



July 2019



**Turkey: Thousands of Syrians  
Forcibly Returned to Peril**

## **Turkey: Thousands of Syrians Forcibly Returned to Peril**

*The forced deportations to Syria did not even exclude those holding the Turkish Temporary Protection Identification Document/Kimlik*

## Executive Summary

Throughout Turkey, Istanbul city particularly, thousands of Syrians were subjected to mass deportations or forcibly returned to Syrian territories, under the latest campaign launched by the Turkish authorities against whom they called offenders of state laws. The campaign, which reached its peak in July 2019, escalated following a statement by the Turkish Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu, which he made on July 13, 2019, on a special meeting with Arab journalists and media activists.

“Those living in Istanbul while having neither a Kimlik nor any other form of residence permits, [offenders of state laws], are liable to deportation back to their countries. Additionally, those living in Istanbul while registered as refugees in other provinces are to be deported to their provinces of registration,” Soylu stated<sup>1</sup>.

**Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ has documented several cases where Syrians, holding an Istanbul-issued Temporary Protection Identification Document/Kimlik, were deported to Idlib, contrary to the statements of the minister of interior.**

According to the Turkish National Television Network/TRT, the total number of Syrian asylum seekers in Turkey amounts to “3 million 506 thousands and 532 refugees.”<sup>2</sup> The minister of interior, for his part, stated that “3 million and 630 thousand Syrians are under temporary protection in Turkey”<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> “Istanbul: New Salient Statements Made by Turkish Minister of Interior on Syrians’ Status,” Turk Press. July 13, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.turkpress.co/node/62943>.

<sup>2</sup> The official source has not defined the exact number of Syrians holding a temporary protection identification document or others with the tourism residence permit. For further information, refer to “Syrian Refugees in Turkey Exceed 3.5 Million,” TRT. July 24, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019.

<http://www.trtarabi.com/archive/%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A6%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B2-3/>.

<sup>3</sup> The Temporary Protection label usually refers to persons holding the Temporary Protection Identification Document, called Kimlik in Turkish. However, hundreds of Syrians hold a Tourism Residency Identification Document, regardless of which they are mixed with the first category. The two categories are often confused for political reasons. “Soylu: Turkey Did Not Give Up on the Spirit of Ansar and Muhajirun in Hosting Syrian Refugees,” Anadolu Agency. July 13, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9/%d8%b5%d9%88%d9%8a%d9%84%d9%88-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%83%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d9%84%d9%85-%d8%aa%d8%aa%d8%ae%d9%84-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%ad-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%86%d8%b5%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%b6%d8%a7%d9%81%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%86/1530850>.

The scrutiny and inspection campaigns did not spare any of Turkey's provinces. But the most intensive one aimed at Istanbul, where hundreds of police personnel were deployed, taking a position at the entrances and exits of streets and public transportation stations. They even raided houses, especially in places known for containing large groups of Syrians. Amidst the swirl, Syrian refugees were thunderstruck, for they resorted to Turkey wishing for safety after the war forced them out of their homeland, to be held captive by Turkish authorities and deported to Idlib province, given no chance to speak, take their personal belongings or at least inform their families. Many of the forcibly deported refugees told STJ that they signed the voluntary return form under the effects of beating and threats, which they suffered at the hands of Turkish police personnel, who also maltreated many others.

According to the website of the anti-Syrian government Syria TV, the number of people deported by the Turkish authorities through the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing has amounted to 8750 persons, from the beginning to 24th of July, 2019. Other 4370 persons were deported in June 2019. Quoting Mazen Aloush, director of the Public Relations Department of the crossing<sup>4</sup>, the source mentioned these figures in a news report, which it removed from the website later on.



Screenshot of Google search engine, showing the removed news report that enlisted the statistics, under the title: “Bab al-Hawa to Syria TV: Number of People Deported from Turkey in July Amounted to 4380.”

<sup>4</sup> “Bab al-Hawa to Syria TV: Number of People Deported from Turkey in July Amounted to 4380,” Syria TV. July 24, 2019. Last visited: July 24, 2019. The article was removed by Syria TV only two days from publishing it. The news was available on the following link: <https://www.syria.tv/content/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D9%88%D9%89-%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B2-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%BA%D9%88%D8%A7-4380>.

The reasons under which the Turkish authorities deported refugees are various; some were deported for not having a Kimlik at all; others, however, were forcibly returned to Syria for having a Kimlik registered in a province different from the one they are based in, contrary to the statements of the Turkish minister of interior, who stressed that persons under the second category will be deported to provinces of registry. In the city of Istanbul, even holders of an Istanbul-issued Kimlik were not spared, for many of them were forcibly returned to Syria without being informed of the justification to the actions taken against them.

