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Autonomous Administration Sent Several "Internally" Displaced Youths in the City to Serve the Mandatory Self-Defense Duty

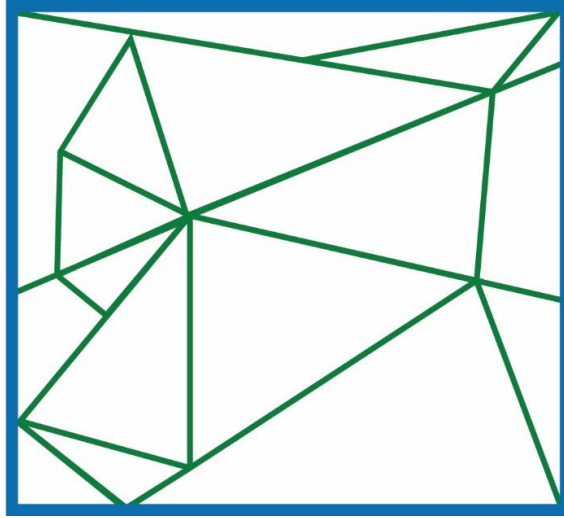
About Syrians for Truth and Justice-STJ

[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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Introduction

The Autonomous Administration-held city of [al-Hasakah](#), in the north-east of Syria, witnessed tensions and protests as of May 26, 2018 until June 3, 2018. Neighborhoods of Western Nashwa, Eastern Nashwa and Ghuwayran were subjected to storming campaigns by the pro-Autonomous Administration military police in order to send a number of young men whose ages are between 18 and 30 to serve the self-defense duty. According to many testimonies obtained by STJ, the military police raided many houses that contain visitors and displaced persons from other provinces to send them to forced service; this prompted many people to protest and resulted in a hand-to-hand fight with elements of the military police. Later, the scuffle evolved and elements of the military police fired bullets indiscriminately into the air and arrested a number of youths.

Not only that, but also the military police of the Autonomous Administration send several "internally" displaced youths from other provinces, such as Raqqa, to Ghuwayran neighborhood and recruited them forcibly, resulting in protests by the locals, which the military police addressed by firing live bullets into the air.

According to the field researcher of STJ, strain still prevails in the three neighborhoods in al-Hasakah city until the date of writing this report May 13, 2018, despite of numerous attempts to calm down the situation between both parties, indicating that the majority of the population of the three neighborhoods are Arab components. The military checkpoints operated by the military police of Autonomous Administration at the entrances of these neighborhoods have increased the tension, especially that they search the passers-by to and from the neighborhoods and examine their identities.

Forces affiliated to the Autonomous Administration had earlier carried out raid campaigns for the purpose of recruitment and arrested dozens of young men in Raqqa province and in Manbij city during May/ and the beginning of June 2018. STJ had published a flash report concerning the incident titled "[Compulsory Conscription Continue in Raqqa and Manbij and Protests Against It- Arrests Under the Law on Mandatory Self-Defence Duty Stipulated by Defense Committee of Autonomous Administration on July 21, 2014](#)"



There was another report titled "[Recruitment under “Self-Defense” Increased in al-Hasakeh Province- Recruiting Dozens of Youths in Training Camps although they are Excluded from Compulsory Military Service](#)"

First: What is Mandatory Self-Defense Duty

On January 21, 2014, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) along with Kurdish, Arab and Syriac parties allied with it founded the Autonomous Administration in northern Syria, consequently three districts were formed and were called cantons that means (administrative division), they were Cizire Canton, Kobane Canton, Afrin Canton. Each canton has its own council which will be represented in the General Council.

The Autonomous Administration includes 16 bodies, officially titled,

1. The Body of Municipalities and Environment
2. External Relations
3. Defense and Self-Protection
4. Interior Affairs Authority
5. Body of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs
6. Women and Family Affairs
7. Body of Culture and Art
8. Tourism and Protection Antiquities
9. The Education Committee
10. the Economics Body
11. the Financial Authority
12. Employment and Social Affairs
13. the Health Authority
14. the Energy Commission
15. the youth Authority
16. the Authority of Justice

Through these bodies, the Autonomous Administration managed to control its own areas, since the Defense and Self-Protection Authority was first designated for the military affairs related to People Protection Units (YPG) and Women's Protection Units (YPJ). However, on July 21, 2014, the Defense and Self-Protection Authority issued its first [law](#) under the self-protection item, which stipulated that:

"Every single family should send one of its members whom aged between 18-30 for mandatory self-defense duty which lasts for 6 months."

Jan 16, 2016, the Autonomous Administration [raised](#) the months of compulsory service of self-defense duty from 6 to 9, according to a vote by the Legislative Council.

And on Dec 28, 2017, the Legislative Council issued a [decision](#) to raise the months of compulsory service or the so-called self-defense duty to one year instead of nine months.

