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سوريون  
من أجل  
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Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



## Syria: 56 Persons Arrested by the National Army in Afrin

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In June 2019, the Kurdish majority Syrian area of Afrin, held by the Turkish Army<sup>1</sup> and the National Army, affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government/National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, located north-western Aleppo province, bore witness to raids, accompanied by arrests and detentions which targeted 56 persons, including a woman. Of the arrestees, 12 were released; 9 others were transferred to central prisons in Afrin and Azaz. The fate of the rest had not yet been known at the time of writing this report - June 4, 2019. The area also suffered a few money and jewellery thefts, which corresponded to the raids and arrests, as reported by the field researchers of Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ.

STJ's field researchers, spreading in five of Afrin's cities and villages, documented the names of the persons held captive during the raids and arrest campaigns in June 2019. They also said that the Civil Police<sup>2</sup>, backed by a group of Turkish forces and the Military Police, as well as the Hamza/Hamzat Division<sup>3</sup>, the Political Security Branch and al-Waqqas Brigade<sup>4</sup>, were responsible for these campaigns.

One of the released persons, who was detained in the Maratah Prison, named after the [village](#) where it is located, described the conditions of his arrest:

**“During the investigation, we were beaten and tortured, not to mention the insults and humiliations. The investigation was a thorough one; it covered all that we had done through life, since birth to the present moment. Most of the questions focused on our role under the Protection Units, the sort of affiliation we had with it, and also our relations with the Syrian regime. In the prison, we were forced to perform the five prayers.”**

<sup>1</sup> In the report it published on August 2, 2018, Amnesty International described the Turkish presence in the Syrian city of Afrin as a “military occupation.” For further details refer to the following: “Syria: Turkey must stop serious violations by allied groups and its own forces in Afrin,” Amnesty International. August 2, 2018. Last visited: July 5, 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/08/syria-turkey-must-stop-serious-violations-by-allied-groups-and-its-own-forces-in-afrin/>.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes it is referred to as the National Police or the Police Force and Public Security in Afrin. Formed by Turkey, its personnel were trained inside Turkey; its general command, however, was entrusted to General Abdulrazzaq Asslan al-Laz. For his part, Lieutenant Colonel Rami Tlass/Abu Youssef was assigned the commander of the Free Police in Afrin. Born in al-Rastan area, rural Homs, Tlass used to operate under one of the opposition's armed groups in Eastern Ghouta, prior to the Syrian regular forces' control of it.

<sup>3</sup> One of the military formations of the opposition's armed groups that participated in Operation Olive Branch, which the Turkish army spearheaded along with Syrian opposition armed groups. The body is headed by Lieutenant Sayif Abu Baker and the Hamza/Hamzat Division, functioning under the National Army Brigade/Second Legion, which is affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government/National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. This division was founded in April 2016, after the integration of the following military bodies: The Hamza Legion, Dhi Qar Legion, Ra'aed al-Shaml/Thunder of the North Legion, Marea al-Sumood/Marea of Steadfastness Legion and the Special Task Legion, according to a statement published on April 24, 2016. The body was officially named the Hamza Division-Special Forces.

<sup>4</sup> One of the opposition's armed groups, affiliated with the National Army, the First Legion-13th Division-Brigade 133.

## 1. Arrests in Ma'abatli District:

On June 14, 2019, the Civil Police initiated a raid and arrest campaign against the village of [Awlad Arab/Arabou](#), on which it arrested: **Rasheed Habsho, Ibrahim Khalil, Firas Habash, Mohammad Habash, Ali Mohammad, Mustafa Youssef, Mohammad Nour, Said Jammki, Nassrat Entabi and A'aref Mustafa.**

On June 29, 2019, the Civil Police has also conducted an arrest camping in the village of Ma'abatli/Mubata, arresting **Izzat Shevan, Farhat Hmmaj, Hussain Shaikh Breem, Mohammad Ali Ramu, Khabat Baker, Jwan Khujah, Mustafa Khujah, Mohammad Shaikho, Ezzeddin Zainah, Ali Jujak, Shukri Mousa, Hassan Shaikho and Mustafa A'ajoulah.**

The majority of the arrestees, according to STJ's field researcher, were transferred to a prison in the village of Maratah, where arrestees are usually released after paying a fine.

## 2. Arrests in Sharran District:

On June 10, 2019, the Civil Police, accompanied by Turkish forces, conducted an arrest campaign in the village of [al-Duha/Metina](#), under which three men and a woman were arrested to be released only two days later, STJ's field researcher reported.

