

August 2019



**Gendarmerie Offences: 7 killed,
17 injured in Ras al-Ayn,
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The present summary report counts casualties fell during 2018 and first half of 2019

The STJ statistics on the crimes committed by the Turkish border guards (Gendarmerie) against asylum seekers in Syria's Ras al-Ayn/ Sari Kani city alone, during the first half of 2019, has documented, at the very least, the kill of a man and a woman and the injury of six civilians, including three children and two women, along the border wall while attempting to access into Turkey illegally.

Earlier, in 2018, in the same city, STJ documented a similar incident of the kill of at least three young men and the injury of three others by the Gendarmerie gunshots, while trying to enter Turkey illegally with the aim to seek asylum. The Gendarmerie even open fire without scruples at innocent people while going about their daily business, killing a child and a young man and injuring other three children and four youths in the area near the Syria-Turkey border, specifically in the city of Ras al-Ayn, during 2018.

I. Asylum seekers fell as attempting to cross the Turkish border illegally in 2019:

On February 25, 2019, a group of eight people, including three children and three women, from the village of al-Matleh in Ras al-Ayn, came under the direct fire of the Gendarmerie, as trying to cross into Turkey illegally from the eastern village of al-Arada, with a hope to seeking refuge.

A woman, 25, who was with the group, detailed STJ about the incident-but ask anonymity-saying:

"We cut a deal with a smuggler to Turkey. He is called Hisham and hails from the village of al-Arada in Ras al-Ayn. We were eight people, with an old man around 70. We left the village of al-Matleh at 8.00pm on February 25, 2019 towards the smuggler's village. I was with my mother-in-law when she told the smuggler that she would not go on the journey if the passage was not safe. The smuggler Hisham assured her that the Gendarmerie will never shoot if we arrived before 10.00pm as they knew we were coming. We started heading along the border on foot. We walked for more than an hour through an area- I don't know the name of it. The elderly man got tired, while the smuggler was asking us to hurry. However, the Turkish border guard spotted us, when we came near a little river, and they started shooting. We were afraid and wanted to get back, but the smuggler yelled "it is just warning shots" and that the route was safe and they would not target us. We continue down the road and passed the town of Abu Raseen/Zarkan, until we got off the border wall. The smuggler said that he would only get us to the bridge, which is 200 meters from the border wall. There, the smuggler asked us, women, to walk ahead of the men, but I refused to do so."

