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*Ras al-Ayen: The Conflict over
the “Gate to Syrian Jazira” on
its Seventh Anniversary*

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This special report covers the events and violations witnessed by the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani between November 2012 and September 2013

1. Executive Summary:

Today—November 8, 2019— marks the 7th anniversary of the spark that catalyzed the clashes witnessed by the city of [Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani](#) in al-Hasakah province, northeast Syria, in 2012, an area that abounds with ethnic and religious diversity, where different religious and ethnic groups live and exist side-by-side, including Syriac Assyrians, Kurds, Arabs, Armenians and Chechens, while it sets an example of civil peace and coexistence.

Adjacent to the Turkish border strip, the city fell to the hold of the Autonomous Administration in northeast Syria, taken over by the People’s Protection Units/YPG, after the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front/al-Qaeda was expelled from it, on the heels of the Syrian opposition-affiliated armed groups, which controlled the city in 2012 in the aftermath of some days long battles with the Syrian regular forces, which at the date maintained a mere symbolic presence in the area.

Between November 2012 and September 2013, the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani changed from being a safe area into an open front for military struggle, bearing witness to a rising action every now and then. Many observers attributed this shift to the city’s strategic importance, for it is the “gate to the Syrian Jazira”, on the northeast of the country, known for its wealth of oil and other riches, which the armed opposition groups, Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh/Islamic State/ISIS, later on, sought to get hold of at all costs.

The 2012 clashes broke out when opposition-affiliated armed groups and other hardliner Islamic groups, most notably Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades¹ and Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, forced their way into the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 8, following which the Syrian Government Air Force aimed at the city with several air raids, sending many of its families on a flight of displacement to other areas or to Turkey as a place of refuge. The city then became a landscape for a fresh series of confrontations that brought these groups against the Kurdish People’s Protection Units/YPG.

The clashes were matched with several violations and practices by the opposition-affiliated armed groups against the locals who remained in the city, ranging from abduction, holding civilians as captives and using them as hostages to looting and confiscation of public and privately-owned properties, not to mention the artillery shelling. The city also bore witness to airstrikes, conducted by the Syrian regular forces, due to which several civilian casualties

¹ Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades: An Islamic group founded in Aleppo Province following the break out of the armed conflict in Syria. The group was brought to existence by Hamoud Ghoul Aghassi (Abu al- Qa'qa'), originally from Aleppo Province, who was involved, as many sources indicate, in the creation of the initial nucleus of al-Qaeda Organization in Iraq through sending volunteer recruits to Iraq and al-Fallujah. The group encompassed 22 brigades under the command of Sheikh/Scholar Omar Hilal, a former jihadist who participated in the Iraq War in 2003. Most known of these brigades was the Toyour al-Ababil/ Abābīl Birds, led by Hassan Jazarah, who was executed along with six of the brigade’s militants, as each of them received a bullet in the head by the Islamic State/ISIS/Daesh at the square of the al-Atārib town, rural Aleppo, in late November 2013 on the charges of looting and pillage. The Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades was dissolved in 2014.

were recorded. These violations, committed by so-and-so sides, took a toll on dozens of innocent civilians.

As reported by numerous sources, the armed groups which took part in the attack against the city, particularly those affiliated with the opposition, were granted significant support by Turkey, especially since the latter has [openly](#) hosted the injured of these armed groups at its hospitals, while it provided the groups with food and ammunition via the border crossing, through which Turkish ambulances would pass back and forth to the city, entering it with loads of weapons and ammunition and carrying aboard the wounded militants of the armed opposition groups on their way out, to provide them with medical care, according to several of the city's residents and eyewitnesses.

