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Syria: 10 facts about the 1962 special Census of al-Hasakah

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More than 46 thousand Kurds are still stateless

The 5th of October 2019 marks the 57th anniversary of the [special census](#) of al-Hasakah province, northeastern Syria, which is largely populated with ethnic minorities having different religious affiliations, including Assyrians, Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Chechens and others.

In commitment to pursuing the stateless issue, STJ republishes the following ten core facts about the special census of al-Hasakah, on its 57th anniversary:

1. [Al-Hasakah](#) was the only Syrian province in which the census was conducted, in application of **Decree No. 93 of August 23, 1962**, passed by the "Separatist Movement", or as it called itself the "Supreme Arab Revolutionary Command of the Armed Forces", which was formed directly after the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian union. The decree ordered the census, based on Decree No. 1 of April 30, 1962 and the ministerial decision, No. 106 of August 23, 1962. The now known "Al-Hasakah 1962 Census Decree", states in its article 1:

«A general census is to be carried out in al-Hasakah province in one single day. The exact date will be more closely determined by an order from the Ministry of Planning, at the recommendation of the Interior Minister. »

2. In order not to lose their Syrian citizenship, the al-Hasakah Kurds had to prove residency in Syrian territory since 1945, at least. The extremely short time frame for the census - one day - set by the government wasn't enough for people to prepare the required documents or even to understand what was going on. Besides, the responsible authorities didn't provide sufficient information about the census' procedures and aims.
3. Along with the political storms, Syria was also hit with natural storms and hurricanes. On 18 and 19 April 1962, torrential rains, coming from Turkey and some Syrian areas, affected al-Qahtaniyah, formerly Qubour al-Bid, town in Qamishi/Qamishlo, and left about 20 dead and 10 missing. It also washed away more than 100 houses, cracked some 50 others and displaced thousands of people, many of whom were housed in schools and tents.
4. The census resulted in disastrous consequences for people who have been stripped indefinitely of Syrian citizenship along with their descendants. The overwhelming proportion of those were Syrian Kurds, which make this issue one of the most complex issues that successive Syrian governments have failed to deal with, or to lift the injustice befallen those affected.

5. STJ had access to inside information from official sources in the Personal Status Department of al-Hasakah, revealing that the number of the registered *ajanib* /red card holders, reached **(346.242)** in early 2011. **(326.489)** of them managed to obtain Syrian nationality, while the rest, **(19.753)**, are still stateless.
6. Regarding the *maktumeen*, the same source denied the Syrian government's allegations on its lack of knowledge of their numbers, noting that the Personal Status Department of al-Hasakah used to rely on the records of the *makhateer* during the previous decades, who were responsible for issuing identification certificates for the *maktumeen*. The number of *maktumeen*, has reached more than **(171.300)** as of 2011, **(50.400)** of whom obtained Syrian nationality after resolving their legal status by becoming *ajanib* and then Syrian citizens. However, some **(41.000)** *maktumeen* were unable to rectify their legal status owing to problems encountered by the Personal Status Department during the registration process, and there are still less than **(5000)** people who chose not to submit.
7. In total, the number of stateless Syrian Kurds between 1962-2011, has reached more than **(517.000)**.
8. Following the onset of peaceful protests in Syria, which demanded sweeping reforms in the country, Decree No. 49 was issued on April 7, 2011, and has been announced on the official website of The Syrian People's Council under the title "Granting Syrian Arab Nationality to those Registered as *ajanib* in al-Hasakah". The decree states:
 - Article 1:** individuals who are registered as *ajanib* in the al-Hasakah province shall be granted Syrian nationality.
 - Article 2:** The Minister of the Interior shall issue the decisions containing the executive instructions to this decree.
 - Article 3:** This decree shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the Official Journal.
9. Several months after the issuance of Decree No. 49 of 2011, a ministerial decree of nationalizing *maktumeen* was reported. The Personal Status Department employees, however, told submitters that it was not yet in effect, and they actually didn't know which department would take it over.
10. Unlike citizens, Syrian Kurds, who were rendered stateless by the 1962 census, suffer deprivation of their most basic civil, political, social and economic rights. Some of them had a lifetime of statelessness, having no certificates proving their birth nor death.



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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