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## Sixty-three arrests in Afrin during July 2019

Fourteen villages and towns in Afrin witnessed increased arrests in July compared to the 64 made in June

## **63 arrests in Afrin during July 2019**

*14 villages and towns in Afrin witnessed increased arrests in July compared to the 64 made in June*

The last July saw a surge in the number of arrests, compared to the previous month, in the Kurdish majority Syrian city of Afrin, under the control of the Turkish Army and the National Army of the Syrian Interim Government/ the Syrian National Coalition of the opposition.<sup>1</sup> 63 people were arrested from 14 villages and towns, but only 12 released, while some transferred to central prisons in the cities of Afrin and Azaz and the rest are still unaccounted for.

According to STJ field researchers in more than five districts and towns in the Afrin region, the Civilian Police,<sup>2</sup> supported by Turkish forces, was responsible for the greatest number of arrests, while the rest were conducted by the Military Police along with the groups of Liwa Sultan Mehmed Fatih brigade, the Levant Front, al Waqqas Brigade and the Sultan Murad Division.<sup>3</sup>

STJ field researchers reported that the arrests were arbitrary and did not respect due process. Besides, neither the arrested nor their families were given oral or written notifications of reasons for the arrests.

STJ documented 56 arrests, at the very least, in June 2019, carried out by National Army affiliated groups along with the Turkish forces, the Civilian Police and the Military Police.<sup>4</sup> In addition, 13 kidnappings were carried out by unknown parties in the same area since the beginning of 2019 until the end of July of the same year<sup>5</sup>.

## I. Arrests in Sharran/Şera area

In July 2019, 25 arrests took place in four villages of the Sharran area:

- In the village of **Zaitounak/Zêtûnekê**:

As reported by a local, members of the Military Police arrested nine people on charges of collaborating with the Autonomous Administration on July 17, 2019. According to relatives of the arrested, the Military Police requested fines of up to SP.150,000 in exchange for the release of each. However, only three of the arrested were released, while the rest were transferred to Afrin.

<sup>1</sup> In a report released on August 2, 2018, Amnesty International described the Turkish presence in the Syria's Afrin as an 'occupation'. See: "Syria: Turkey must stop serious violations by allied groups and its own forces in Afrin", Amnesty International, August 2, 2018. <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> Also known as the "National Police" or "the Police and Public Security Forces in Afrin". It was formed by the Turkish government who trained its personnel on its territory. The General Command of the body was assigned to the Major General Abdul Razak Aslan Alaz, while Lt. Col. Rami Tlass / Abu Yusuf was appointed as a commander of the Free Police in Afrin. The latter comes from the Rastan area in Homs suburbs and was a member of one of the opposition's military formations, who had fought in Eastern Ghouta before the Syrian regime forces took control of it, supported directly by Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Al Waqqas Brigade is an armed opposition group, affiliated to the National Army, 1st Corps - 13th Division - 133rd Brigade.

<sup>4</sup> "Syria: 56 Persons Arrested by the "National Army" in Afrin", STJ, July 4, 2019 <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-56-persons-arrested-by-the-national-army-in-afrin/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Syria: At Least 13 Kidnappings Recorded Recently in Afrin", STJ, July 25, 2019 <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-at-least-13-kidnappings-recorded-recently-in-afrin/>.

They arrested were: Mahmoud Hajo, who is the head of the village (mukhtar), Ali Hajo, Khalil Horo, Ali Horo, Ismail bin Mohammed Ali Hamdan and Hussein Hamdan. Suleiman Qara Mohammad, Akid Horo and Mazkin Haj Ahmed were the released.

- In the village of **Dikmedash/ Dikmedaş:**

At 6 am on July 9, 2019, the Civilian Police along with the Turkish forces raided the village of Dikmedash and arrested three people, identified as; Hanif Fahmi Mohammed, Mustafa Ibrahim Basha and Juan Walid Horo, on charges of previous dealings with the Autonomous administration, as reported by the STJ field researcher.

Further, on July 18, 2019 a patrol of the Civilian Police and Turkish forces launched another raid, arresting Yousif Hanif/Hanifi,65, Luqman Fahmi Mohammad, 40, Kareem Ali Jouma'a, 40, Abdul Hameed Hameed Hamza, 38, Ahmed Hasan Aref, 55 and Riad Ali Jouma'a, 25, who had been detained previously for six months on charges of serving in the ranks of the Self-Defense Forces of the Autonomous Administration. He was released recently, however, after paying a large fine.

- In **Qirt Qilaq** village:

Shibab Moushu Bin Minan was arrested from the village by the Sultan Murad Division on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and then transferred to Azaz Central Prison, as reported by one of his friends. Earlier in June 29, the Division arrested three young men, who were later released, after paying fines, on July 20. The arrested were; Masoud Musalam, arrested twice by the Division and paid SP.250.000. Sha'aban Rashow, arrested by the Military Police and paid SP.100,000 and Murad Musalam.

- In **Ma'araskeh/Mereskê** village:

A local said that the village is under the control of the Levant Front, which recently have withdrawn its members, who were from the village of Marimeen, from Ma'araskeh and replaced them by others came from the village of Maraanaz.

On July 17, 2019 the Levant Front arrested Mustafa Khalil, 50, and his 24-year-old son on charges of former serving in the ranks of the Self-Defense Forces. The son was released at midnight on the same day after being severely tortured, while the father released on July 21, after being tortured also, as STJ was informed by eyewitnesses and reliable sources.

The father and son were arrested again at 3.00 am on July 23 from their home in the village, and transferred to the headquarters of the Levant Front in Afrin. The young man Ahmed Bashir Khalil was also arrested from the village on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July and released on its 15<sup>th</sup>.

