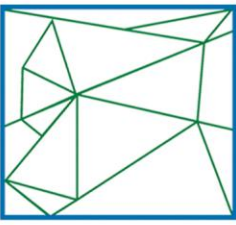


سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
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Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



January 2018



Salvation Government Continue Closing down Aleppo Free University

Students Denial to subordinate of the University to Salvation Government Affiliated to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham- Formerly al-Nusra Front



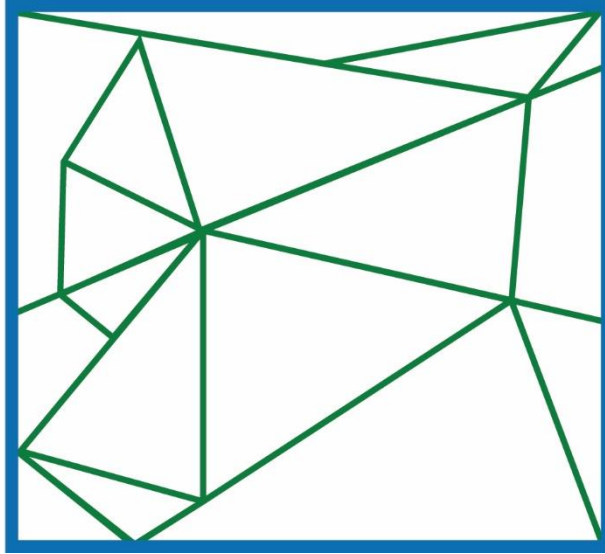
About Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ

[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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Preface

The Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government continued closing down Aleppo Free University¹ in [ad-Dana](#) and [Sarmada](#) towns located in the northern countryside of Idlib, following issuing a decision to suspend permanence from January 6, 2018 to January 14, 2018. The decision denied thousands of students to access their education and pushed them to receive lectures in the open. According to [Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ](#) reporter, the decision was justified by the campaign of frequent shelling on several areas, cities and towns in the northern countryside of Idlib. Moreover, armed agents of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS were placed in front of the university doors in both towns in order to prevent any attempts by students to enter the university.

According to STJ reporter, other decisions preceded this decision by the Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government. On December 21, 2017, the latter issued a decision to appoint Ibrahim al-Hamoud as Head of Aleppo Free University instead of Mustafa Taleb, who was appointed the Syrian Interim Government, affiliated to the National Coalition Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces).

On December 26, 2017, many students from Aleppo Free University protested rejecting the decision that subordinated their university to the Higher Education Council affiliated to Salvation Government. However, al-Hamoud, the new head appointed by the Salvation Government, said most of the students who went out in the protests were not students, but people brought from other regions in order to carry out subversive actions.

According to many testimonies obtained by STJ in January 2018, there were significant negative consequences on the decision of closing Aleppo Free University; perhaps the most important is depriving thousands of students from continuing their education.

¹ Aleppo Free University was launched in 2015-2016 of the academic year in areas not controlled by the Syrian government. There are up to 4,000 students, and the university follow the Syrian interim government (the opposition). Faculties of the university are distributed in HTS-held areas such as ad-Dana and Sarmada located in northern Idlib countryside, in addition to Kafr Takharim city in western Idlib countryside. The university includes a number of faculties such as the Faculty of Information Technology Engineering, Faculty of Medicine, and Agricultural Engineering.



What is Salvation Government, When did it Form, and Who it Follows

On September 17, 2017, the "General Syrian Conference" was held in Idlib province and concluded the formation of a "Constituent Assembly/Constituent Body" to nominate the head of the new government; resulting in a concluding statement to form the so-called "Salvation Government" in order to run "liberated areas" in northern Syria. The Salvation government was effectively formed on November 2, 2017, as it announced the nomination of its ministers in its founding conference, chaired by "Mohammed al-Sheikh, who said in turn that the formation of this government came after launching an initiative to form a civil administration by a group of academics, actors and bodies in Idlib. The government faced accusations of subordination to HTS, formerly al-Nusra Front because it used agents of HTS in implementing several of its decisions.

According to STJ reporter, this Government controlled several civil institutions in Idlib, including Idlib University that consequently followed the so-called Higher Education Council in the "Salvation Government" during November 2017, but prior to that, it used to follow the Syrian Interim government.

On December 10, 2017, the Salvation Government issued a warning to the Syrian Interim Government to close all its offices in the "liberated areas", including Aleppo Free University.



Image shows copy of the decision by the Salvation Government on 10 December 10, 2017, which warned the Syrian Interim Government to close all its offices in the liberated areas.

