

## The Third Time Escape of the Hawran Courthouse Inmates Increases Tension in Some Areas of Daraa Western Countryside

A Special Report Highlighting an Incident of 23 Prisoners Escape from Gharz Prison in Daraa Province, March 2018

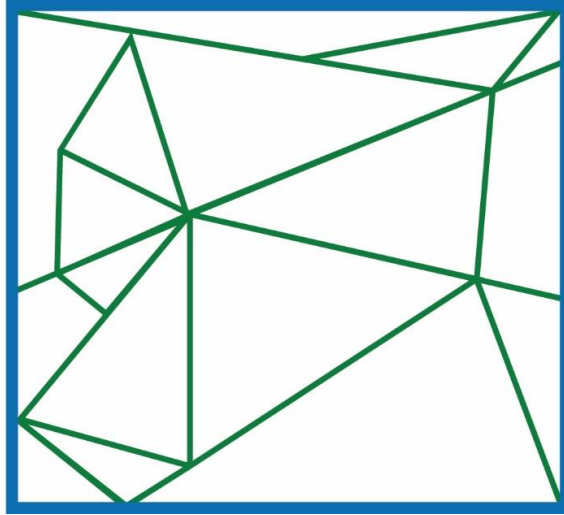
## About the organization (STJ)

[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 (males and females) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  

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Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice





# **The Third Time Escape of the Hawran Courthouse Inmates Increases Tension in Some Areas of Daraa Western Countryside**

*A Special Report Highlighting an Incident of 23 Prisoners Escape from Gharz Prison  
in Daraa Province, March 2018*



## Preface

On March 16, 2018, twenty-three prisoners escaped from the [Gharz prison](#)<sup>1</sup> in [Daraa](#) province, which is administered by the Hawran Courthouse, also known as the Dar al-'Adl fi Hawran<sup>2</sup>. Those prisoners had been arrested earlier in 2017, after being charged with murder and belonging to the Islamic State Organization"also known as ISIL".

According to several testimonies obtained by [STJ](#), 18<sup>3</sup> escaped prisoners were caught in late March 2018, while the search for the rest continues. It is also remarkable that it is not the first time that prisoners flee "The Gharz prison", where on October 29, 2017, 20 prisoners escaped the prison, also on January 19, 2018, (22) others managed to escape too. The charges against those fleeing were theft, murder and belonging to ISIL. It should be noted that a number of them were subsequently caught by the courthouse.

According to STJ field researcher, the recent escape increased tension in some areas of the western countryside of Daraa, from where a number of the escaped persons, who are accused of murder, descended. Noting that an armed clashes erupted as a result, on the same day between "al-Halaqi and al-Jaradat" families in [El Aliyah](#) village in the western countryside of Daraa, following the escape of six prisoners of "al-Jaradat" family who were convicted of murdering two young men of "al-Halaqi" family earlier in 2017.

The escaped prisoners are: (Muayad Khairuddin al-Jarad, Ahmad Rashid al-Hariri, Younes Khalil al-Gabawi, Ali Hasan al-Jarad, Asa'ad Adnan al-Zarqan, Ihab Khairuddin al-Jarad, Bilal Saeed al-Zarqan, Khaled Jamal al-Masri, Shiraz Yasser al-Jarad, Abdullah Nasr al-Hamad, Ahmed Abu al-Sel, Omar Ahmad al-Jalem, Omar Hamza Zein El Abideen, Omran Hussain al-Qassim, Nasser Hussain Al-Qassim, Qusai Ibrahim Kanakri, Muhammad Ahmad al-Jarad, Muhammad Ahmad Khair al-Braidy, Muhammad Ahmad al-Bush, Muhammad Turki al-Samouri, Muhammad Adnan al-Zarqan, Mustafa Abdullah al-Jarad and Ahmad Jasim Hasoun)

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<sup>1</sup> The Syrian armed opposition managed to control [Gharz prison](#) in March 2014. This prison located in Elnaymah village, south Daraa, where the Syrian government used to use it as a civilian prison which was known as "Daraa Central Prison". However after the formation of the courthouse of Hawran the prison became its main headquarter and the prison was reactivated.

<sup>2</sup> In November 2014, military and civilian bodies have announced the formation of the Hawran Courthouse, to be the only judicial body representing the judiciary in Daraa and Quneitra provinces, with the abolition of all other courts belonging to the armed factions. The formed Courthouse consists of several judges and it is currently headed by "Ismat al-Absi" and take the "Unified Arab law" as a reference in resolving the differences referred to it.

<sup>3</sup> STJ filed researcher couldn't identify the escaped prisoners who were been caught later. According to several sources from the Courthouse of Hawran, five of the escaped prisoners who were still free had gone to the areas of ISIL control in Hawd al Yarmouk, while the rest's whereabouts have not known yet.