Second: Sending Youths to Compulsory Service and Onset of Protests- al-Hasakah

On May 26, 2018, the military police of the Autonomous Administration installed a military checkpoint inside Western Nashwa located in al-Hasakah, specifically in Sharia Roundabout, and through this checkpoint it began arresting a number of young men aged from 18 to 30 years, and then sent some of them to the recruitment centre affiliated to the Autonomous Administration within al-Hasakah for the purpose of the self-defense duty, many locals of Western Nashwa reported to STJ.

Muhannad Kh. a native from Western Nashwa and a father of three sons whose one of them has been recently sent for self-defense duty, said to STJ,

"My son is 29, and he is an employee at the Department of Technical Services of the Syrian government in al-Hasakah and serves as a technical supervisor within the Department. He is also discharged from the regular military service, since he had served the Syrian regime in Damascus from 2007 to 2009. However, because he is at the age required by the Autonomous Administration, he was arrested by the military police checkpoint at the Sharia Roundabout on May 26, 2018, after that, they took him to the recruitment centre, and they informed us about that. Therefore, we went to the recruitment centre to explain that my son had served the Syrian regular army, but they told me inside the recruitment centre that they recognize not the Syrian regime nor its military service. Moreover, they told me that the self-defense



duty is obligatory on all youths and that my son would serve the duty willy-nilly. I could do nothing but to wait for my son until he comes back for his first vacation after being trained for a military course by Autonomous Administration, and then trying to smuggle him out of the Syria."

The military police continued to send many of the neighborhood youths for self-defense duty for two continuous days, besides they entered some houses in the neighborhood by force because there were reports received by the military agencies that there are young people from other Syrian provinces inside these houses and that they are visitors to those houses, according to what eyewitnesses and locals of Western Nashwa told STJ.

In the first evening hours of 27 May 2018, a patrol of the pro-Autonomous Administration military police entered some of these houses that contain visitors from other provinces in Western Nashwa, but a group of the residents attacked that patrol, which caused a hand-to-hand fight between the patrol and the neighborhood residents. The incident ended up arresting some of the young men who took part in the scuffle, including young men from al-Zahrawi Family, which was confirmed by a member of al-Zahrawi Family to STJ, he spoke in this regard, **"A number of women and young men from the family attacked the patrol, which in turn used force against my family members; during the attack, an element of the patrol was stabbed with a knife. After that, the patrol asked for support, so the Asayesh forces of Autonomous Administration came and caused a chaotic situation within the neighborhood as a result of indiscriminate shooting in the air. The young men attacked the second patrol and set fire in the tyre, and blocked the road between Western Nashwa and Eastern Nashwa. Both patrols fled."**

The witness concluded that clan elders intervened in order to resolve the problem peacefully, but the Autonomous Administration demanded al-Zahrawi Family to hand over their young men whom aged between 18 and 30 for the self-defense duty, but the family smuggled the wanted youths into Iraq then to Turkey.



Third: Sending Youths from Other Provinces to Mandatory Self-Defense Duty

On May 29, 2018, another group of young men assaulted a patrol of military police affiliated to Autonomous Administration near al-Basil Roundabout located in Ghuwayran neighborhood inside al-Hasakah, knowing that the majority of the residents of this neighborhood are Arabs, as they constitute 90% of the population. Ammar al-Hamidi, a native from Ghuwayran confirmed this and spoke to STJ saying,

"The assault occurred after a patrol of military police raided several houses of displaced persons within the neighborhood and arrested a number of their youths to send them to compulsory service, knowing that they are displaced and temporarily reside in the neighborhood, but the military police did ignore this matter. Therefore, a group of young men attacked the patrol to release these youths, but in vain. After that, the patrol fired live bullets into the air, prompting them to flee, but returned later into the neighborhood in order to set fire in the tyre and block the way to al-Basil Roundabout. All this pushed the Asayesh forces to intervene and arrest some young men against the backdrop of this chaos, as they claimed."

In another testimony to STJ by Na'ila Dweiha/alias, one of the displaced persons from Raqqa city into Ghuwayran, said that pro-Autonomous Administration military police had raided her house on May 29, 2018, and took her son identified as Kamal Sweileh who is 24 years old, along with his cousin, Mohammed Sweileh, who is 28 years old, knowing that they are displaced and not natives of al-Hasakeh. She added,

"Despite our attempts to tell the military police that we are displaced from Raqqa, they told us that it is up to Autonomous Administration and that we had to review them. Actually, on May 31, 2018, we did so but they told us that the compulsory service is obligatory on every individual in al-Hasakah whatever his origin is. Up to now, I have been unable to visit my son nor his cousin who were taken to mandatory service, knowing that my husband has been missing and detained by the Islamic State organization (ISIS) since 2016 on charges of shaving a haircut contrary to Sharia, plus I have no idea of his whereabouts so far."

According to eyewitnesses and residents of Western Nashwa, Eastern Nashwa and Ghuwayran to STJ, this tension between Autonomous Administration forces and the sons of these neighborhoods, which the majority of them are known to be Arabs, continued until June 3, 2018, because the military police stopped its raids for sending youths to mandatory self-defense duty, but after it had taken more than 27 youths from al-Hasakah to serve the self-defense duty.