Photo credit: [The Salvation Government Facebook page](#).



First: Details of Pre-Decision of Shutting Down Aleppo Free University

On December 20, 2017, the "Salvation Government" issued another decision to appoint Ibrahim al-Hamoud² as Head of Aleppo Free University instead of Dr. Mustafa Taleb, appointed by the Syrian Interim Government-the opposition, this forced Aleppo Free University to follow the Salvation Government.



Image shows the decision by the Salvation Government on December 20, 2017, appointing "Ibrahim al-Hamoud" as Head of Aleppo Free University instead of Dr. Mustafa Taleb.

Photo credit: [Facebook of Aleppo Free University students.](#)

² According to several sources, Ibrahim al-Hamoud holds a degree in Information Technology and a doctorate from the Russian Federation. He was the Dean of the Faculty of Information at Aleppo Free University before being sacked from the Ministry of Higher Education of the Syrian Interim Government.



On December 26, several Aleppo Free University students specifically from the faculty of Information Technology Engineering, located in ad-Dana in Idlib countryside [went out in a protest denying the decision of subordinating their university to the Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government](#). The response from Jouma al-Omar, Head of the Higher Education Council in the Salvation Government, came through a statement published in the same day. He pointed out that there is a deception practiced on the students as well as that Aleppo Free University is an independent corporate body administratively and financially, and that it will still stand with all its faculties and staff and will never be shut down as rumored among the students.

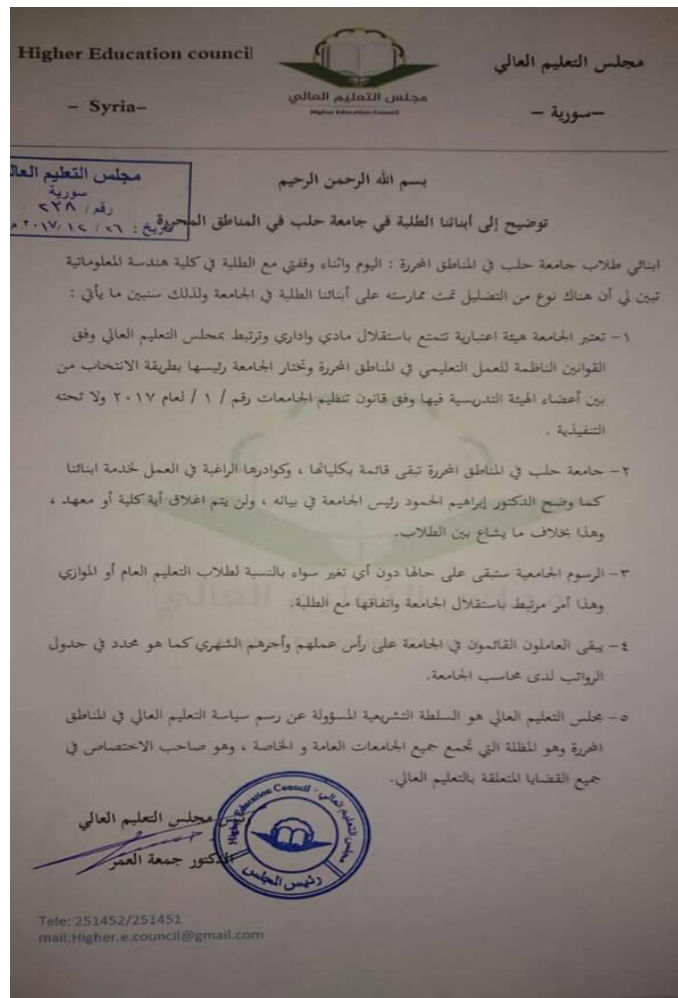


Image shows the statement issued on December 26, 2017, by Jouma al-Omar, Head of the Higher Education Council, as a response to the protests carried out by the students.

Photo credit: [Facebook of Aleppo Free University Students](#).



[A video footage](#) posted by Facebook of Aleppo Free University students on 27, December 2017, showed Jouma al-Omar, Head of the Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government, saying that several students who protested are not students but are been brought from other regions to carry out sabotage actions within the university.

As a response to all above, Aleppo Free University issued a statement in the same day, asserting that the students who went out on the protest are indeed the students of the university, and that the university is a corporate body that never joins the Higher Education Council in the Salvation Government. It also asserted that the university would choose its own head by election and not by force or abuse. The statement also denounced bringing armed agents from HTS and putting them in front of the university headquarters.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

رداً على البيان الذي أصدره جموية العمر بتاريخ 26 / 12 / 2017 م:
الذي بدأ فيه بقوله أن هناك نوع من التضليل يمارس على طلاب جامعة حلب الحرة، وزعم أنه رأى ذلك
خلال وقفته في اللحظة التي كان طلاب جامعة حلب الأحرار قد نظموا احتجاجاً داخل حرم كلية الهندسة
المعلوماتية.