## II. Arrests in Raju/ Reco district

Two villages in Raju district witnessed 9 arrests, seven of which were carried out by the Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade. The arrests were as follows:

In the village of **Ma'amala**, on July 13, members of the Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade arrested three people from their homes in the village, on charges of communicating with a family loyal to the People's Protection Units (YPG) and for moving the furniture and other stuff to from homes of other families to theirs under the pretext of preserving them.

The arrested were identified as: Jamil Refaat Jafar, Khalil Ismail Hakim and Ibrahim Ibrahim Zohni. They were all released after two days, according to a village resident.

On 26 July, the same Brigade arrested four people on the basis of being witnesses of a marriage, which bride turned out to be still married to another man but fled his home.

The detainees are: the cleric / Imam of the mosque named "Abu Amin" and Mustafa Zainki and Izzat Kurdi and Najib Kurdi, 15 years, and their fate is still unknown.

In the village of **Ba'dinli**: a local reported that the brothers Hamoud and Rachid Khallou were arrested on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, but provided no further details on the conditions of detention or who conducted it.

## III. Arrests in Bulbul/ Bilbile district

STJ field researcher quoted a civilian in the village of **Ali Karu** saying that the Civilian Police, supported by the Turkish forces, arrested eight people, two of whom were later released. The witness gave no further details on the date of arrests, or the charges they based on.

The arrested were: Nuri Muhammad, the head of the village (mukhtar), Muhammad Muhammad ibn Adnan and Izzat Jabu, Muhammad Hussein ibn Khalil, Muhammad Hussein ibn Rashid, Jamil Muhammad ibn Muhammad Said, Khalil Hussein ibn 'Abd al-Rahman and Mas'ud Muhammad ibn' Abd al-Rahman. Nuri Muhammad and 'Izzat Jabu were later released.

## IV. Arrests in Maabatli/ Mabeta

Two villages in Maabatli district witnessed eight arrests, six of which were carried out by the Civilian Police Service supported by the Turkish forces. The arrests were as follows:

In the village of **Mirkan/Hasa**, a resident said that on July 11, 2019, the Civilian Police and the Turkish forces along with a group of the Levant Front stormed into several houses in the village to search for people accused of collaborating with the Autonomous Administration. Six people were arrested that day; Ojalan Aliko, a former member of the Asayish (the police and internal security forces), Shukri Dawood, a former Asayish member who was previously arrested and imprisoned in the prison of Al-Rai city for about a year, Suleiman Dawood a former member of Asayish, and Taher Na'so, who was a candidate for the post of the mayor during the Autonomous Administration's control.

On July 13, the Levant Front arrested Mustafa Hussein and Yasin Taher Abdo, who both were former members of the Asayish.

In the village of **Baremjeh/ Brîmce** Khalil Uthman and Ahmad Bunni were arrested on July 30<sup>th</sup>, but no details provided about the perpetrator.

## V. Arrests in the city of Afrin

STJ field researcher in Afrin city reported that members of the Levant Front and the Military Police arrested five people, three of whom are engineers working at the city's local council.

The field researcher spoke to a relative of the Nouredine Mustafa Youssef, who was arrested on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, by the Levant Front and later transferred to the city of Azaz. The witness said:

**"Nouredine hails from the village of Ba'dinli, married with three children. He used to work as a hairdresser before the opposition's control over the village, and then he took a job at a money transfer office. He was arrested by members of the Levant Front from his work place, on charges of cooperating with the YPG and transferring money to people responsible for carrying out bombings in the area. Members of the al-Mu'tasim Billah Brigade had arrested him previously in May and released him shortly after. I must point out that one of the al-Mu'tasim Billah Brigade members who arrested him first is a brother of the Levant Front member who arrested him in the second time. We believe it was for a fine as usual, but he was, however, transferred to Azaz and handed over to the Turkish forces, so none of the two groups could ask for a fine. "**

In a separate incident, the Military Police raided the headquarters of the local council of Afrin on July 24 and arrested the engineer, Khushnaf Hammu, the head of the engineers' room, for unknown reasons.

On July 28, the Military Police also stormed the local council building again and arrested the two engineers Zakaria Ali and Ahmed Mukhtar while doing their work. They were taken to the former Military Police headquarters (the commercial school in the city), and still held there.

A friend of the engineers suggested the arrest to be a result of the major dispute which had erupted between members of the Afrin Engineers' Room and those of the Association of Liberated Syrian Engineers, Aleppo Branch. As the latter used its relations with the military forces in power to arrest the three engineers.

STJ field researcher reported the arrest of Jamal Nidal, on July 30, providing no further details.

## VI. Arrests in Shaykh Al Hadid district

In the **Anqalah** village, a local confirmed that, the al-Waqqas Brigade arrested Kamal Shukri from his home in the village, for unknown reasons, on July 20, and transferred him to the central prison in Ma'ratah. The next day, July 21, Muhammad Shukri was also arrested by the same Brigade and transferred to the same prison.

In the village of **Marwaniya**, a local told STJ field researcher that Khalil Damerji, Khushnaf Mohammed and Marwan al-Sayyed were arrested, without mentioning any details about the perpetrators.

## VII. Arrests in Jindires district

In the village of Ramadiya, STJ field researcher spoke to a local who said that two young men voluntarily surrendered themselves to the Civilian Police for fear of torture in case they were arrested, as they had joined the self-defense forces of the Autonomous Administration. The two young men were transferred to the civilian police prison in the village of Jindires and still held there since July 13.

In the village of Jindires a resident reported that the Civilian Police arrested the young Mohamed Aibo from his home on 15 July.

According to a local, the man arrested used to serve in one of the Autonomous Administration's civil institutions, and now he is in one of Jindires prisons and had been tortured severely, as reported by reliable sources.

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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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