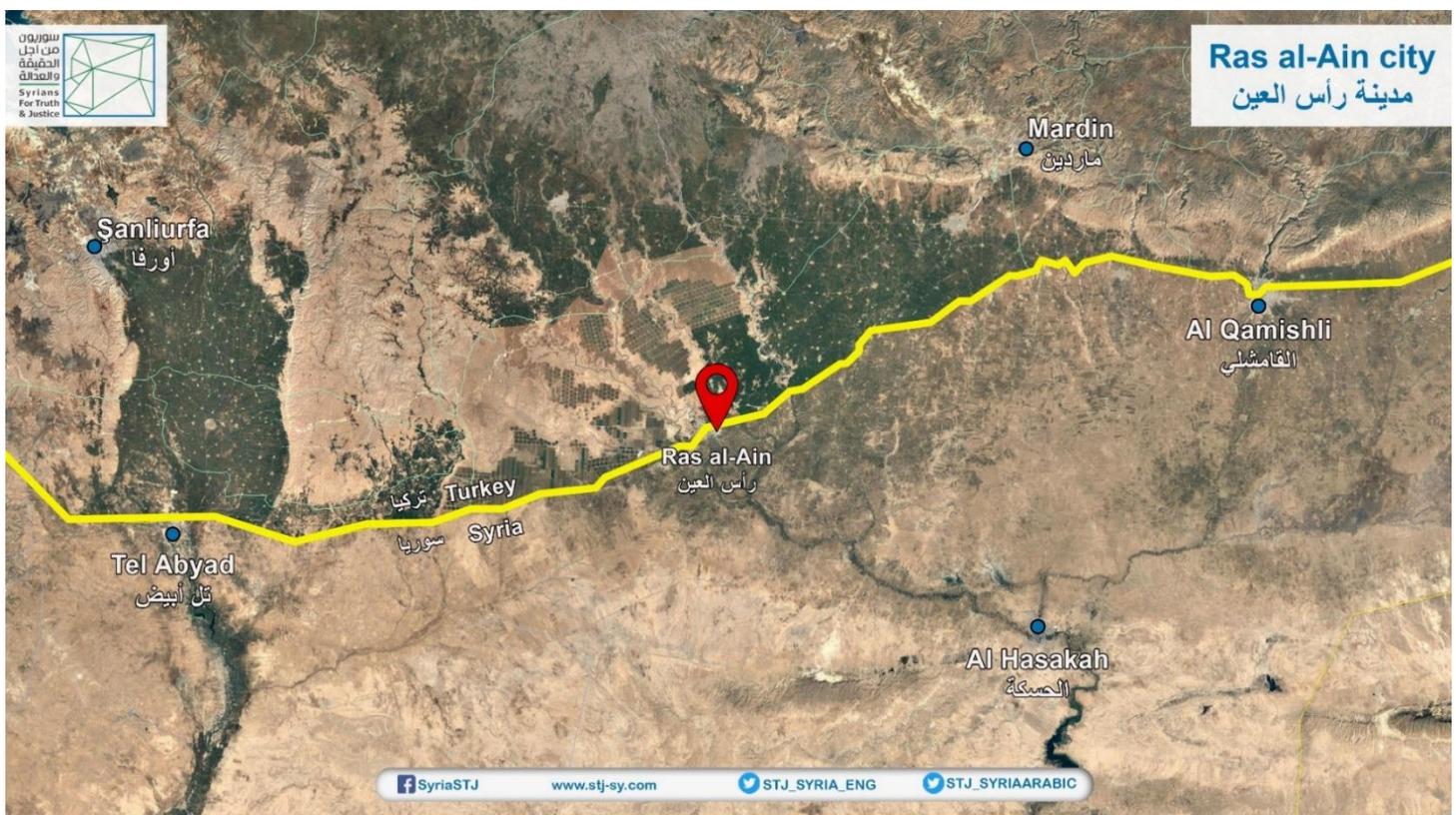


Photo no. (1)

2. Immediate Turkish Intervention to Regain Control over the City in 2019:

In 2019, the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani was turned into a front for military action once again. On October 9, 2019, the Turkish forces, backed by the factions of the Syrian National Army/SNA, operating under the armed opposition, have embarked on a military operation

decoded Peace Spring² in northeast Syria, aiming to establish a safe zone on its southern borders, where two million Turkey-based Syrian refugees are to be housed.³

At the onset of the Turkish military operation in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, the majority of the area's population was rendered displaced, amounting to nearly 50,000 persons, after the city was subjected to airstrikes and artillery shelling on the part of Turkey and the Ankara-backed militants of the Syrian National Army, which preceded the escalation of the clashes with the Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF that attempted to combat the Turkish offensive as dozens of civilians were stuck in the confrontation areas inside the city.