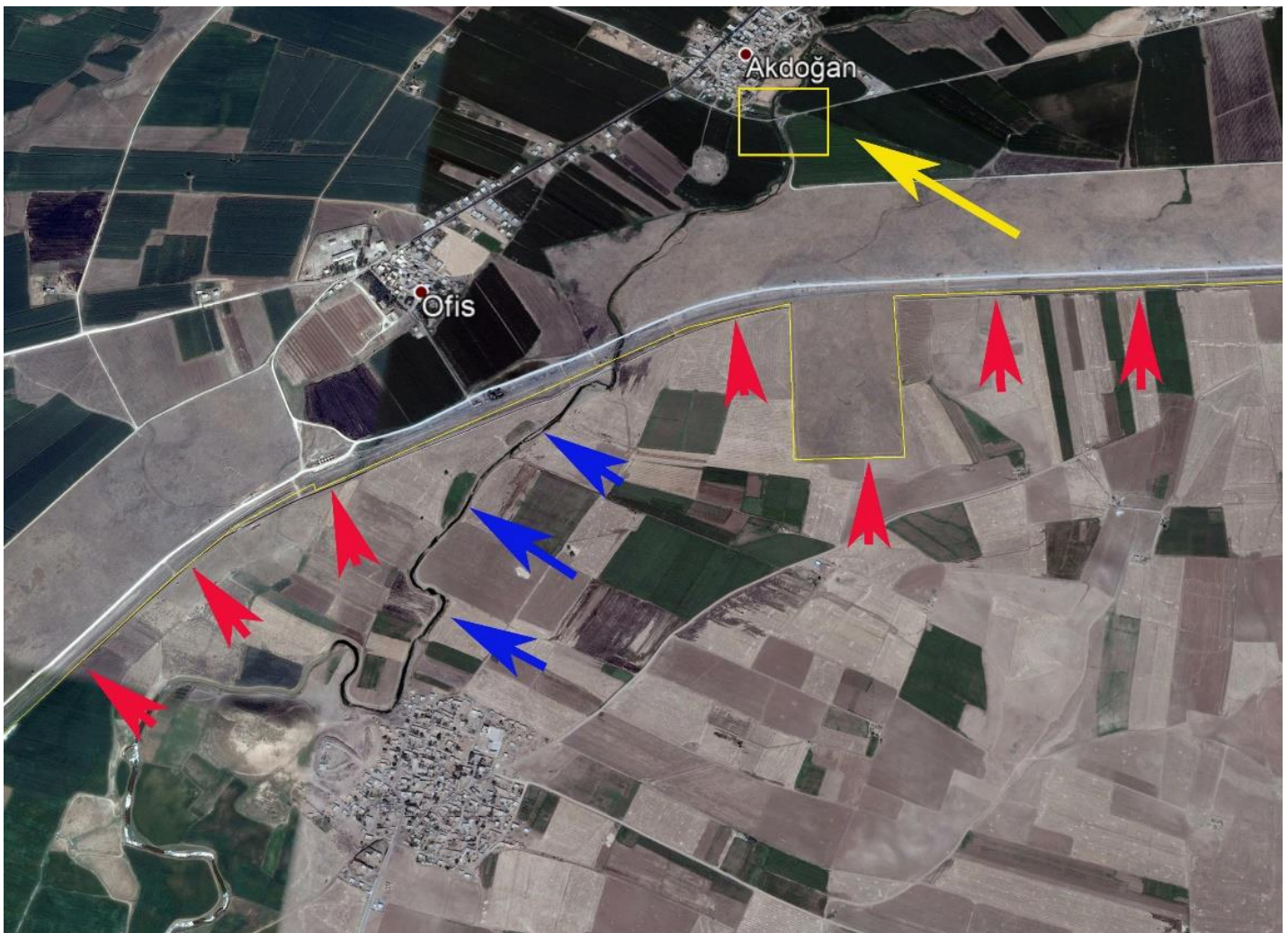
The witness added:

“When we start moving again, the bullets began to rain on us for about half an hour. When the Gendarmerie shine the light on us, I saw my mother-in-law dead on the ground, as a bullet hit her in the head. She was ten meters away from me and my children were standing beside her with the light of snipers shed on them, but they did not been shot. I was injured, but tried to stand up to get to my children, but the sniper hit me again on my right shoulder and I fell to the ground. I called my children to come to me. I took them and managed to crawl back to the river, and so we survived. On the other side of the river there was a bunch of people, among them were friends of the smuggler. They came and took me. The smuggler, along with two young men, managed to escape, while my mother-in-law and the elderly man were fatally shot, and the latter’s wife lost her eye and his daughter injured. We, the wounded, were taken to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn, where I stayed for two days, having severe bleeding.”

According to the witness, the smuggler denied the whole thing when questioned by the Asayish forces. Her family, however, filed a suit against him and he was subsequently imprisoned.



A satellite image illustrates the scene of the attack at the Syria–Turkey barrier.



A satellite image illustrates the route followed by the group. The yellow arrow points the bridge site, while the arrows in red point the Turkey-Syria barrier and the blue arrows point the little river.

The child, 14-year-old, told STJ about what had happened and how he was permanently injured in his hand by the Turkish Gendarmerie gunshots in the same incident. He said:

“When the border guards opened fire at us, my uncle killed at once, while me and my aunt were badly wounded. Four bullets hit my left arm, and left me totally unable to move it. I started running towards the valley that was behind us. The smuggler was nowhere; he escaped with others. I walked up a hill and then passed through an olive grove and reached the Ras al-Ayn-Ad Darbasiyah highway. There, the smuggler passed by in a minibus and pick me up. After passing an Asayish checkpoint, however, he wanted to drop me at a gas station, but a man there-whom I can’t identify- threatened to kill him if he didn’t take me to hospital. So, the smuggler took me to his father’s house and called my uncle who came and took me to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn.”