The deportations were not limited to male and young Syrian refugees, as they affected women and children as well, eyewitnesses reported to STJ, saying that the Turkish police has deported women along with their children to Syria, where they were left to meet an uncertain fate.

The latest deportation campaign catalyzed fear and concern among Syrian refugees, especially in Istanbul city, coercing many of them, men, women and elderly, to stay at home sacred of being deported. Some refugees even refrained from going to work, as a result of the inspections and scrutiny aimed at Kimlik holders, for they prefer to lose their only source of living over arrest and deportation. In addition to the elderly who are in a dire need for medications, the majority of these refugees are their families' sole breadwinners.

In a report published on March 22, 2019, Human Rights Watch documented the deportation of thousands of asylum seekers to the Syrian Idlib province by the Turkish security forces at the Syrian-Turkish borders. The report said:

“Turkish security forces have routinely intercepted hundreds, and at times thousands, of asylum seekers at the Turkey-Syria border since at least December 2017 and summarily deported them to the war-ravaged Idlib governorate in Syria, Human Rights Watch said today. Turkish border guards have shot at asylum seekers trying to enter Turkey using smuggling routes, killing and wounding them, and have deported to Idlib newly arrived Syrians in the Turkish town of Antakya, 30 kilometers from the Syrian border.<sup>5</sup>”

In another report, addressing the latest deportations, the organization said that the recent forced deportations are not voluntary returns, for the Turkish authorities are threatening refugees with imprisonment and coercing them into signing the voluntary return form, adding that “dumping [these people] in a war zone is neither voluntary nor legal.<sup>6</sup>”

In conclusion, the mass deportations synced with many unprecedented threats, waged by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against the majority Kurdish north-eastern Syrian areas in a meeting with heads of Justice and Development/AK party branches in the Turkish provinces, held in the capital Ankara on July 26, 2019. He revealed that 330 thousand persons

---

<sup>5</sup> “Turkey: Mass Deportations of Syrians,” Human Rights Watch. March 22, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/22/turkey-mass-deportations-syrians>.

<sup>6</sup> “Turkey Forcibly Returning Syrians to Danger: Authorities Detain, Coerce Syrians to Sign ‘Voluntary Return’ Forms,” Human Rights Watch. July 26, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/26/turkey-forcibly-returning-syrians-danger>.



“returned” to Syria and that the objective of his anticipated military operations is to guarantee the “return” of more Syrians to their homes<sup>7</sup>. Other threats were made on July 14, 2019, also by President Erdoğan, as he pledged to turn what he called the “terrorist belt” into a “safe area.” Additional threats, implicit however, were directed by the Turkish Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu on July 21, 2019, at the countries of the European Union, saying that no European government will be able to hold on for six months, if Turkey is to open the gate for migrants, allowing them a passage to Europe<sup>8</sup>.

STJ published several reports documenting the Turkish Border Guard’s violations against Syrian areas and citizens, in addition to deportation of others who were seeking asylum<sup>9</sup>.

## 1. Testimonies of Syrian Refugees Lately Deported to Syria:

On 17th and 16th of July, 2019, hundreds of Turkish police personnel spread in areas highly populated with Syrians in Istanbul city, such as Esenyurt, Avcılar, Esenler, Sultangazi, Fatih, Aksaray, Sultanbeyli and Zeytinburnu, where they let themselves in factories and sewing shops employing Syrian workers. They also boosted security measures at entrances and exits of public transportation stations. They arrested hundreds of Syrian refugees on streets and public squares and started to forcibly return refugees/asylum seekers to Syria. STJ’s field researcher reported that 800 Syrian refugees were deported on the two mentioned days alone<sup>10</sup>.

### A. “They Abandoned Us to an Uncertain Fate”:

<sup>7</sup> “Erdoğan: Turkey is determined to destroy the ‘terror corridor’ east of the Euphrates,” Anadolu Agency. July 26, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7/%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B5%D9%85%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA/1542116>

<sup>8</sup> “Europe leaves Turkey in lurch on migrant issue,” Anadolu Agency. July 21, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/europe-leaves-turkey-in-lurch-on-migrant-issue/1537716>.

<sup>9</sup> “Turkish Gendarmerie Gun Down a Displaced Woman and Deport Syrian Asylum Seekers,” STJ. June 13, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkish-gendarmerie-gun-down-a-displaced-woman-and-deport-syrian-asylum-seekers/>.