Up to October 17, 2019, Turkey, supported by the factions of the Syrian National Army, managed to impose a suffocating siege on the city and to take over almost half of it. The shelling that accompanied the Turkish offensive against the city resulted in dozens of civilian casualties. The Autonomous Administration, for its part, accused⁴ Turkey of using internationally prohibited/banned weapons during the offensive, after it documented burns sustained by cases rushed to the hospital in the town of Tall Tamr. While the Turkish Ministry of Defense denied⁵ these accusations, no mandated independent international committee succeeded to investigate into the use of internationally prohibited weapons by Ankara and the factions it backs to the date this report was written.

On October 17, 2019, Turkey concluded an agreement⁶ with the U.S. providing for the suspension of the Turkish military action in northeast Syria for (120) hours and the withdrawal of the SDF into a depth of (32) kilometers. However, the SDF accused Turkey and the factions

² "Erdogan: Turkey to Launch Military Operation in Northeastern Syria." Anadolu Agency, October 5, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 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%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%AC%D9%8A%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%B4%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA/1603022>.

³ "Erdogan: We can no longer hold back on the condition in eastern Euphrates." Anadolu Agency, October 1, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 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%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%85-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA/1599068>.

⁴ For further information, refer to: <https://www.facebook.com/952306884959249/posts/1130589620464307/>.

⁵ "Turkish Forces Did Not Use Internationally Banned Weapons during Operation Peace Spring, Ankara Confirms." Turkpress, on October 21, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 2019. http://www.turkpress.co/node/65713?fbclid=IwAR3ufYpGAR4rE5GVwd8_EMc_k7G4qmIc6oj6yiH-eeQMKFjnhVL-JyRfwP0.

⁶ "New op in Syria not necessary: Turkish Defense Ministry." Anadolu Agency, on October 23, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/operation-peace-spring/new-op-in-syria-not-necessary-turkish-defense-ministry/1623206>.

of the Syrian National Army of violating the Ankara-Washington agreement several times, for the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani was subjected to a Turkish artillery and aerial shelling.

Under the US-Turkey deal, the SDF announced⁷ the withdrawal of all its forces from the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on October 20, 2019, after which another announcement was made, however, by the NFL-affiliated armed groups, which Turkey backs, declaring their control of the full range of the city and massive areas of its countryside. On October 18, 2019, Amnesty International issued a report⁸, in which it accused the Turkish army and its allied armed opposition groups of committing horrendous violations and war crimes, such as summary killings and unlawful attacks that have killed and injured civilians, during the offensive into northeast Syria, including the killing of the Syrian-Kurdish female politician Hevrin Khalaf, the Secretary General of the Future Syria Party.

3. Report Methodology:

In terms of methodology, the report is based on a total of (12) testimonies and interviews conducted by the field researcher of Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ in September 2019 in person with eyewitnesses, who directly observed the events that broke out in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani between November 2012 and September 2013. In addition to this, dozens of open sources have been referenced in the report, where these events have been documented either by means of photos, videos, reports or news articles.

4. The Armed Opposition Groups' Clashes with the Syrian Regular Forces in Ras al-Ayen City:

These events started with the attacks undertaken by Syrian opposition-affiliated groups on the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani at the dawn of November 8, 2012, which aimed to take it over and ripe it out of the Syrian regular forces' grip that operated only symbolically in the city back then. The majority of the city's population, however, was not satisfied with the attacks, despite the fact that Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani was one of the Syrian cities that witnessed persistent peaceful anti-government demonstrations in 2011, the first of which was organized on April 8, 2011, less than a month into the breakout of the protests in Syria.

⁷ "SDF Forces Withdraw from Ras al-Ayin Putting into Force the Deal with Turkey." Arabic CNN, on October 21, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 2019. <https://arabic.cnn.com/middle-east/article/2019/10/21/syria-sdf-turkey-safe-zone-kurds>.

⁸ "Syria: Damning evidence of war crimes and other violations by Turkish forces and their allies." Amnesty International, on October 18, 2019. Last visited: November 4, 2019. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/10/syria-damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-and-other-violations-by-turkish-forces-and-their-allies/>.

