

June 2018



Unidentified Gunmen Assassinate Several Civil Defense Members in Tal Hadya, Aleppo Countryside

The incident Took Place on May 26, 2018 in Hayat Tahrir

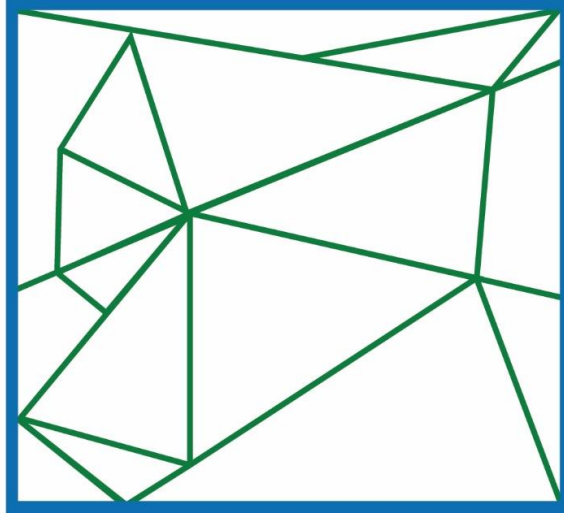
About Syrians for Truth and Justice-STJ

[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 incident Took Place on May 26, 2018 in Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-Held Areas

On May 26, 2018, an unidentified armed group carried out extrajudicial execution against several members of the Syrian Civil Defense (the White Helmets) at their center in [Tal Hadya](#) Town, southern Aleppo countryside. The operation resulted in the death of six members and injury of another, as the Syrian Civil Defense confirmed to STJ.

On June 4, 2018, Ibrahim Abu al-Laith, the media spokesperson of the Civil Defense detailed to STJ,

"At dawn on Saturday, May 26, 2018, anonymous armed group, which we failed to identify, raided the Civil Defense Centre at Tal Hadya, gathered the members, who were seven, in one room, shot them and killed **four** at the spot. Three others were injured, one of whom died half an hour later and another one died on June 3, 2018 affected by his wounds, whereas the last one survived but is still undergoing treatment. According to preliminary analysis, the cell, composed of four elements, used Russian rifles, stole a vehicle belonging to the Civil Defense and technical equipment plus communication sets. The security apparatus of the free police undertook the investigation."

الدفاع المدني السوري

تنعي مديرية الدفاع المدني في محافظة حلب الحرة 5 من متطوعيها
إرتقوا شهداء في سبيل الإنسانية إثر هجوم غادر تعرضوا له داخل
مركزهم في بلدة تلحدية في ريف حلب الجنوبي



أحمد عبد الجواد العيسوي



محمد محمود المصطفى



زكريا السعيد



راغب البكر



علي الأحمد

نسأل الله لهم القبول والغفران ولذويهم الصبر والسلوان

The Civil Defense members who were killed in an assassination operation carried out by an unidentified armed group at the center in Tal Hadya town located in the south countryside of Aleppo on May 26, 2018.

Photo credit: The Syrian Civil Defense Directorate in the Free Aleppo province.



The Syrian Civil Defense Directorate in Aleppo published a [video footage](#) showing the room in which the assassination operation took place and the signs of gunshots and bloodstains on the walls and the floor.