“Report of Casualties: Turkish Gendarmerie Gun Down 7 Civilians and Injure 17 Others in Ras al-Ayn, al-Hasakah,” STJ. July 22, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://stj-sy.org/ar/%d8%ad%d8%b5%d9%8a%d9%84%d8%a9-%d9%85%d9%82%d8%aa%d9%84-7-%d9%85%d8%af%d9%86%d9%8a%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a8%d8%b1%d8%b5%d8%a7%d8%b5-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%86%d8%af%d8%b1%d9%85%d8%a7/>.

<sup>10</sup> STJ obtained these numbers via a thorough monitoring process and cross-references, especially the private groups created by Syrians on social media apps, such as WhatsApp groups.

Wael D., 35 years old, escaped the hell of the war that has been consuming his country for years. He decided to escape, deserting the Syrian regular army and headed to Turkey, where he hoped to live in safety and have a fresh start. However, he never contemplated a return to the place he fled and that he might be forcibly returned to Syria by the Immigration Section of the Police Service for not having a Kimlik. He narrated to STJ what he<sup>11</sup> had gone through:

**“In the morning, on July 17, 2019, while on the way to meet a friend who works in a factory in Esenyurt district, a group of police officers, in civil clothes, stopped us at the district’s square. They asked us to show them the Kimlik. Since I had not a Kimlik at all, and my friend had a kilmlik issued by another province, the personnel gave us no chance to speak. They led us to a bus, on which I read a sentence indicating their being members of the ‘Yabancı Polisi/ Foreigners Police’. Only a short time passed when the bus was striving with Syrian refugees, amounting to 20 persons. The personnel considered no differences between youths and old people. It all happened before my eyes, they arrested a man, in his fifties, while walking with his wife, for having a Kimlik issued from a different province. Even this man was not shown mercy; they took him and separated him from his wife.”**

Wael, in the beginning, did not think of deportation to Syria, but when they arrived in the Police Station in Esenyurt district, accompanied by the other arrested refugees, he understood that his fears were turning into reality. He recounted that personnel of the Foreigners Police started beating them hard when several Syrian refugees refused to sign the voluntary return form. He added:

**“The personnel ordered us to sign a paper, upon which Voluntary Return was written in Arabic. We refused to sign in the beginning. But then, they started to brutally beat us. I held on to my refusal, due to which they kept beating me and even asked another person to sign for me. It was the end, when everyone signed the voluntary return form, forcibly. Around 7:00 p.m., they transferred us to the Foreigners Prison/ Yabancı Cezaevi in the Asian hemisphere of Istanbul city. There, the buses were ready to transport us to Idlib province. The journey lasted for about 17 hours, during which they offered us meager portions of water and food. My agitation increased every second especially that we were drawing closer to the Syrian side, where the opposition factions are in control, for I had no official documents what so ever, being an army dissenter. My friend ‘Omar,’ nonetheless, soothed my concerns - he is born in Idlib. He told me that his brother will pick us up from the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing. When we reached our destination, due to the overcrowdedness no one paid attention to documents. They only asked me for my identification document. I told them that I had forgotten it at home and managed to pass in peace. They abandoned me, with many others, to an uncertain fate. I do not know what to do now. I have not a single penny or a shelter. I am not sure of anything; do they want us to join the Olive Branch factions?!”**

---

<sup>11</sup> STJ’s field researcher interviewed the eyewitness online on July 19, 2019.

**استمارة العودة بشكل طوعي**  
**GÖNÜLLÜ GERİ DÖNÜŞ İSTEK FORMU**

(سليم تعبئة استمارة العودة إلى الوطن طوعاً تلقى فرد بالغ من أفراد الأسرة على حدة)  
(Gönüllü Geri Dönüş İstek Formu aile bireylerinden her bir yetişkin için ayrı ayrı doldurulacaktır.)

YABANCI DOĞYA NO (رقم هجاء الأجنبي)	
ADI SOYADI (الاسم و الفام)	
UYRUGU (الجنسية)	SURİYE
DOĞUM YERİ ve TARİHİ (مکان و تاریخ المياد)	HALET
CİNSİYETİ (الجنس)	ERKEK
GÖNÜLLÜ GERİ DÖNÜŞ TARİHİ (تاریخ العودة الطوعية)	2019
GÖNÜLLÜ GERİ DÖNÜŞ SEBEBİ (سبب العودة الطوعية)	KENDİ İSTEĞİ
AÇIKLAMALAR (التوضیحات)	

REFAKATİNDE BULUNANLAR (الأشخاص تحت مرافقة / مع العائلة)

S.NO	ADI ve SOYADI (الاسم و الفام)	UYRUGU (الجنسية)	DOĞUM TARİHİ (تاریخ المياد)	DOĞUM YERİ (مکان المياد)	YAKINLIK DERESESİ (درجة القرابة)	AÇIKLAMALAR (التوضیحات)

Gönüllü geri dönüş talebime istinaden menşe ülkedeki genel durum ve güvenlik durumu hakkında yetkililer tarafından ayrıntılı olarak bilgilendirildim. Gönüllü geri dönüşle, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin bana sağladığı korumanın sona erdiğini biliyorum. Değerlendirmelerimin ardından, Suriye Arap Cumhuriyeti'ne gönüllü olarak geri dönme kararımı teyit ediyorum.