According to STJ's field researcher, the residents of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani have met the invasion of the opposition armed groups of their city with contempt for several reasons, including the fact that the city, at the time, was a shelter for dozens of families displaced from other⁹ Syrian areas and that the Syrian regular forces were not holding an active position in the area, for their presence was limited to a number of volunteer security militants and the guards of the security centers only. Who had an active role in the city, contrastingly, were actually the Kurdish National Council in Syria¹⁰, the People's Council of Western Kurdistan¹¹, both are Kurdish entities, in addition to several coordination offices and opposition revolutionary movements, as well as military and security forces which back then were recently formed, such as the People's Protection Units/YPG and the Asayish/Domestic Security¹².

On a different note, the civilian residents were worried and scared of the repercussions that might be effected by the armed opposition groups' control of the city, manifested in battles and ongoing shelling, similar to what happened in Syrian cities previously taken over by the armed opposition groups, which should have been prioritized over the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani when it comes to the armed groups' support, according to the city's residents, the majority of whom shared the opinion that the city refuses to recognize all military forces and that its struggle is based on the principle of peace alone.

4.1. Civilians Gunned down by Armed Opposition Groups:

After the 8th of November 2012, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani never resembled the city it was a day before, for at 3:00 a.m. on that day, hundreds of militants, affiliated with armed opposition groups, invaded the city, headed by the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades and Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front. The incursion took place on three fronts — on the side of the border town of Tell

⁹ Such as Aleppo, Homs and Daraa, over the control of which the armed opposition groups and the Syrian regular forces were clashing.

¹⁰ The Kurdish National Council in Syria: An opposition political coalition founded on October 26, 2011, encompassing 14 Kurdish political parties, most notably back then were the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Syria/ PDK-S-the Party, the Kurdish Democratic Unity Party in Syria-Yekiti, the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party in Syria, Yekiti Party of Kurdistan in Syria and the two factions of the Kurdish Azadi Party in Syria, in addition to members of the civil society organizations, coordination offices, youth revolutionary movements and independent personalities. On August 27, 2013, the Kurdish National Council joined the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and started to foster the Rojava Peshmerga Forces in 2015 — an armed military unit of the Syrian Kurds, founded in Iraqi Kurdistan following the breakout of the armed conflict in Syria and is yet spreading there.

¹¹ The People's Council of Western Kurdistan: It was founded in December 2011, with its core being the Democratic Union Party/PYD in Syria, which is known for having close ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party/PKK. The council was formed in support of the peaceful democratic popular movement, seeking to change the very roots of the regime, at the levels of institutions and fundamentals, as highlighted in the conclusive statement of its first conference, held on December 19, 2011.

¹² A military force founded by the People's Council of Western Kurdistan, the core of which is the Democratic Union Party/PYD.

Halaf, located 5 kilometers to the west of the city, through the Turkish border on the side of the Ronahi Neighborhood to the north of the city, and finally through the border crossing that separates the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani from the Turkish city of Jilan Binar, which has been closed for a long time on both sides of the Syrian-Turkish border strip. In a video¹³, posted on YouTube channels on November 8, 2019, the attacker armed groups announced storming the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, al-Hasakah Province, and "liberating the area from the grip of the Syrian regular forces," as the announcement indicated.