و تردّ على ذلك بدايةً بأننا لم نخرج عن إطار اعتصامنا في الكلية للحديث مع جمعة العمر، رغم محاولته
لفتح المجال لتبليس الأمور على طلاب الجامعة.
و تردّ أيضاً على ما ذكر في تصريحه:

أولاً – جامعة حلب الحرة هيئة اعتبارية، تتمتع باستقلالها المادي والإداري، ولا ترتبط قطعاً بمجلس التعليم
العالي في حكومة الإنقاذ كما زعم في تصريحه.

ثانياً – إن كان كما ذكر بأن الجامعة تختار رئيسها بطريقة الانتخاب، فإن للجامعة وكوادرها وطلابها حقاً
مقدساً ومشروفاً للوقوف بوجه سطوتكم عليها بالقوة والتصرف.

ثالثاً – جامعة حلب ستبقى قائمة بكلّياتها وكوادرها ولن يتم إغلاق أي كلية أو معهد، و لكنكم اقتحمتم
مقر الرئاسة أولاً وأخذتم الأوراق الثبوتية المتعلقة بالطلاب، إضافة إلى أنكم دخلتم لمباني كلية الهندسة
المعلوماتية عنوةً وبسطوة القوة، واستبدلتم أقفال الأبواب، وكذلك الأمر في كلية الآداب وكلية الحقوق.

رابعاً – نرفض رفضاً قاطعاً أن يكون مجلس التعليم العالي الممثل داخل حكومة الإنقاذ سلطة تشريعية
لجامعتنا، وأن تكون هذه السلطة مسؤولة عن رسم سياسة تعليمنا بعد أفعالها المشينة المتمثلة بقرض
المفاضلة التي تريد و إغلاق مكاتب جامعتنا في المناطق التي تفرض حكومة الإنقاذ سطوتها عليها بالقوة.

خامساً وأخيراً – لم يتعرض أحد لطلاب جامعة حلب في كافة الكليات حتى تقوم حكومة الإنقاذ بجلب
عناصر مسلحة وتوقيفهم أمام مقرات الجامعة.
لم يتعرض طريق طلاب جامعة حلب الحرة سوى قراراتكم التعسفية .

حرر بتاريخ 26-12-2017

والله من وراء القصد و هو يهدي السبيل

Image shows the statement posted by Aleppo Free University on December 26, 2017 that came as a response to Jouma'a al-Omar, Head of the Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government.

Photo credit: [Facebook of Aleppo Free University Students](#).



Second: Decision to Stop Permanence at Aleppo Free University and the Insistence of Students not to Implement it

On January 4, 2018, following the protests carried out by students of Aleppo Free University, Ibrahim al-Hamoud, Head of the university appointed by the Government of Salvation, issued a decision to stop permanence at Aleppo Free University in the "liberated areas" for eight days from January 6, 2018 to January 14, 2018, on the pretext that there is a campaign of repeated bombing on the liberated areas in the northern countryside of Idlib. It should be noted that the university headquarters are relatively distant from the shelling and clashes areas.



Image shows Ibrahim al-Hamoud's decision, Head of Aleppo Free University appointed by the Salvation Government, to stop permanence at university, as of January 6, 2018 to January 14, 2018.

Photo credit: [Facebook of Aleppo Free University students](#).



Despite the decision to close Aleppo Free University, many students continued to receive their lectures in the open, specifically in front of the college doors that were closed by the Higher Education Council of the Salvation Government. According to STJ reporter, armed elements of HTS were placed in front of the closed college doors to prevent any attempts by students to enter the university.



Images show many students from Aleppo Free University receiving lectures in the open, following the decision to shut down their university in January 2018.

Photo credit: [Facebook of Aleppo Free University students](#).



Image shows the presence of some of armed agents of HTS-formerly al-Nusra Front- in front of the doors of Aleppo Free University in ad-Danah located in Idlib countryside during January 2018.

