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HTS Arrests 22 Civilians in Idlib for Different Reasons

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The arrests made by HTS' security and police forces, including al-Hisbah, against 5 children, two women and 15 men during August and September 2019

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), by its religious police, the al-Hisbah and other affiliated forces have arrested five children, two women and 15 men, including activists, in the province of Idlib. The arrests were conducted throughout August and September 2019 for different reasons. The detainees were beaten and mistreated, including the children, and while some of them were released, the rest are still unaccounted for. Further arrests were made by the police force of the Salvation Government of HTS on grounds of alleged criminal cases.

STJ field researchers in Idlib said that those who are directly arrested by HTS or by its affiliated militias; like the police force including al-Hisbah in Idlib, are placed in three kinds of prisons:

- 1- **The police custody:** criminal defendants, like thieves, are detained in police custody before being transferred to Idlib central prison under a decision issued by a judge of the Ministry of Justice of the Salvation Government.
- 2- **Idlib central prison:** it has two sections; the civilian section: for minor offences the military section: for political and military prisoners, such as activists and members of armed groups in conflict with HTS, along with people arrested for undisclosed security reasons.
- 3- **Security prisons:** they are Harem prison, al-Iqab prison in Jabal Zawiya and the Zanbaqi prison Darkush. These prisons are notorious, like those of the regime in Damascus. They are for military commanders, people accused by HTS of committing serious breaches of public security or considered dangerous by it, ISIL members and those suspected to be, criminals for abductions, and sometimes activists and media workers.

According to information collected by STJ field researchers from witnesses and survivors of the arrest, HTS conducts arrests either on its checkpoints, deployed on the roads of the province or by raiding the house of the wanted people by its so-called security office. People arrested in the second way are transferred to special courts called the "special security courts" and are usually placed in one of the aforementioned security prisons.

Another way of arrest used by HTS is by sending a subpoena by its police to the wanted person ordering him to come to the police station in a specified period, and if the latter failed to attend, a patrol be sent to capture him/her from his/her house. Those arrested this way are mostly accused of misdemeanors like shooting in celebrations or fights. They are brought before the judiciary of the Salvation Government, which sentenced them and then they are transferred to Idlib central prison, where they serve their sentences.

It should be noted that the recent prison sentences issued by the Ministry of Justice of the Salvation Government included compulsory labor in digging trenches to reinforce the front lines and fortified the defense sites and strengthen them. These works have become part of the punishments after the military operation launched by the Syrian government and Russia on Idlib province in April 2019, which is still ongoing, added to other harsh and degrading punishments such as flogging.

HTS and Salvation Government courts rely mainly on the provisions of Islamic Sharia in the issuance of judgments in all cases. Those courts never adopt positive law as other courts in other Syrian regions do.

HTS also requires the prisoner to complete a Sharia course before being released. According to local sources and witnesses, contents of this Sharia course differs depending on the arresting authority; those arrested by the police force of the Ministry of Justice including the religious wing, al-Hisbah, are forced to memorize a section of the Quran in addition to 40 hadiths from the Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadith. While those arrested by the security forces are forced to memorize at least three section of Quran along with all the hadiths and lessons in Fiqh and Islamic studies. A former detainee said that some were forced to memorize the whole Quran for their prison sentence is long.

وزارة العدل
محكمة صلحين
النيابة العامة

خلاصة حكم

إلى السيد أم السجين في سجن إدلب المركزي
حاز القرار القضائي المذكور في هذه المذكرة على الدرجة المطلوبة وأصبح واجب التنفيذ

اسم المحكوم عليه	[Redacted]
الحرم المحكوم به	السرقه
المحكمة مصدرة القرار	بداية الجراء الاول
الجهة المصدقة للقرار	[Redacted]
تاريخ التوقيف	[Redacted]
خلاصة الحكم	الحبس: ثمانية اشهر فقط من تاريخ التوقيف الجلد: ثلاثمائة جلدة فقط على دفعات الغرامة: ستمائة دولار أمريكي فقط
الالتزامات المدنية	[Redacted]
تاريخ إطلاق سراح المحكوم عليه	[Redacted]

فتمتلك منكم إنفاذ الحكم الجزائي الشرعي بفقراته الحكمية الجزائية وفق ما جاء في هذه المذكرة بحق
المسجون وإيقائه لدى السجن حتى نهاية المدة المحكوم بها وفق الأصول، وإلى حين موافاتكم بمذكرة انتهاء مدة
والله ولي التوفيق

رئيس النيابة العامة
٢٠١٩/٢/

A trial summary of a prisoner, who was released in September 2019, issued by the Salqin court of the Ministry of Justice of the Salvation Government in February 2019. The document shows the felony committed and the due penalty, which include three hundred lashes.