Bilgilerinizi arz ederim.

GÖNÜLLÜ GERİ DÖNÜŞ YAPMASI İSTİYEN YABANCIYIN  
Tevrici vü vıssı  
İmzası veya Parmak izi  
Adı ve Soyadı

GÖREVLİ PERSONELİN  
İmzası  
Adı ve Soyadı  
GOKMAN ATAY

TERCÜMAN  
İmzası  
Adı ve Soyadı  
ABDULVAHİT GÜRANLAN

KURUM/KURULUS YETKİLİSİ(\*)  
İmzası  
Adı ve Soyadı  
Tetkici li yakat

(\*) مسؤول من المؤسسة المنظمة للمساعدة الإنسانية للأمم المتحدة للشؤون اللاجئين، ممثل الهلال الأحمر، ممثل وطني أو من المنظمة غير الحكومية أو مسؤول في وحدة حقوق الإنسان والمسؤولية للمحافظة

(\*)BMMYK Yetkilisi, Kızılay Temsilcisi, UluvalıUluslararası Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu Temsilcisi veya Vatık İnsan Hakları ve Etiler Birim Görevlisi.

The Voluntary Return Form, which many Syrian refugees are coerced into signing. The photo has been posted onto social networking sites by one of the deported persons.

## B. “It Is Either Death or Being Smuggled Back to Turkey”:

The district of Zeytinburnu, Istanbul city, also bore witness to the deportation of dozens of Syrian refugees. On the 17th and 16th of July, 2019, the personnel of the Turkish Police Service raided several factories and sewing shops, thus, increasing the number of Syrian refugees deported, said Mohammad M., 25 years old, from rural Damascus, who was forcibly returned to Syria on July 17, 2019, for having a Kimlik issued by a different province - Bursa. He<sup>12</sup> recounted the following to STJ's field researcher:

<sup>12</sup> STJ's field researcher interviewed the eyewitness online on July 20, 2019.



**“It has been many years since I started working at a sewing shop in Zeytinburnu. This job was almost my sole source of income, given the bad work conditions and the exploitation that Syrians are subjected to by the Turkish business owners here. I cherished what I had and got married to the woman I love. We began dreaming of a safe future. At the onset of the campaign, fear started to grow bigger inside us as Syrian workers; we were worried that they might prevent us from working for not having a work permit, especially when news began to flow from other areas as well, that police personnel are raiding factories and arresting all the Syrian workers who broke the law. Overcome with horror, we still went to work every day, as not to lose our income. Our Turkish boss, for his part, reassured us, that it would take him a cup of tea and a bribe of a hundred Turkish liras to persuade the police officers to leave us to our work. Nonetheless, on July 17, 2019, while in the factory, personnel affiliated with the police service and the municipality made their way into our shop. Many of my companions managed to escape, but I was not that lucky. The personnel arrested me, along with six workers, some of whom are holders of a Kimlik issued by a different province; others had no Kimlik at all. We were led to a bus, which was to take us to the police station in Zeytinburnu district.”**

Once arrested, Mohammad called his wife and asked her to bring their family record book, recently issued, and her own Istanbul-issued Kimlik, thinking that the police personnel might reconsider his case and leave him alone. However, this was to no avail. Neither his boss’s attempts nor the streaming tears of his wife could deliver him from deportation along with other six Syrian refugees. He added:

**“Two months ago, I embarked on obtaining a Kimlik from Bursa province, which I intended to transfer to Istanbul, where my wife is registered. The problem is that such procedures take a long time and the personnel of the Police Service and the municipality did not even give us the chance to discuss the matter or take our belongings with us. We waited for about three hours until three additional buses were filled, each containing over 20 Syrian refugees. They headed to someplace near the Sabiha Gokcen International Airport, the Asian part of the city. And then, we were taken to the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing aboard different buses. It is important to mention that this was not the first time I get on a deportation bus, for the Syrian regime has displaced me from my city Zamalka earlier on; today, the Turkish police is the one deporting me, after I learned Turkish and had a job and a wife. I am to pity; my wife is in Istanbul while I am in Idlib province. I am left with no other choice; it is either death or being smuggled back to Turkey.”**