Photo credit: [University of Aleppo Free University students.](#)



Third: Testimonies of Students and Teachers from Aleppo Free University

Omar al-Mohammed-alias-one of the university students who participated in the recent protests that rejected the decision by Salvation Government to close Aleppo Free University, spoke to STJ:

"Aleppo Free University has given us another opportunity to pursue our education, especially as it includes many students who have not been able to complete their education outside Syria, or even in areas controlled by the regime forces. However, after the formation of the Salvation Government backed by HTS, it began, through the Higher Education Council, to issue arbitrary and irresponsible decisions, and it started to interfere in the affairs of our university, which we have rejected as students and participated in the protests against this unjustified decision. It should be known that we have not been allowed to enter our colleges yet."

In another testimony, Mohammed Abdel Qader-alias-a student of the Faculty of Physics at Aleppo Free University said the recent events that concluded to close the university, made him lose a lot of effort and time as well as prevented him from receiving his graduation certificate. In this regard, he said:

"On January 7, 2018, I went to university to receive my graduation certificate, but I was surprised that some armed elements were in front of the university door. They forcibly denied anyone who wanted to enter the college. The thing that most scares me is that I cannot get my graduation degree due to the problems, notably that I have did a lot of effort and spent a lot of time until I reached the graduation stage."

Khaled al-Saleh-alias-one of the teachers of the Faculty of Science, also emphasized that the teaching staff at the university is supporting students in expressing their opinions, explaining that he has no problems with the cooperation between Aleppo Free University and Idlib University of the Salvation Government. He said:



"I have no problem with this cooperation, as my direct relationship with my students and my work is to teach my own subject with dedication and devotion, but all I wish is that no student loses his right in the study. For example, because of the decision to close the university, some theoretical faculties were able to complete their lessons in the open, but in the practical colleges, most of our lessons need a laboratory and a microscope, and this led our students to miss their lessons."

One of the university teachers in turn confirmed to STJ, that many of the harassment affected Aleppo Free University by the Higher Education Council specifically prior the decision to close the university. The teacher noted that it had been preceded by other unjustified decisions. In this regard he spoke:

"At the beginning of the current school year 2017/2018, there was a decision to impose a single differentiation for students at Aleppo Free University, and the Salvation Government attempted to impose this decision by force through armed agents, but eventually it declined from its decision. Moreover, we were subjected to other harassment, when the government claimed and desired to move Aleppo Free University to Jarables city in the northern countryside of Aleppo. In addition, the Salvation Government has also accused us of corruption, but the Ministry of Education of the Syrian Interim Government responded to the allegations. For example, the Higher Education Council of Salvation Government said that the Faculty of Medicine is acting without reference to the university presidency and charged the college's procurement committee with corruption."

The University teacher pointed out that personal arguments among officers of the Higher Education Council of Salvation Government, on the one hand, and officers of the Ministry of Higher Education of the Syrian Interim Government is perhaps one of the reasons that led to the decision of closing down Aleppo Free University, especially since many officers of the Higher Education Council of Salvation Government were working in the Higher Education Ministry of the Syrian Interim Government, but were subsequently dismissed from their jobs. He continued:



"Interference of militarization in education or in civic institutions is absolutely unacceptable, because it ruins more than it benefits. In fact, there was a memorandum of understanding between the Syrian Interim Government and Idlib University prior to the formation of Salvation Government to cooperate and to join Idlib University to the Higher Education Ministry of The Syrian Interim Government, specifically on April 25, 2017. However, the Salvation Government, the newly formed, rejected this memorandum and even demanded that Aleppo Free University will subordinate to it."



Image shows the Memorandum of Agreement issued on April 25, 2017, between both the Ministry of Education of the Syrian Interim Government and Idlib University, prior to its subordination to Salvation Government, for cooperation between the two parties. Photo credit: A teachers Aleppo Free University.



Concerning the negative effects of the decision of closing Aleppo Free University, a university teacher told STJ, saying:

"There are significant negative effects on the application of the decision to subordinate Aleppo Free University to Salvation Government, the most important of which is the substantial interference of militarization in the government. We seek to develop and create cooperation between our university and the global universities, but the militarization of this government makes the issue of our support in front of global universities and the sought to exchange experiences with them, an unachievable matter. It should be noted that the reason for the university's closure, which they justified by the campaign of violent bombing by the regime forces, is an illogical reason. Particularly that the university headquarters located in the northern Idlib countryside are not bombed, and the shelling is concentrated currently on towns and cities of southern Idlib countryside such as Ma'arat al-Nu'man and Saraqib. I believe that we will face constraints due to suspending the permanence. We are in the last days of the first semester and we were about to do exams, but it was all postponed due to the closure decision."

An update: STJ reporter said that the university was reopened in both ad-Dana and Sarmada on January 22, 2018, after talks about individual initiatives to return the situation to what it had been before.