Regarding the rescue of the injured and the drag of the victims' bodies from near the border, STJ spoke to Y.H., a relative of one of the victims, who recounted:

"It was after midnight when we learned about the incident. We head down there immediately. The Gendarmerie was shooting and shining light on every one tried to approach the area, where bodies of the woman and the elderly man were. Since it was dark, we couldn't see the bodies, but when dawn came, we managed to locate and drag them. They were 20 meters away from the river. We learned that there were other casualties, among them was a woman who lost her eye and another who went paralyzed." (the witness preferred to conceal the identity of victims).

II. Asylum seekers fell as attempting to cross the Turkish border illegally in 2018:

STJ field researcher confirmed that a 33-years-old Iraqi refugee, from the city of Mosul, was among those injured by the Turkish Gendarmerie for being caught trying to access into Turkey illegally. He was severely beaten by the Gendarmerie near the bordering village of Tall Khinzir, in the suburbs of Ras al-Ayn, on February 28, 2018. Knowing that he came there, after he had escaped ISIL in the city of Deir ez-Zur.

On April 13, 2018, three family related men attempted to cross the border into Turkey illegally, namely: Abdulkarim Kh, 18, Hamid S., 21, and Zayed M., 22. They came from a village around the Mabrouka town in the western suburbs of Ras al-Ayn. They tried to cross into Turkey from the bordering point of Talkalakh in the village of Abu al-Soun, western Ras al-Ayn, but they were caught and two of them shot dead as a result, according to the only survivor, Abdul Karim, who recalled:

"We climbed over the wall using a ladder and crossed the border. But the Gendarmerie rushed toward us raising their rifles. They were about 20 or so. They started beating us severely with batons and riffles' stocks. One of them was using a stick, more solid than that of oak, and beat us with all his strength. I was almost fainted due to heavy beating. However, I managed to escape them and barley walked towards the wall and re-crossed it to Syria and then collapsed on the floor unable to move. I stayed fainted till dawn. When I opened my eyes, I saw some strangers around me, I asked them about my friends and they told me that they still stuck in the hands of Gendarmerie, almost dead, and said that they would take me to hospital."



Marks of torture on the body of Abdul Karim F., inflicted on him by the Gendarmerie after being caught trying to access into Turkey illegally on Friday April 13, 2018. Photo credit: STJ.

Zahir S., 40, the elder brother of the victim, Hamid S., said that his brother was a newlywed and that his cousin, Zayed M., had two children and his wife was four months pregnant. He told STJ about the troubles and difficulties they suffered in finding the bodies of the victims, saying:

“My brother attempted to cross into Turkey with the aim of finding a job. Two of my cousins were with him. Indeed, they crossed the border but the Turkish Gendarmerie were ready for them. They severely beat and torture my brother and cousins before they threw them back to Syrian territories. As a result, two of them were died and the other was taken to hospital. On Saturday April 14, 2018, we found the body of my cousin near the borders. And on Sunday April 15, 2018, we found that of my 21-year-old brother who was only trying to find a job to support his family.”



The victim Hamid S. who died of torture inflicted on him by the Turkish Gendarmerie on Friday, April 13, 2018. Photo credit: STJ.



The victim Zayed M., who died of severe torture inflicted on him by the Turkish Gendarmerie on Friday, April 13, 2018. Photo credit: the archive of Roj Hospital.

In a separate incident, people of the village al-Udwanian in Ras al-Ayn suburbs found a body of man near the Turkey-Syria borders on Wednesday April 18, 2018. It was clear that the victim was died of torture inflicted on him by the Turkish Gendarmerie some time earlier. Delawar M. A. the information officer at Roj Hospital stated that the victim died of his wounds, which were caused by the torture he was subjected to, estimated in early April 2018. He spoke to STJ saying:

“Some locals brought the body here after finding it near the Turkey-Syria border. The forensic doctor who examined the body, estimated the date of death to be early April 2018, and said it was caused by severe beat with sticks and iron bars. Family of the victim identified the body, which, as the confirmed, was for a 21-year-old man named Mohammed A.A. from a village around the Ain Issa district in the province of Raqqah.”