### C. Mother Witnesses the Deportation of Her Son and Only Breadwinner to Syria:

Raghdah M., a 40 years old woman from Aleppo, recounted to STJ the details of her son's, Samer, deportation during the latest campaign. She lived with her two sons, Samer and Mohammad, in Beylikdüzü district, Istanbul city, which is known for being one of the areas targeted by intensive inspection campaigns in search of Kimlik holders. She<sup>13</sup> said:

**“War conditions forced us to leave Syria many years ago. My husband died in the Syrian regime’s detention facilities. My son, Samer, was also arrested by the Syrian security services for a short time, coming out with various psychological issues, caused by the beating and the terrorization process he was subjected to. It was then when we made up our mind to leave to Turkey. My older son Samer was Mohammad’s, the younger brother, and my sole breadwinner. I repeatedly tried to convince him of obtaining a Kimlik, but the long working hours and his fear of the police held him back. When the campaign started, I suggested that he goes to live with a female friend of mine, based in one of the city’s classy areas, waiting for the action to subside a little. I was especially scared that he might be deported because this meant losing him once again as a son and as a breadwinner. On the evening of July 17, 2019, while on the bus to my friend’s house, we came by a police inspection post near the Mall of Istanbul. They asked three Syrian young men to get off the bus for not having a Kimlik. Unfortunately, my son Samer was arrested with them. They forced him to board another bus, paying no attention whatsoever to my pleas or incessant tears.”**

Samer, according to the mother, was forcibly returned to Idlib province, after an arduous journey of many hours. He told her that he was beaten so hard by the Turkish police to succumb and sign the voluntary return form. Raghdah is yet hoping for a means to bring her son back home, her only breadwinner.

### D. “I Do Not Know What We Have Done to Deserve Such Treatment”:

Several eyewitnesses, whom STJ interviewed, said that their Turkish neighbors reported the authorities about the houses where Syrians live, in many areas of Istanbul city. The police, for its part, intentionally raided these houses at midnight or dawn<sup>14</sup>. This was what exactly happened to Omar kh., 18 years old, and his seven friends who shared a house/dormitory designated for men only in Esenler district. Recounting to STJ his<sup>15</sup> misfortune, Omar said:

<sup>13</sup> STJ’s field researcher interviewed the eyewitness online on July 20, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> More than six cases were documented during the campaign.

<sup>15</sup> STJ’s field researcher interviewed the eyewitness online on July 21, 2019.

**“Around 2:30 a.m., on July 18, 2019, while getting ready for sleep, because I had to go to work in a textile/sewing factory, a hard knock on the door could be heard. I was scared, and my friends also panicked. In the beginning, we decided not to open the door. But when we heard a voice threatening to rip it open, we immediately opened it ourselves. At the door, we found Turkish Police personnel. They entered the house with faces full of anger and restlessness. They asked for the Kimlik. Because I had no Kimlik, they arrested me. They also arrested seven of my friends, for some had no Kimlik at all; others, however, had a Kimlik issued by other provinces. One of the guys had an Istanbul-issued Kimlik, with the identification number 98. They did not spare him because he did not update his data [at the registry].”**

Along with his seven friends, Omar kh was transported to the police station in Esenler, where they spent a night. They were maltreated by the police officers there. Omar kh, commenting on this, said:

**“We were beaten, insulted and subjected to verbal abuse by the police personnel. Then, they transported us to the Sabiha Gokcen International Airport; our hands were tied with plastic cuffs. There, buses were waiting to transfer us to Idlib. Before boarding the buses, they took all that we had and our cellphones. They also demanded that we take off our belts and shoelaces. The number of deported refugees on the bus was about 32 persons. Six Turkish police personnel boarded the bus as well. They hit and insulted us throughout the journey to Idlib. I do not know what we have done to deserve such treatment.”**

### **E. Women and Children Deported to Syria:**

The forcible return campaigns were not limited to men alone, for women and children had a fair share of the suffering, according to several eyewitnesses whom STJ interviewed. On July 19, 2019, the number of persons deported amounted to no less than 400 refugees, women and children included, as reported by STJ’s field researcher.

Rihab M., a 35 years old woman from Aleppo city, was walking with her two years and a half old toddler in Fatih district, before her arrest by the Turkish police personnel for not having a Kimlik. The arrest took place on July 19, 2019. She<sup>16</sup> narrated to STJ what happened:

**“I arrived in Istanbul about two years ago after I got a divorce and paid everything I had to the last penny to escape the hell of war in my country, with my child. When I came here, I could not find a job whatsoever. A person helped me rent an underground room, and I started gathering plastic from the streets to make a living for my son and pay the rent. However, on the morning of that day, the Turkish police**

<sup>16</sup> STJ’s field researcher interviewed the eyewitness online on July 20, 2019.