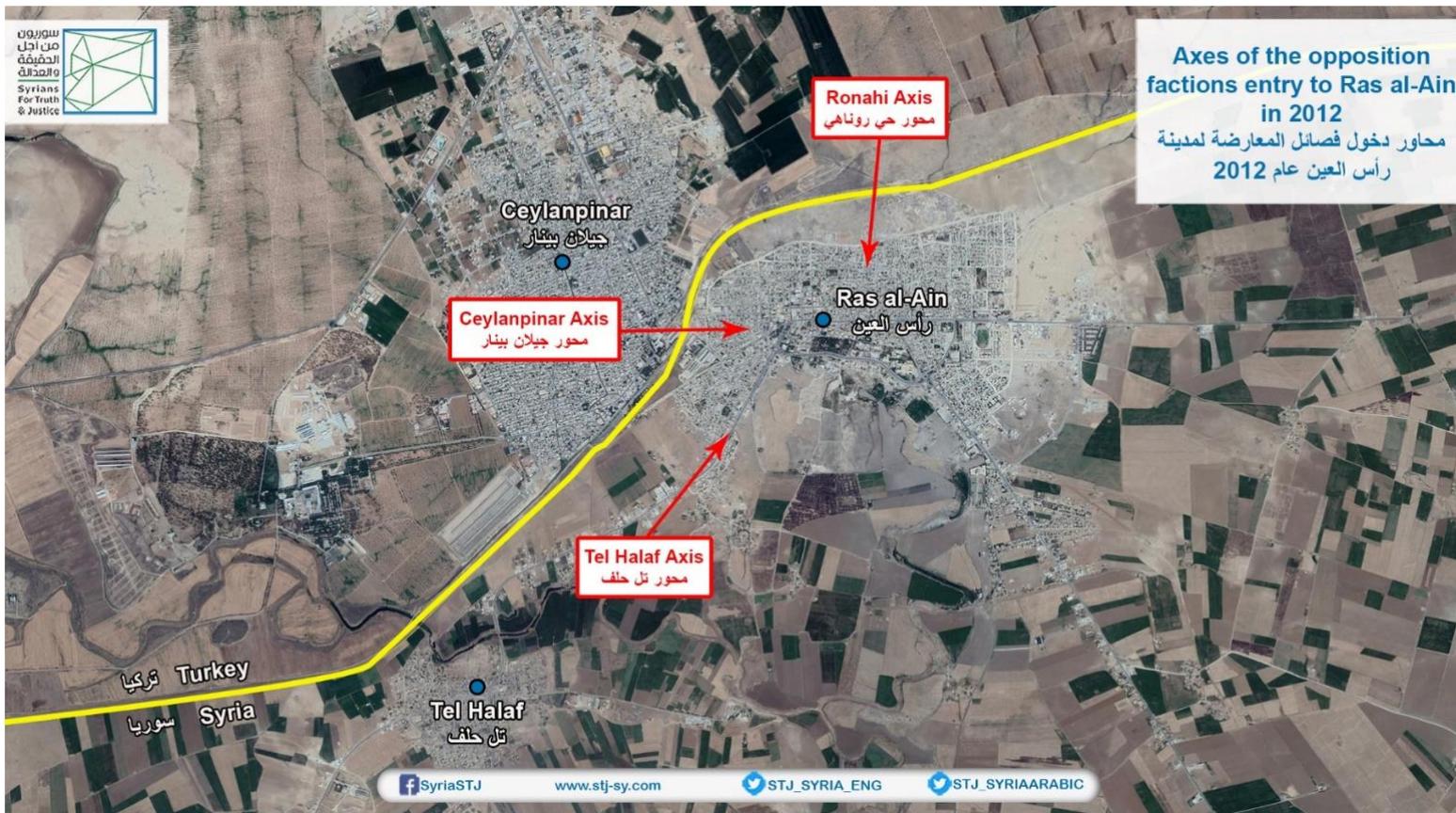


Photo no. (2)

¹³ A video, through which the opposition armed groups declared storming the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 8, 2012.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTRESipsR8c&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0WRpmy4_G-9nW-RzizDsDfK9HyeyJrhP7KOAC3u8hg6oBsxWa-exk9ufw.