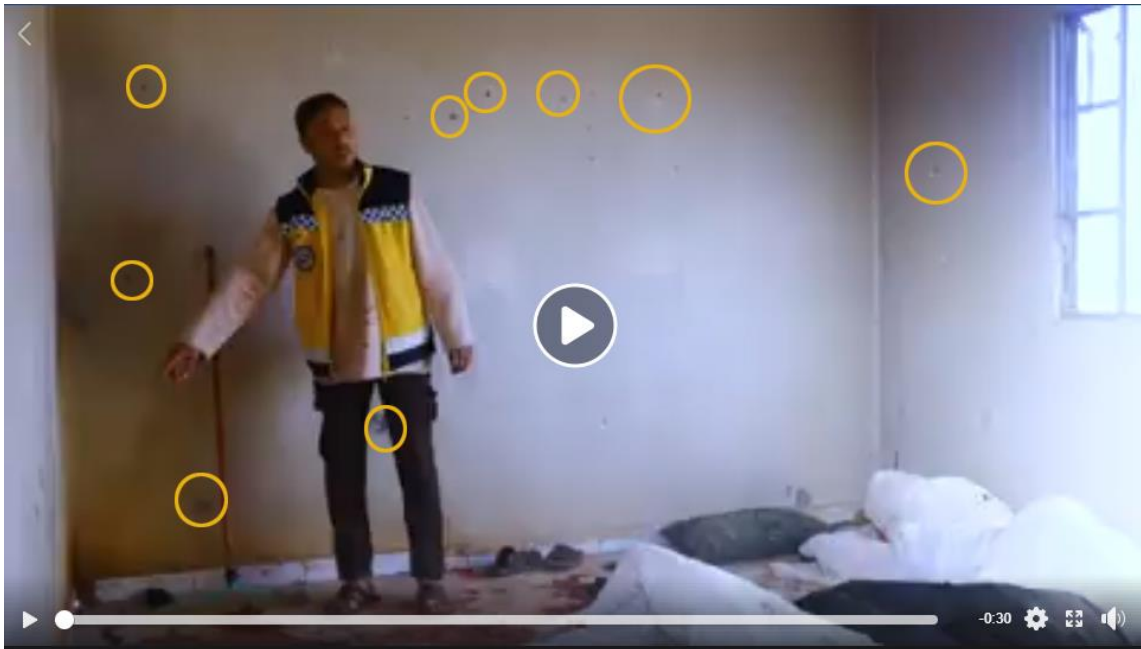


Image taken from the [video footage](#) posted by the Facebook page of [the Civil Defense Directorate in the free Aleppo province](#), and shows signs of gunshots on the walls that is normally consistent with summary executions carried out from a close distance.

For his part, Ali Haj Deebo, chairman of the Local Council of Tal Hadya, said on June 3, 2018, in an interview with STJ that the incident took place at the Civil Defense Center located in the "Cotton Research Facility", around 1300 meter from Tal Hadya and only 300 meters from [Banes](#) town; the Civil Defence members had moved there just few days before the incident after they have worked for eight months in the "Agricultural extension Facility". Ali Haj Deebo stressed that this incident was the first of its kind in the region.

On the other hand, another witness from the region who declined to disclose his identity for security purposes said to STJ on June 5, 2018, that he considered the move from the old center to the new one to be a trap by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)¹ because the assassination took place only several days pose their move. The witness added that several military checkpoints scattered in the area were withdrawn from their positions on the same day.

¹ On January 28, 2017, several jihadi factions in northern Syria announced the merger under the name Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), and the factions that declared the merger under the new name are Jabhat Fateh al-Sham – formerly al-Nusra Front, Nour al-Din Al-Zenki Movement, Liwaa al-Haq, Jabhat Ansar al-Din, Jaysh as-Sunnah and Ansar al-Sham al-Islamiyya Movement. However, against the backdrop of the recent clashes between Ahrar al-Sham Movement and HTS in the north of Syria on July 15, 2017, Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement announced its separation from HTS on July 20, 2017.

This is not the first incident against the Civil Defense members, as in a previous occasion August 12, 2017, unknown gunmen stormed a Civil Defence Centre in Sarmin town located in Idlib, killed seven members and stole the entire equipment and machinery there, as the Civil Defence stated at the time. Local activists along with residents of the town accused persons, loyal to the Syrian regime, who had sneaked from both Fatah Army-besieged towns of Kafriya and al-Fu'ah, which are only 10 km from Sarmin. Other activists accused Jund al-Aqsa² and HTS of committing the assassination.



A room at the Civil Defense Centre in Sarmin located in Idlib, following the exposure of its members to assassination operation by unidentified gunmen on August 12, 2017.

Photo credit: Smart News Agency.

² Jund al-Aqsa Organization was called "Saraya al-Quds" when it was affiliated to al-Nusra Front, but it separated from al-Nusra Front because of al-Nusra Front's hostility to the Islamic State (ISIS) organization, as fighters of Jund al-Aqsa faction say they tend to the Islamic State organization; their stronghold was in Sarmin located in Idlib. HTS launched a military operation against them after Jund al-Aqsa's incursion south of Idlib and northern Hama. The military operation ended with an agreement allowed Jund al-Aqsa to go ISIS-control areas east of Syria. Finally, it dissolved itself and was divided into three groups, the first group stopped military action and recently joined the Guardians of Religion Organization/Tanzim Hurras al-Deen, the second group joined Turkistan Islamic Party, and the last one headed to ISIS-held areas eastern Syria.



Concerning the incident of August 12, 2017, a group affiliated to "Jund al-Aqsa", which in turn work under the umbrella of the Turkistan Islamic party, declared that it had arrested the persons who carried out the assassination against the Civil Defense members and published their "confessions" as well as executed them a week later i.e. September 18, 2017. News then was published through its channel, Telegram Application, which was later closed by the application Management, and STJ was unable to verify the identity of all those executed or the course of the investigation. However, some media outlets circulated the incident and [published a footage of a father of an executed person while denouncing his son's execution](#) identified as Omar Ido. News said that Ayman Sarwati, the Forensic, was the one who had issued the fatwa to execute the son along with other convicted persons.

Furthermore, members of the Civil Defense have also been subjected to assaults in Jisr al-Shughur city, as a [Civil Defense source stated on September 21, 2017 to agencies](#), that eight armed persons seized their vehicle on the road between al-Janudiyah and Darkush, after threatening them to use weapons, adding that the armed persons spoke on behalf of HTS and drove a car carrying Damascus plate and then they went towards Darkush town.