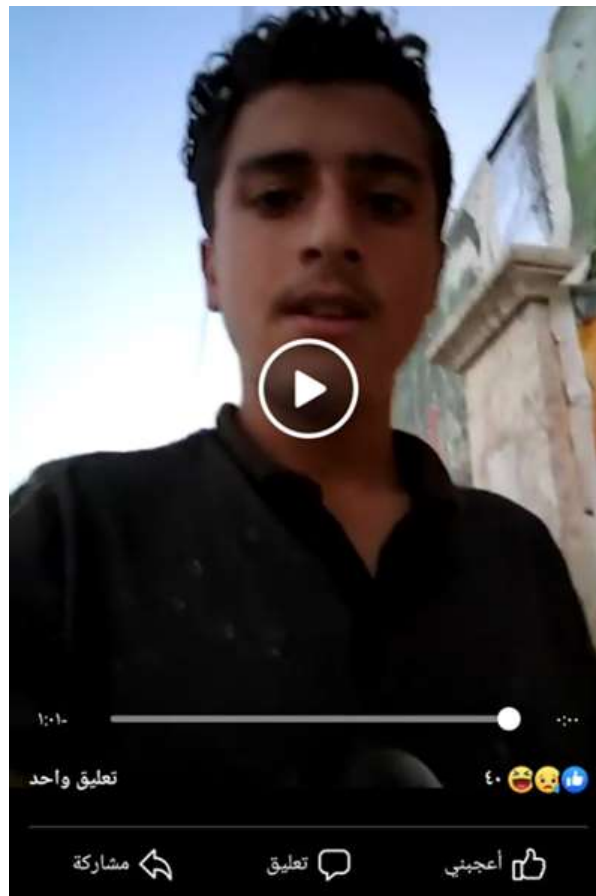
arrested me. They did not let me be, for I was taken, along with my son, to a police station, where I was terrorized into signing a voluntary return form. The personnel intended heating men in front of me at the station, as to make me afraid. I thought that I was the only woman who was arrested along with her child, but I was surprised when I saw about 18 other women, accompanied by their children, being deported with me to Idlib.”



Syrian refugees deported to Syria on board a bus on July 19, 2019. The photo features a child as well.  
Photo credit: An eyewitness.

On the same note, a video<sup>17</sup> posted by media activists on July 22, 2019, featured a 15 years old Syrian teenager by the name “Mohammad Mistawee” providing testimony on how he was deported to Syria for having a Kimlik issued from a province other than Istanbul. In the testimony, he said:

**“I was arrested by the Turkish personnel while buying bread in the city of Istanbul. They asked me to present them with my Kimlik. Seeing that it was issued by Şanlıurfa, they put me in a bus and transported me to Tuzla district. After beating and insulting me, they coerced me into signing a deportation form, Syria was the meant destination. Today, I am in Northern Aleppo, and I want to go back to my family.”**



A footage extracted from the [above mentioned video](#), featuring the teenager Mohammad Mistawee.

<sup>17</sup> For further information, watch the video on the following link:  
[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2748381911946334&id=100003236577482](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2748381911946334&id=100003236577482).





Mohammad Mistawee's Kimlik, showing his birth date as in 2004. Photo credit: [Social networking pages](#).

## F. Syrian Refugees Deported Despite Having Official Protection Identification Documents/Kimlik:

The deportation campaigns did not even spare Syrian refugees holding an Istanbul-issued Kimlik. On Facebook pages, a video went viral, featuring a Syrian refugee deported to Syria though he had an Istanbul-Issued Kimlik. The young man in the video<sup>18</sup> is called Amjad Mohammad Adel Tablieh. In his testimony, Amjad said that the Turkish Police personnel arrested him for forgetting his kimlik at home. They gave him no chance or time to go back and get it or even ask one of his family members to bring it. He was placed aboard a bus and transported to Hatay. There, they were beaten into signing a voluntary return form, for there were many other young men in his company who were also deported despite having a Kimlik. Amjad also reported the assaults they were subjected to by the Turkish security forces throughout the journey to Idlib.

<sup>18</sup> For further information, watch the video on the following link: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2746440595473799&id=100003236577482](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2746440595473799&id=100003236577482).



Footage taken from the [above-mentioned video](#), featuring young man Amjad Mohammad Adel Tablieh.