The arrestees are **Farhad Haj Abdo, Issam Abdulhannan Omar, Rasheed Sido and Mrs. Faidan Hussain, the head of the Komin(Commune)/local administration in the village.**

## 3. Arrests in Afrin District:

On June 21, 2019, The Hamza/Hamzat Division, along with the Military Police, has conducted a raid and arrest campaign in the [Kefer Zita village](#), arresting 12 persons, including a child. STJ field researcher quoted several of the village's people, who bore witness to the raid, saying that the personnel of the Military Police have stolen/seized a motorcycle, a car, cellphones and sums of money amounting to 200 thousand Syrian Pounds, while they beat and verbally insulted the people during the inspections.

STJ's field researcher documented the arrest of several persons on the charge of belonging to "Protection Units-affiliated sleeper cells", who have all been transferred to the Azaz Central Prison. The arrestees are **Mohammad Abdo Farid, who was beaten and tortured, Wardeen Ahmad Mohammad, Bashar Mohammad Suleiman, Adnan Abdo Abdo, Ali Mohamad Klah Khairy and Mohammad Hassan Suleiman.**

**Abdo Mahmoud Abdo and the child Ibrahim Zuhair Mohammad (the 15 years old son of the Mukhtar<sup>5</sup>).** None of them had yet been released at the time of writing this report.

In addition to the above mentioned, the following were also arrested: **Ali Klah Khairy, Bashar Mohammad Suleiman, Omar Mohammad Suleiman, Khalil Hassan Abdo, Zuhair Aziz Mohammad (the Mukhtar), and Khairo Hassan Suleiman;** however, they were all released five days into their detention.

In the [village of Tellef](#), which houses about 10 families only, as the Turkish forces prevent the people's return to their homes for having established a military base there, the Hamza/Hamzat Division, accompanied by a group of the Military Police, conducted a raid on June 21, 2019, in the village and arrested the young man **Dejuar Haj Khalil**, for they found a military outfit of the People's Protection Units in the place where he resides. Quoting one of the village's people, STJ's field researcher reported that the young man is a shepherd and his house is originally located near the Military Base, the reason why he was prevented from living there and was forced to reside in another, based in the village's vicinity. The latter house belongs to one of the Units' personnel, who left the area, leaving their personal belongings behind. Upon raiding the house, the military outfit and other possessions were found, causing the arrest of **Dejuar**.

In the **city of Afrin**, on June 25, 2019, the Political Security arrested the young man **A'aref Hamou** for unidentified reasons and released him a week later, according to STJ's field researcher.

#### 4. Arrests in Jindires District:

On June 21, 2019, the [village of Kefer Dali](#) suffered a raid and arrest campaign at night, undertaken by the Hamza/Hamzat Division, along with a group of the Military Police. During the incident, five persons were arrested and the Mukhtar's car, a Pickup, was confiscated.

STJ's field researcher documented the names of the arrestees as thus: **Mustafa Abdullqader, the village's Mukhtar, Omar Abdulrahman Khelo, Mustafa Abdulrahman Khelo, Abdulrahman Abdullqader and Jaman Bin Hussain Hamakli.**

On the same day, the **Kafr Dalī al Fawqānī village** witnessed a raid and arrest campaign by the Hamza/Hamzat Division and a group of the Military Police, which ended with the arrest of two men; **Shukri Mohammad Mustafa and Shukri Walid Isso**, in addition to the theft/seizure of six cellphones, a sum of money estimated at about 900 thousand Syrian pounds and some jewellery (bracelets and other belongings), STJ's field researcher reported, quoting several of the village's people.

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<sup>5</sup> Governor of a village.

## 5. Arrests in Shaykh Hadid District:

For a whole week, the **village of Senarê**, reported STJ's field researcher, was a target for several arrest campaigns, which started on the 5th and ended on the 9th of June 2019. The campaigns were carried out by the al-Waqqas Brigade, alongside the Civil Police.

A number of the area's residents told STJ's field researcher that the Civil Police has arrested **Zakarya Hassan Mustafa**, who worked as a forest ranger during the Autonomous Administration's control of the area, and **Abdo Mohammad Khelo**, who was a conscript in the ranks of the Protection Units. The two young men were transported to the city of Afrin, where investigation was to be continued.

In sync, the al-Waqqas Brigade has arrested both **Zakaray Mohammad Makmilo** and **Koleen Amrou** and released them on June 14, 2019. The brigade has also arrested **A'aref Shaikh Mohammad** and **Mohammad Hannan Alo** and let them go one day from their detention.

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## History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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