I. The documented arrests

STJ field researchers documented several arrests carried out by HTS and its al-Hisbah police against civilians. They also talked to relatives of some of the detainees, who preferred Anonymity for security reasons:

- **On September 9, 2019:** members of the al-Hisbah arrested Bassam Dakel, 55, from his house in Idlib on charges of cursing God. The detainee will appear before the judiciary in the coming days, according to a person close to his family, who pointed out that the detainee suffers from diabetes and high blood-pressure.
- **On September 15, 2019,** members of the security forces stormed a house -we prefer not to mention the family's name- arresting the father along with his two sons, 15 and 14, for insulting the security members. They were taken to Branch 107, where one of the children whipped with 40 lashes released the following day. While the other child was questioned about names of people who usually visit them. Mobile phones of the father and sons were confiscated and not returned.
- **On September 12, 2019,** HTS arrested the activist Mohammad Jadaan, after shooting him directly in the leg and the abdomen, for unknown reasons. With his poor state of health, his place of detention is still unknown, according to his brother who talked to STJ field researcher saying:

"Members at an HTS temporary (flying) checkpoint on the road to the town of Muhambal, shot my brother directly in the leg and the abdomen. Then they took him to a hospital in the city of Jisr al-Shughur. When we learned about the incident, we rushed to the hospital, where my brother was admitted in another name. however, when we managed to know his place, they moved him by their car; we tried to follow them but they set a temporary checkpoint on the way."

The witness added:

"The next morning, we learned that my brother was in Idlib Hospital. I went there and asked the information desk workers for him, but they said that there was no such person. So, I went and searched for him in the patients' rooms and found him in one of them, but the guards prevented me from talking to him. However, after several hours a Qatari Red Crescent car accompanied with HTS members, arrived to the hospital and took my brother without the permission of doctors and without considering his health status. We are still searching for him in all hospitals as he is admitted with a false name."

The witness confirmed that Mohammad Jadaan was not wanted to any authority and that he was not at odds with the HTS. Besides no subpoena was sent to him, contrary to the claims of HTS members about being wanted for a security issue. **“I hold the Qatari Red Crescent responsible for the safety of my brother and what is happening with him as they drove him to an unknown location.”**, said the witness.

- **On September 11, 2019**, members of the security forces of HTS arrested the media activist Ahmad Rahal, a reporter for the El Dorar al-Shamiya network, from his home in Idlib for unknown reasons, and released him nine days later.
- **On September 8, 2019**, members of HTS security forces arrested the student Nuri al-Bashir from the campus of Idlib University, after insulting him in front of the students, because of his opposition to the Salvation Government, and he was released a week later.
- **On September 3, 2019**, Dr. Othman Al-Hassan was shot while riding his car near the amusement park on the al-Dana Road by armed members of HTS security forces. As a result, his car crashed into the roadside and the perpetrators dragged him out and directly shot him in the leg then took him to Bab Al-Hawa Hospital, where he entered the operating room. Soon after, another security group broke into the operating room, arrested the doctor during the operation and transferred Othman to an unknown location and released after several hours.
- **In September also**, two 16-year-old children were detained -we prefer not to mention their names- by the al-Hisbah from a garden in Idlib on charges of harassing girls. They were detained for several days during which they were severely beaten, and had their hair shaved, and later released after signing an undertaking that they will never repeat this act.
- A man, his wife and his son- we prefer not to mention their family name-, were arrested from a park in Idlib city. They initially arrested the man for unknown reasons and soon after they returned and arrested his wife and son. They are still unaccounted for.

Field researchers also documented arrests took place in August 2019:

- **On August 24, 2019**, HTS security forces arrested the media activist Mohammad Da'aboul from his home in the Naoura neighborhood of Idlib city for unknown reasons and confiscated his personal computer. He is still unaccounted for.

- **On the same day**, members of the security forces arrested the media activist Fateh Raslan, a correspondent of Step News Agency, from his house in Idlib city for unknown reasons and his fate remains unknown.
- **On August 21, 2019**, HTS security forces arrested six youths on charges of staging a demonstration and sit-in in Bab al-Hawa area. The detainees are: Hamid al-Araj, a member of the United Observatory, Hamza al-Araj, Sayadi Ahmed al-Araj, Hassan Mohammad al-Hayek, Ahmed Hussein al-Abdullah and Mohammad Hussein al-Abdullah
- **On August 4, 2019**, HTS security forces arrested Mari Shehadeh, head of the Free Directorate of Education of the interim government, in rural Latakia. His wife, Sham al-Shareef, the Head Teacher of the al-Sahil high school, was also arrested from the Ataa al-Khir camp near the village of Kherbet Eljoz in western rural Jisr al-Shughur, for refusing to affiliate the Education Directorate to the Salvation Government. A local source reported, however, that they both were released on the evening of the same day.

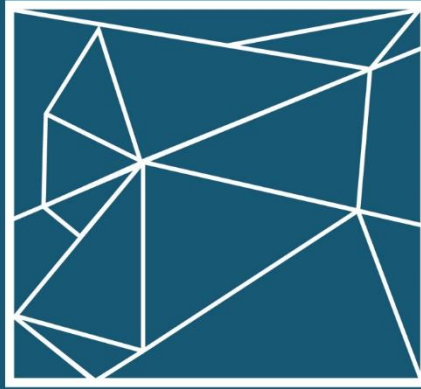
HTS had earlier carried out executions in the provinces of Idlib and Hama,¹ while its Sharia courts and affiliated Islamic groups had tried and executed defendants².

¹ "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham Execute Two Persons and Arrest Others in Dana City- Idlib", STJ, June 25, 2018 (last visit: September 20, 2019) <https://stj-sy.org/en/589/>.

"HTS Executes 6 Persons Accused of Dealings with the Regime and ISIL", STJ, September 20, 2019, (last visit: September 30, 2019) <https://stj-sy.org/en/771/>.

² "Six Persons Placed on Death Row as Sharia Courts Preside over Two Murder Cases in Idlib and Hama", STJ, February 19, 2019 (last visit: September 30, 2019), <https://stj-sy.org/en/1188/>.

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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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