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Arrests, Including two Women, 54 in Afrin during October 2019

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Arrests have declined in October compared to previous months due to the olive harvest season and the participation of the groups controlling the region in the "Operation Peace Spring"

Turkish forces and allied armed groups of the National Army,¹ have decreased their detentions and arrests in the Kurdish-majority city of Afrin to 54, including a woman, in October compared to the 127 they made in September,² according to STJ field researchers. Most of those arrested were released on bail while the rest were transferred to central prisons and command centers in the area and some others are still unaccounted for.

This decrease in the number of arrests was primarily due to the start of the “Operation Peace Spring” in northeastern Syria, in which Turkey put thousands of its soldiers, who were distributed in the area, and to the fact that October is the olive harvest and press month, as members of the armed groups in this month monitor the harvest and press process and force olive trees owners to pay them money in the form of royalties and/or taxes.,

According to statements of locals and observations of the field researchers, the Military Police and the Civil Police Service conducted the bulk of the arrests, while the Levant Front, the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), the Sham Legion/*Failaq al-Sham* and Ahrar al-Sharqiya made the rest of the arrests.

Most of the witnesses and locals met by STJ confirmed that the majority of arrests were conducted arbitrarily and didn’t follow the due process. As many of those arrested hadn’t been informed of charges against them by written notices or orally, contrary to the statements made by the former spokesman of the National Army that the arrests were carried out within the legal framework.³

I. Arrests in Afrin:

The district of Afrin (Afrin city and the areas administratively attached to it) witnessed the arrest of 24 people, 22 of which were made by the Military Police, while each of the Civil Police and Ahrar al-Sharqiya conducted one arrest, according to witnesses and locals:

- On October 1, a patrol of the military police arrested the surgeon Sabri Hanan, 75, from his home in Afrin. The doctor had been previously kidnapped with his brother and released after paying a ransom.
- On October 1, a patrol of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya group raided the house of Sher Mustafa, arresting him and stealing Jewelry and money from the house, which is

¹ In its report on August 2, 2018, the Amnesty termed the presence of the Kurdish forces in Afrin an ‘occupation’. For more info: “Syria: Turkey must stop serious violations by allied groups and its own forces in Afrin”, Amnesty, August 2, 2018. (last visit: September 2, 2019)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/08/syria-turkey-must-stop-serious-violations-by-allied-groups-and-its-own-forces-in-afrin/>

² “Syria: 127 Arrests in Afrin during September 2019”, STJ, October 2, 2019 (last visit: November 4, 2019) <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-127-arrests-in-afrin-during-september-2019/>

³ “The practices of the Syrian armed groups between the jurists and the military” Fi al-Uomq, Watan FM., July 8, 2019 (last visit: October 1, 2019) https://soundcloud.com/watanfm/08-07-2019fil3omq?fbclid=IwAR0lxzkTXeXuGXzIDEVr4Fkc3HlXhC_xx6nvU8BsG8lyPeYwwaY-G7RrmQ

located on the highway, according to a resident of the neighborhood. However, Sher was released on October 12 but STJ couldn't confirm whether it was for bail or not.

- On October 4, an eyewitness from the village of Kerzayhel said that at approximately 6:30 am, a military police patrol raided civilian houses and arrested a number of people without arrest warrants being issued against them and for no clear reasons. The arrestees are: Hassan Tahseen Nasser, 65, Jihad Subhi Nasser, 40, Bakr Hanan Awash, 63, Yahya Hamkro, 52, Othman Hammo, 32, Ahmed Wahid Abdo, 85, Nuri Shukri Mahmoud, 60, Farhad Sheikh Abdo, Mohammad Youssef Hamkro, 30, Zakaria Yahya Hamkro, 25, Rizan Othman Hammo, 30, Sheikh Ahmed Wahid, Abdul Rahman Walid Abdul Rahman, Adel Shukri Mahmoud, Farhad Ahmed Waheed, Kawa Adel Mahmoud, Shoukry Nouri Mahmoud, Shiro Hassan Nasser and Abdul Rahman Aref Klebjik.

According to the witness, most of them were bailed out (the witness did not mention the bail amount).

- In the same village, on October 9, the 20-year-old Yousef Mohammad Othman was arrested at the checkpoint of Taranda village, which belong to the Civil Police, on charges of performing the self-defense duty under the Autonomous Administration. No information has been reported about him so far.