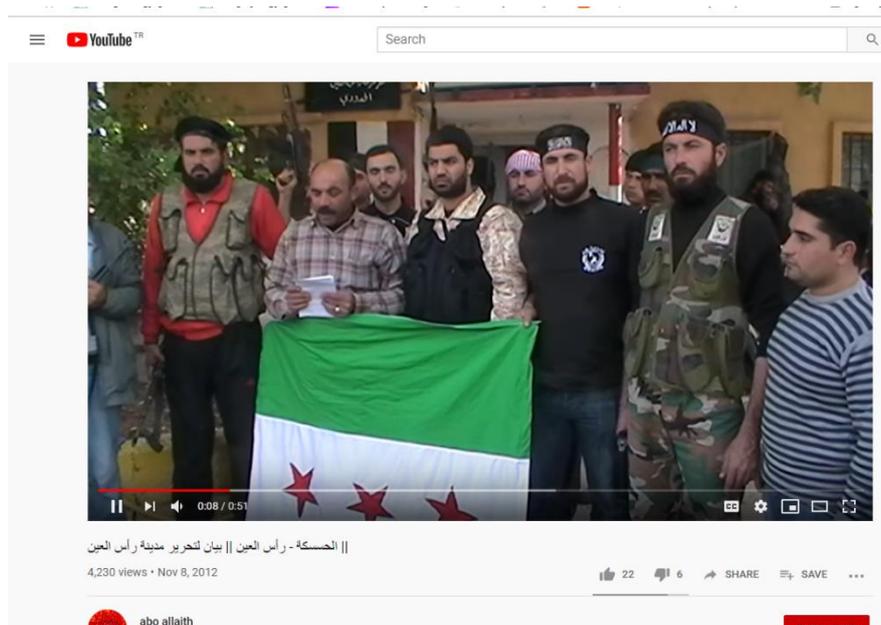


Photo no. (3) – The footage, taken from [the video mentioned above](#), depicts the exact moment on which the armed opposition groups announced their invasion of the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani city on November 8, 2012.

Published on November 7, 2012, a different video¹⁴ featured the militants of Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades entering the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani while chanting Islamic slogans.

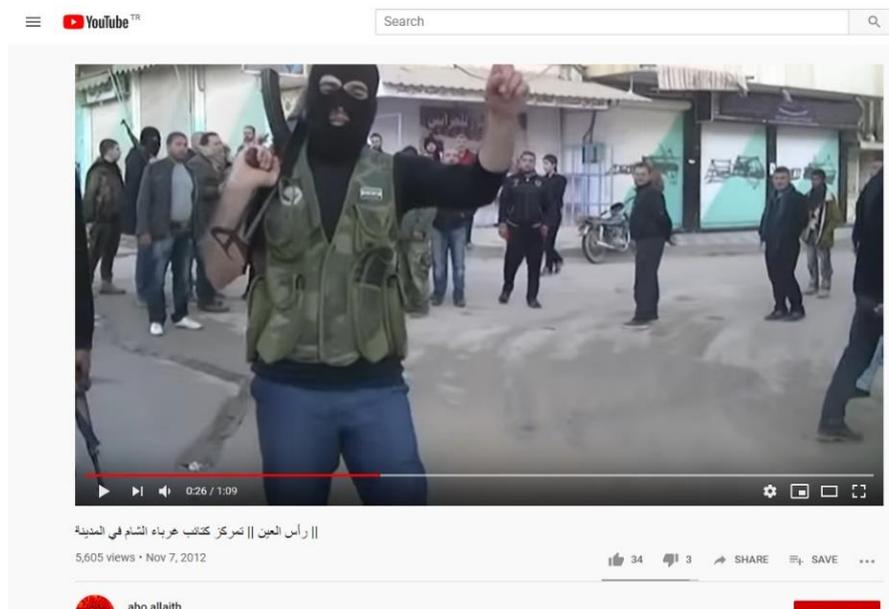


Photo no. (4) - The footage is taken from [the second video](#), which features the armed opposition groups entering and taking positions in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 7, 2012.

¹⁴ For further information, refer to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O74uGib_Yw.

That night, the city's sleeping people were shaken awake by the whizzing bullets and Takbīr (the Arabic phrase *Allāhu akbar* that is usually translated as "God is [the] greatest"), despite the fact that the city contained only three government security detachments: Those of the Political Security, the Military Security and the State Security. The number of personnel, in these detachments however, was no more than a 100 troopers, who decidedly avoided clashes with the protestors during the demonstrations, for this was the Syrian Government's general policy in addressing the demonstrations in the Kurdish areas. Nonetheless, when the armed opposition groups, which were at the zenith of their power at the time, in parallel with the gradual increase of the areas they were taking over in Syria, entered the city, most of the Syrian regular forces escaped the area and evacuated the security facilities, except for the Military Security Service's center, where only 12 troopers stayed and combated the armed opposition groups that encircled them, in addition to the Asfar-Najjar farm, 5 kilometers to the south of the city, where Syrian regular forces were stationed, that also was cordoned by the armed groups.