## First: Details of a Twenty-Three Prisoners Escape from the Hawran Courthouse

The inmates managed to escape the "Gharz prison", by creating a security gap with the help of the guard shift head, where they get out through the ruined part of the prison, which was destroyed as a result of the Syrian regular forces bombardment in 2017. That was confirmed to STJ by "Ismat al-Absi", president of the Hawran Courthouse, where he said that prisoners facing charges of murder were the brains behind this escape, they are; Bilal Saeed al-Zarqan, Asaad Adnan al-Zarqan and Muhammad Adnan al-Zarqan. In this regard he continued:

**"The last prison escape is the third in the court's history, and the reasons are the same each time, where there is no response or cooperation from the Syrian armed opposition factions in Daraa to stop such incidents, that there are only a few security escorts accept to continue working, because they have not being paid for some time, as well as the significant shortfalls in their proper gear. Besides the prison's need for renovation, especially since the Syrian regime forces bombed it last year, which led to the destruction of one of its parts, knowing that the court can not afford all those requirements. The escaped prisoners were (23), 15 of whom convicted on charges of murder, and the rest charged with belonging to ISIL.**

**From the date of the escape incident to the present, (18) of the fugitives have been caught, most of whom had surrendered, because of their parents and relatives' awareness of their escape's consequences, that each of those prisoners had committed a murder and had been handed over to the court under a clan reconciliation, which previously made between the parents of the murderers and those of the victims. Therefore, there is unanimity that these killers must be kept in prison to be punished. The breach of this agreement may lead to tension in the areas where the murders have been committed, and for those accused of belonging to ISIL, their sentences ranged from six months to five years. Many of the escaped prisoners have contacted me to return to prison. Through our investigations of prisoners who have returned and surrendered themselves, it has been found that those behind the escape incident were: Bilal Saeed al-Zarqan, Asa'ad Adnan al-Zarqan and Mohammed Adnan al-Zarqan, who are charged with murder, they forced the rest of the prisoners to flee with them. For the rest of the escaped prisoners they are still hiding but they will be found and caught."**



المهجع (الاول)

م	الاسم الثلاثي	اسم الام	تاريخ التوقيف	الجرم
١	مؤيد خير الدين الجراد	فاشقة	٢٠١٧/١٤/٢٧	قتل
٢	أحمد رشيد التريدي	هند	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	قتل
٣	يونس خليل جهاوي	فاطمة	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	داعش
٤	علي بن الجراد	زكية	٢٠١٧/٨/٢٧	قتل
٥	أسعد عدنان الزرقان	فاطمة	٢٠١٧/١١/١٩	قتل
٦	إبراهيم خير الدين الجراد	عائشة	٢٠١٧/٩/٢٧	قتل
٧	بلال سعيد الزرقان	سهايم	٢٠١٧/١١/١٩	قتل
٨	فالد جمال المري	منى	٢٠١٧/١٥/٢٥	قتل
٩	شيران ياسر الجراد	عائشة	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	قتل
١٠	عبدالله نضر الحمد	غفران	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	قتل
١١	أحمد أبو السبل	صياة	٢٠١٧/٨/٢٧	داعش
١٢	عمر أحمد الكاظم	عائشة	٢٠١٧/٩/٢٧	قتل
١٣	عمر حمزة زين العابدني	إيمان	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	داعش
١٤	عمران حسين بقسيم	حمدة	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	داعش
١٥	ناصر حسين بقسيم	حمدة	٢٠١٧/٩/٢٧	داعش
١٦	قصي إبراهيم كناكري	إسراء	٢٠١٧/٥/١٨	قتل
١٧	محمد أحمد الجراد	شمة	٢٠١٧/٩/٢٧	قتل
١٨	محمد أحمد خير التريدي	سهايم	٢٠١٧/٩/٢٧	داعش
١٩	محمد أحمد البوشن	سعيدة	٢٠١٧/٩/١٧	قتل
٢٠				
٢١	محمد تركي السموعي	نادية	٢٠١٧/١١/١٧	داعش
٢٢	محمد عدنان الزرقان	فاطمة	٢٠١٧/١١/١٩	قتل
٢٣	مصطفى عبد الله الجراد	عمومة	٢٠١٧/١٠/١٧	قتل
٢٤	أحمد هاشم مسعود	نجود	٢٠١٧/١٠/٢٦	قتل
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Image shows the names of the prisoners fleeing the Courthouse on March 16, 2018.

Photo credit: [The Hawran Courthouse](#).



## Second: Action Taken by the Hawran Courthouse to Stop Flight Incidents

The Hawran Courthouse suffers from the lack of capacity to conduct judicial security proceedings, that there are many accused of abductions occurred between Daraa and As Suwayda provinces, which are located within the Syrian armed opposition controlled areas, but the court has not apprehended them yet because of the absence of an appropriate security force. The frequent escapes from the Courthouse prison required its administration to take precautionary measures to prevent similar incidents in the future. In this regard, al-Absi continued saying:

**"A request has been made to the Syrian interim government's police command and governorate council in Daraa, to assign the responsibility of guarding prison to the police service. This request has been approved since the beginning of 2018, and we are still awaiting implementation. It was also agreed to allocate (25%) of the courthouse's proceeds for the current guards, knowing that the court's revenues are barely sufficient to the food and other prison expenses, the guards number will be increased within the available capabilities. An agreement was also made with some Syrian armed opposition factions cooperating with the court, such as the Althawra Army<sup>4</sup>, to assign the responsibility of guarding the court building from outside, besides tightening the punishment against the guards who were present during the recent escape."**

## Third: Escalation of Tension in the Western Countryside of Daraa as a result of the Escape of Some Prisoners Accused of Murder

According to STJ field researcher, the majority of the "Gharz prison" fugitives who flee on March 16, 2018, are from the western countryside of Daraa. Several civil authorities had issued statements condemning the recent flight and demanding the return of the escaped prisoners to be sentenced.