Amjad Mohammad Adel Tablieh’s Istanbul-Issued kimlik. Photo credit: [Social networking sites](#).

On July 27, 2019, the official Turkish Anadolu Agency published a news report, in which it pointed out that the transportation process of the young man Amjad Tablieh happened by mistake and that he was transported back into Istanbul by the Turkish authorities<sup>19</sup>.

Another video<sup>20</sup>, exchanged by media activists and human rights organizations on July 19, 2019, features several Syrian refugees being deported to Syria by the Turkish police, handcuffed on board a bus.



Footage taken from the [above mentioned video](#), featuring several Syrian refugees who are reportedly being forcibly returned to Syria.

<sup>19</sup> "Turkey: Syrian Returned to Istanbul after being Mistakenly Transported out," Anadolu Agency. July 27, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9/%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%83%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%a5%d8%b9%d8%a7%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a-%d8%a5%d9%84%d9%89-%d8%a5%d8%b3%d8%b7%d9%86%d8%a8%d9%88%d9%84-%d8%b9%d9%82%d8%a8-%d9%86%d9%82%d9%84%d9%87-%d8%ae%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%ac%d9%87%d8%a7-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ae%d8%b7%d8%a3/1543228>.

<sup>20</sup> "Several Syrians Deported to Syrian Territories," Justice Organization. July 19, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=406350893335864&id=118720138765609](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=406350893335864&id=118720138765609).

On the same day, media outlets<sup>21</sup> covered the story of a Syrian refugee deported during the latest campaign, who is a man displaced from rural Damascus and called Abu Ammar. In his testimony, he said:

**“I live in Istanbul with my wife, children and baby, recently born in Turkey. I had reserved an appointment to obtain a Kimlik from Bursa province, near Istanbul. Yesterday, on Thursday, the Turkish police arrested me on Mehmet Akif Street, along with my paternal cousin while heading to work at 8:00 a.m. When the police asked for my Kimlik, I told them that I have a passport. The policeman looked at me and asked me to board the bus. I was transported in the company of other men to a police station in the neighborhood; they cuffed our hands with plastic belts and confiscated our cellphones. The police provided us with papers, upon which our names were written. The rest of the information was not translated. Asking them about the content of the papers, the police officers said that it was a regular procedure.”**

On July 23, 2019, other media outlets<sup>22</sup> covered the story of young man Somar Jamal Abzou, born in Salamiyah city, Hama province. Jamal is one of the Syrian refugees who have been deported to Syria, where he was immediately arrested by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham/HTS on the claims of his being a militant of the Syrian regular army. People close to the young man, however, said that HTS arrested him for being from Salamiyah city, known for containing a variety of religious minorities.

On July 20, 2019, media activists<sup>23</sup> published the story of Omar Da’aboul on social networking sites. He is one of the Syrian refugees deported for attempting to immigrate to Greece by sea. He was deported despite having a Gaziantep-issued Kimlik, along with other 40 men. In his testimony, Omar said that one of the young men deported with him is Christian and has no acquaintances in Idlib province, in addition to a 13 years old boy. He concluded the testimony by saying that he tried to return to Turkey through one of the border posts, but the Turkish Gendarmeries caught him, beat him and sent him back to Syria.

<sup>21</sup> “Abu Ammar Deported for the Third Time: He was, thus, Deported from Istanbul to Idlib,” Syria TV. July 19, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. [https://www.syria.tv/content/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB-%D9%87%D9%83%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A5%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A8?fbclid=IwAR05gRrWdOHw9k1AyekFuz\\_i653Uhn51qpjGHDUTZGr6OFLwls mM51mxPA](https://www.syria.tv/content/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB-%D9%87%D9%83%D8%B0%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%87-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A5%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A8?fbclid=IwAR05gRrWdOHw9k1AyekFuz_i653Uhn51qpjGHDUTZGr6OFLwls mM51mxPA).

<sup>22</sup> “Deported by Turkey to be Arrested by al-Nusra Front: Story of Young Man Trying to Support His Family,” 7al. Net. July 23, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://7al.net/2019/07/23/%d8%b1%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%91%d8%aa%d9%87-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%83%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d9%81%d8%a7%d8%b9%d8%aa%d9%82%d9%84%d8%aa%d9%87-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b5%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d9%82%d8%b5%d8%a9-%d8%b4%d8%a7/>

<sup>23</sup> For further information, refer to the following link: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=2379084069005873&id=100007129093338](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2379084069005873&id=100007129093338).

