children who work and who have got their own money and can obtain these materials without being obliged to take money from their parents, according to Othman.

The promoters target the children from the age of 14 by giving them some pills for free for a specific period until they get used to them and then start to buy them. Other methods are adopted by the elements of the SDF such as charging the children to steal doors and windows of houses in exchange for getting a handful of narcotic pills in addition to some money, Othman reported.

Based on the testimonies collated by STJ, earnest accountability and censorship against this phenomenon are absent, and no rigorous procedures have been taken to end them. The Municipality in Raqqa city have put awareness posters in the streets on the danger of the drugs without taking any other procedures to arrest the promoters. Mohammed Othman narrated the arrest of some promoters who are "not protected" and said:

"The main promoters or the major traffickers have not been arrested; it is said that they (referring to the SDF) had arrested persons who are small promoters and they are elements who have got no protection from any commander and work for their own, and carry about only 20 pills. The Forces arrested those small elements, who promote for drugs, for four or five days then released them and then sold the narcotic pills by themselves."