On March 16, 2018, the family of "al-Jarad and Moutawe'en", descends from [Al Harah town](#) in the western countryside of Daraa, issued a statement condemning the escape of three prisoners who are (Bilal Saeed al-Zarqan, Muhammad Adnan al-Zarqan and Asa'ad Adnan al-Zarqan), especially as they were the brains behind of the jailbreak, and they are charged with the murder of "Badran Ahmad al-Jarad" who belongs to " al-Jarad and al-Moutawe'en" family which hold the Courthouse responsible for what happened and said:

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<sup>4</sup> It was formed as a result of the merger of four Syrian opposition military factions in Daraa province which are "Yarmouk Army, al-Moutaz Army, Liwa al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Hasan ibn Ali Brigade and Omar Mukhtar Brigade which joined them by the end of 2017.



"We regret the covenants and charters we have committed with the Courthouse, and we hold it responsible for any action the al-Jarad and al-Moutawe'en clan members may do if they encounter any of those escapees anywhere, especially in Al Harah town."



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بيان (٣)

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَعْمَلُونَ \* كَبُرَ مَقْعًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

نحن آل الجراد والمطاوعين في مدينة الحارة نستنكر وبشدة ما حدث في صباح يوم الجمعة ١٦/٣/٢٠١٨  
إن هذا العمل المشين بحق دار العدل هو خيانة لكل قطرة دم سالت على أرض سورية وخيانة لكل شهيد ومعتقل وخيانة لأعراض الحرائر في معتقلات النظام بعد هذا العمل المشين الذي حصل اليوم من هروب للمجرمين من سجن غرزوم بينهم ثلاثة من مرتكبي الدم بحق المغدور (بدراف أحمد الجراد)

وهم:

١- بلال سعيد الزرقان

٢- محمد عدنان الزرقان الملقب (رطو)

٣- أسعد عدنان الزرقان

ونأسف على العهود والمواثيق التي التزمنا بها مع دار العدل لذلك نحمل دار العدل مسؤولية أي تصرف تقوم به عشيرة الجرادات والمطاوعين في حال مشاهدة أحد من هؤلاء في أي مكان وخاصة في مدينة الحارة

والله من وراء القصد

حرب تاريخ ١٦/٣/٢٠١٨

Image shows the statement issued by the family of "al-Jarad and al-Moutawe'en" on March 16, 2018.

Photo credit: Activists from Al Harah town.





Armed clashes occurred between "al-Halaqi and al-Jaradat" families, in [El Aliyah village](#) next to Jasim city, on the very day that six prisoners of "al-Jaradat" family escaped, those who were convicted of murdering two youths of the "al-Halaqi" family, and had been sentenced to death. However, the other party lodged an appeal, which led to a delay in the execution of the sentence, which prompted the "al-Halaqi family" to issue a statement on March 16, 2018, in which it threatened to escalate if the prisoners did not surrender themselves.



Image shows the statement issued by "al-Halaqi" family on March 16, 2018. Photo credit: Activists from El Aliyah village.



"Muhammad Abu Abdullah", a media activist from Jasim, spoke to STJ about the repercussions of the recent escape on El Aliyah village in the western countryside of Daraa, where he said:

**“The differences between (al-Halaqi and al-Jaradat) families traced back to a long time, but they evolved last year when the two young men;” Hassan Ziad al-Halaqi and Ibrahim Khalil al-Halaqi” killed on January 9, 2017. After several days, a clan reconciliation was concluded between the two families, with the extradition of six persons from “al-Jaradat” family to the courthouse, who are “Muayad Khairuddin, Ali Hasan, Ihab Khairuddin, Shiraz Yasser, Muhammad Ahmad and Mustafa Abdullah al-Jaradat”, who participated in the killing of the two young men of al-Halaqi family.**

**However, after the prisoners escaped from the seat of the court on March 16, 2018, tension re-erupted between the two families, where several youths of al-Halaqi family blew up a house and burned others belonging to the families of the fleeing prisoners. Families of the six prisoners were forcibly displaced from the village, besides the injury of a woman from al-Halaqi as a result of the clashes. As the events progressed, several factions of the Syrian armed opposition, including the Army of Islam, intervened as interposition force. Where on March 19, 2018, the escapees surrendered themselves to the Army of Islam, and the reconciliation agreement signed between the two families was reintroduced on March 24, 2018, and it was agreed to complete the judicial sentence against the killers and to implement it in the coming days.”**