The victim's brother said that the family had lost contact with their son since April 2, 2018, and in this regard, he went on to say:

“My brother failed to find a job here, so he decided to cross borders into Turkey, maybe he could get an opportunity there. He had no other choice, since he was the sole breadwinner for his wife and children. On April 2, 2018 he took his bag and rushed out, saying he found a safe route to Turkey. Since then, we never heard from him, though calling him many times. We informed the Asayish forces of the Autonomous Administration about my brother's disappear, and after 16 days, they called, and asked us to come to Raj Hospital to identify a body found by same locals near the border. Unfortunately, it was my brother's.”

On Friday May 4, 2018, Abdulqader Q., 39, a resident of Aleppo was seriously injured as a result of being beaten by the Turkish Gendarmerie while attempting to cross the border into Turkey illegally near the village of Nis Tell in Ras al-Ayn western suburbs. He narrated to STJ how he narrowly escaped death. He said:

“At dawn on Friday, May 4, 2018, I tried to cross the border into Turkey illegally aiming at seeking job there, as the economic situation is desperate here. However, I was caught by the Turkish border guards the minute I climbed the wall. They started beating me violently with iron bars and thick sticks. I felt like I was about to die, so I pretended to pass out, and they believed that, since I was covered with blood, and threw me over the wall to the Syrian side. I tried to ask for help but never could. The Asayish forces found me, however, and took me to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn. Doctors there gave me the emergency treatment and stayed the whole night curing my wounds. It's thanks to them that I'm out of danger.”

III. The Gendarmerie randomly attacked innocent victims who were going about their daily business:

The city of Ras al-Ayn/ Sari Kani in the province of al-Hasakah north east Syria, has seen the kill of, at least, two people and the injury of seven while going about their daily business in the areas near the Turkey-Syria border since the beginning of 2018 until its October.

1- Gendarmerie bullets killed and wounded civilians, including children, during the early months of 2018

- On June 29, 2018 the child Ibrahim B., 17, from the village of Ein al-Hisan south Ras al-Ayn, received a bullet in the head, while on his way to work in the Northern neighborhood of al-Mahatta in Ras al-Ayn, near the Turkey-Syria border. Despite being hospitalized, Ibrahim died, since the bullet went through his head causing him severe wounds.
- On February 14, 2018 the child Bashar Th., 10, hit by a bullet fired by the Gendarmerie while he was playing near his home in the Northern neighborhood of al-Mahatta in Ras al-Ayn. Bashar was wounded in the neck and was taken to the General Peace Hospital in Ras al-Ayn and then transferred to hospitals in the city of [Qamishli/Qamisho](#), where he stayed for thirty days until he recovered, as reported by STJ field researcher.
- On March 18, 2018, Abdul Karim N., 11, was also shot by the Turkish Gendarmerie when he was playing in front of his house in the Northern neighborhood of al-Mahatta in Ras al-Ayn. He was admitted to the Modern Medicine Hospital in the city, where he stayed until his condition stabilized.
- In less than 24 hours, specifically on Monday morning of March 19, 2018, the Turkish Gendarmerie shot dead Ahmed A., 27, from the village of Kishtu in Ras al-Ayn suburbs, as he was at his work place in a cement blocks factory. He transferred as a result to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn. Delawar M. A. the information officer at Roj Hospital confirmed that:

“The victim used to work in a factory near the Turkey-Syria border. He received a bullet in his chest which caused him serious wounds led to his death despite being hospitalized.”