II. Arrests in Shaykh al-Hadid/Sheh:

At the center of the town of Shaykh al-Hadid, on October 2, the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), arrested Mustafa Mohammad Sheikho, (nicknamed Gilo), 55, on the pretext of harvesting the olive crop belonging to his brother Nazmi, who resides in Germany. However, our field researcher was unable to gain additional information about the incident.

III. Arrests in Bulbul district:

Civilian police arrested 13 people in the Bulbul district, three of them were later released while one was transferred to the central prison in Afrin:

- On October 9, a resident of the village of Ashouna said that a number of people had been arrested by the Civil Police, including Hassan Alo and his only son Shaheen Alo, under the pretext of being former workers in the party's ranks. Roden Omar Mustakilou, was also arrested for performing the self-defense duty, as well as Abdelkader Brim, who was accused of harvesting olives for a party member who resides outside the village.

According to the witness, Hassan Alo, Shaheen Alo and Abdelkader Brim were released after a week on a bail (we couldn't know how much). Rodin, however, was transferred to Afrin Central Prison and still held there.

- On October 24, at 4:00 am, the Civil Police stormed the village of Sagher Obasi (Kari) arresting five villagers, including a woman on charges of performing the self-defense duty and dealing with the party. The arrestees were: Aslan Mdawar, Hussein Sabri Batal, Hanan Taher, Manan Ahmed Ibish and Amina Kalou.
- In the village of Zivinge, on October 18, a patrol of the Civil Police arrested Sido Ismail, Youssef Maamou, his son Walid, and Mohammad Rashid on the pretext of dealing with the Autonomous Administration and working in a local council affiliated it. No more information provided about this incident.

IV. Arrests in Ma'abatli District:

Three people were arrested by the Suleiman Shah Brigade Ma'abatli District

- In the village of Hassa, on October 13, a patrol belonging to the Levant Front group in control, arrested Omar Alo, 30, on charges of dealing with the Autonomous Administration and being a former member of the Asayish forces. He was released on October 19, after paying a bail/fine/ransom of SP.300,000, knowing that his cell phone was confiscated without being restituted.
- In the village of Yakhour/Kaxrê, on October 29, Suleiman Shah Brigade arrested Abdo Khalil Hasso and Mustafa Hassan Maho and took them to their security center in the town of Shaykh al-Hadid. Their families were asked to pay \$10,000 for their release. However, they are still detained so far.

V. Arrests in Rajo:

A witness from the village of Sheikh Muhammadli said that on October 1, the Sham Legion/*Faïlaq al-Sham* group arrested the mayor of the village (*mukhtar*), from his home for speaking out about the abuses committed daily in the village. He was released on October 15.

The witness points out that *Mukhtar* Hanan Shiku, 55, (nicknamed Sino), was appointed by the local council of the Syrian interim government, and had undergone heart surgery days before his arrest.

VI. Arrests in Sharran:

STJ field researchers said that the Military Police along with the Civil Police and the Sham Legion/ Failaq al-Sham raided the Sharran district three times arresting nine people:

- In the village of Nazo, on October 9, the Military Police raided several houses and arrested Adnan Mohammad Khalil, 59, a civilian who has no links with the party, Salem Adnan Khalil, 24, who performed the self-defense duty and had been arrested several times by the National Army, Abdu Othman Othman, 52, Khalid Mohammad Hanan, a civilian with no links with the party, Issa Hanan bin Sheikho, a civilian, and a woman called Mawlouda Khalil, 42, who used to help in the organization of the party's meetings in the village.

According to the witness, all the detainees were released after three days on a bail of SP.50,000 for each. The car of Adnan Mohammad Khalil and Khaled Mohammad Hanan was confiscated and used to transport the fighters of the "Operation Peace Spring".

- In the village Meydanke, on October 16, the Sham Legion/Failaq al-Sham group arrested Fakhri Ibrahim, 34, without a charge. The arrested man was a former cleaner in the people municipality/local council and was transferred to Sharran prison.
- In the village of Dayr Sawwan, on October 17, the Civil Police arrested the cleric (*Sheikh*) Ahmed Waqas- he has a disability in his leg- along with his daughter, from in front of the village's mosque. The witness added that the daughter of the *Sheikh* was arrested for refusing to give them her cell phone, and they both were transferred to the center of Sharran district. No more information provided for this incident.

VII. Arrests in Jindires:

STJ field researcher said that only one arrest took place in the Jindires district during October was on its 9th. This arrest was made by a patrol of the Civil Police against the young man Mustafa Khero Mameklo, who hails from the village of Eshkan Gharbi/Aşkê Xerbî, on charges of performing the self-defense duty.

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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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