## G. Fear and Anticipation:

The latest waves of deportation have spurred a state of fear and concern among Syrian refugees in Istanbul city, especially those who do not have a Kimlik or any personal identification documents registered in other provinces, due to which many of them started keeping a low profile and took precautionary measures, fearing a forcible return to the war furnace. They decided to stay at home afraid of the Turkish Police. Many eyewitnesses, men and women, informed STJ that they have abandoned their jobs and some of them have lost their only source of living because of the deportation wave, despite their being the sole breadwinners of their families. They favored home incarceration over going back to Syria—many of them are stuck in a state of waiting, hoping to legalize their status soon.

On July 20, 2019, the Advisor of the President of Justice and Development Party/AK Yasin Aktay stated that talks are to be held with the Syrian leadership in Istanbul city to address a solution for the refugees' crisis. He added that “the number of Syrian refugees in Istanbul has markedly increased. It has become clear to the Turkish people, that they are carrying out their work illegally and without the correct licenses, which has pushed them to make accusations against Syrian refugees, given the increasing unemployment rates among Turks.”<sup>24</sup>

In the aftermath of action in Istanbul, the Media and Public Relations Office in Istanbul province released a statement on July 22, 2019, in which it reported that Syrian refugees who do not have a Kimlik at all will be transferred to other Turkish provinces, which the Ministry of Interior is to pick, pointing out that applying for a Kimlik in Istanbul is impossible for it has been stopped once for all. In the statement, the Syrian refugees holding a Kimlik issued from other Turkish provinces are given a duration that ends on August 20, 2019, during which they are allowed to return to their provinces of registration. The press release, which was posted on the official Twitter account of the Directorate General of Migration Management<sup>25</sup>, also stressed that the Turkish authorities will continue inspections for the Kimlik at bus stops, airports and all public transportation stations.

According to eyewitnesses and Syrians based in Istanbul, the inspection and arrest campaigns against Syrian refugees in Istanbul city continued after the press release, for many relatives of arrested refugees confirmed losing contact with their children after they got arrested by the Turkish Police, and no one has any information on their whereabouts to the day.

<sup>24</sup> “Aktay: Turkey to Engage With Syrian Opposition Leadership on Refugee Issue,” Anadolu Agency. July 20, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9/%d8%a3%d9%82%d8%b7%d8%a7%d9%8a-%d8%b3%d9%86%d8%aa%d8%b4%d8%a7%d9%88%d8%b1-%d9%85%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d8%a5%d8%b3%d8%b7%d9%86%d8%a8%d9%88%d9%84-%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%84-%d8%a3%d8%b2%d9%85%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%86/1537287>.

<sup>25</sup> “A Press Release on Illegal Migration.” July 22, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://twitter.com/GocidaresiA/status/1153303140298629120>.



An Arab News Agency quoted statements, concerning the latest campaign, made by the Turkish Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu to a Turkish channel on July 24, 2014. He said that Turkey has arrested 1000 Syrians in the context of the campaign, explaining that 6000 and 122 illegal immigrants from various nationalities have been arrested, out of whom 2600 are from Afghanistan and about 1000 are Syrian refugees.

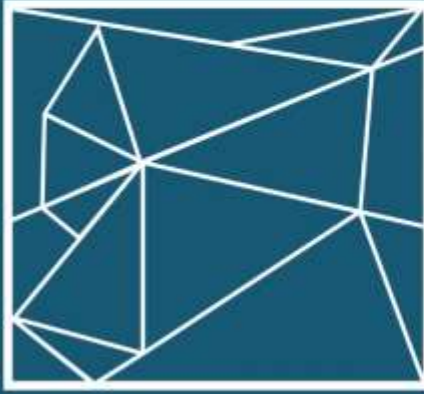
The Syrian refugees who have no Kimlik will be transported to camps to be kept under control, as he put it, stressing that no Syrian will be deported from Turkey.<sup>26</sup>



The press release made by the Directorate of Media and Public Relations in Istanbul province on July 22, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> "Turkey: We Have Arrested 1000 Syrian Law Offenders in Istanbul," Turkey in Arabic. July 24, 2019. Last visited: August 5, 2019. <https://arab-turkey.com/2019/07/24/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B6-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A3%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81-%D9%81/>.

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  
Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



## 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.

---

🌐 [www.stj-sy.org](http://www.stj-sy.org)

📘 [syriaSTJ](https://www.facebook.com/syriaSTJ)

🐦 [@STJ\\_SYRIA\\_ENG](https://twitter.com/STJ_SYRIA_ENG)

📍 [Syrians for Truth & Justice](https://www.instagram.com/Syrians_for_Truth_Justice)

✉ [editor@stj-sy.org](mailto:editor@stj-sy.org)