- On April 10, 2018, the 30-year-old man Obaid A., a displaced person from the city of [Al-Safirah](#), southeast of Aleppo, was shot by the Turkish Gendarmerie while pursuing his work as a farmer in the village of Abu al-Soun In this regard, he spoke to STJ saying:

“At about 11:30 that morning, while I was watering the vegetable grove in the farmland I work in, near the Turkey-Syria border and in the village of Abu al-Soun, I felt something pierced through my body and heard a gunshot at the same moment. Though there were no movements in the area, quite calm. I didn’t lose conscious and tried to stand up, but I heard again a sound of bullets for me, so I lay down and phoned a friend, who works in a nearby farm and asked him for help and then I fainted. I woke up on a bed at the Modern Medicine Hospital in Ras al-Ayn, where my friend had transferred me with the help of the Asayish forces stationed in the village of [Mabrouka](#). The doctor at the hospital told me that the bullet hit my lower back, but they pulled it out and treated my wounds. Thankfully, I have survived.”

2- People continue to fall victims to Gendarmerie fire during July and August and September 2018

On July 25, 2018, Musa A.A. and Ali N.A. were shot by the Turkish Gendarmerie forces and got sustained injuries of varying severity, while they were near the Syria-Turkey border in the city of Ras al-Ayn. STJ field researcher reported that the two wounded men are from the province of al-Hasakah and work in distributing chicken meat by a car. They were injured while transporting a load of chicken meat to a shop near the Ara farm, which is located north of the city, adjacent to the border. They were taken to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn and then transferred to hospitals in [al-Hasakah](#), until their condition stabilized.

On August 18, 2018, Ahmad B., 35, was wounded by Turkish gunfire while he was in front of his house in the northern al-Mahatta neighborhood, adjacent to the Syrian-Turkish border in Ras al-Ayn. According to STJ field researcher, Ahmed was wounded in the lower back and was taken to the Roj Hospital in the city, where he was treated until his condition stabilized.

On September 17, 2018 the child Hamza SH. H., 17, shot by the Turkish Gendarmerie while working in his field in the village of al-Asadiyah in Ras al-Ayn city, al-Hasakah.

“At about 1.00pm, I was watering the cotton field in our agricultural land, which is located near the village road close to the Turkey-Syria border, when my cousin and friends came to visit me. I took a break and we all sat around talking. When I get up to continue my work, a bullet hit me. I fell down, for it caused me severe pain. My cousin and friends tried to reach me, but the Gendarmerie fired towards them, so they had to hide. They called for the Asayish forces, who hastened to rescue me. They dragged me from inside the field and took me to Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn.”

The bullet hit the child Hamza around his genital and settled in the abdomen, causing him injuries in the ureter and kidney, so he underwent surgery in which the bullet was extracted

and his wounds treated, and his condition got stabilized, as reported by STJ field researcher.

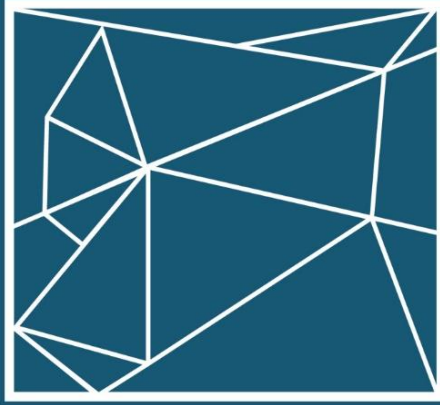


Hamza, while receiving treatment in Roj Hospital in Ras al-Ayn on September 18, 2018. Photo credit: STJ.

STJ had earlier prepared a report on the death of a displaced woman and the injury of her child in Kafr Lousin camp, being shot directly by the Turkish border guards on June 11, 2019. It also reports the beat and torture of 21 Syrians, including 12 women and 3 media activists by the Turkish border guards, as attempting to cross into Turkey illegally. The same report cites the deportation of 18 refugees, among them one media activist, after being caught trying to enter the Greek territory through smuggling routes, on May 28 2019.¹

¹ "Turkish Gendarmerie Gun Down a Displaced Woman and Deport Syrian Asylum Seekers", STJ, June 13, 2019 <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkish-gendarmerie-gun-down-a-displaced-woman-and-deport-syrian-asylum-seekers/>.

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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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