Photo no. (5) - The Asfar-Najjar farm. Photo credit: STJ, provided by journalist Sardar Malla Darwish.

The armed opposition groups' incursion into the city rendered a displaced man dead and two others, original residents of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, wounded, for the three were shot by one of the armed opposition groups, as Hikmat Mohammad (53 years), a member of the city's local council, operating under the Syrian Kurdish National Council, has reported to STJ. Mohammad narrated the following:

"A few months before the Free Syrian Army/FSA has entered the city, the Kurdish National Council-affiliated local council had formed people's committees, consisting of civilians, in each of the city's neighborhoods, which were tasked with guarding the neighborhoods at night as to prevent robberies. When the FSA stormed the city, one of its affiliated brigades passed through the Zaza Street, near the National Hospitable, known today as Roj Hospital. The brigade shot at the two civilians Shaikho Zaza and his son, along with them their guest, a man displaced from Deir ez-Zor, who was sitting with them in front of their house on their night shift of guarding the street. They were rushed to the hospital, for the father and the son were injured. The guest, however, passed away on the spot affected by his severe injury."

4.2. People Displaced; the Armed Groups are Predictably Extremist:

In the morning that day, a few hours into the armed opposition groups' incursion into the city, the clashes reached their peak between the latter and the personnel of the Syrian regular forces, who were fortified at the Military Security Center, located in the middle of the city, forcing thousands of residents out of their homes on a flight of displacement, as they feared the repercussions of the invasion and that the Syrian regular forces might retaliate with a ground attack or aerial shelling. Commenting on this, the 35 years old journalist from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, Abdulhalim Sulaiman Abdulhalim, who back then was the anti-Syrian government Orient TV's correspondent for the Kurdish section, told STJ the following:

"In the morning [of the invasion's day], the city bore witness to a massive wave of displacement, especially its western parts — the area expanding from the border with Turkey as far as half of the city's marketplace, including the al-Mahatah/Station Street and the governmental security headquarters. That is the area where the armed groups of the FSA were densely positioned and which turned into a site for armed confrontations. In a matter of a few hours, the city was almost depopulated. The people, for their part, were divided into a batch that sought refuge in Turkey through the borders adjacent to the city, and another that chose to escape to other areas within al-Hasakah Province or the farms and the villages located near the city, as well as its majority Kurdish northeastern neighborhoods, such as al-Hawarneh, known today as Zorava, and al-Kharabat, with its current name being Ronahi. In these neighborhoods, the People's Protection Units were to be found, and most of

the residents who stayed in the city were men, for the women and the children were sent out of the city, in preparation for any potential emergencies.”



Photo no. (6) – The civilian residents of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani displaced to Turkey as a result of the armed opposition groups’ invasion of the city. Taken on: November 8, 2012. Photo credit: Al Bayan newspaper¹⁵.



Photo no. (7) – The civilian residents escaping the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani to Turkey after it was stormed by the armed opposition groups. Taken on: November 8, 2012. Photo credit: [The Turkish Anadolu Agency](#).

¹⁵ Al Bayan newspaper: <https://www.albayan.ae/one-world/arabs/2012-11-08-1.1763173>.

On the mentioned day – that of the incursion – 70% of the population was displaced from the city, which used to house more than 40.000 persons. The Christian and the Yazidis were the first to contemplate fleeing Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, given the extremist characteristics featured by the militants of the armed opposition groups, who shouted slogans such as, Allāhu akbar/ God is [the] greatest, al-'izzatu li-llah/ Glory be to Allah and Qaeduna li-al-Abad, Sayedouna Mohammad/ Forever our leader; our master Mohammad, while they fought, not to mention the names of the involved armed groups, which included Ghuraba al-Sham, Allahu Akbar/God is the Greatest Brigade, Ahfad al-Rasoul/ Grandchildren of the Messenger and Jabhat al-Nusra/ al-Nusra Front. In addition to this, among the armed groups' commanders were two figures, Saddam al-Jamal and Muhaymen al-Tayee. The first, nicknamed Abu Rukaya al-Ansari, was the commander of the Allahu Akbar/God is the Greatest Brigade, who later on became the commander of the eastern region (al-Hasakah, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa) under the armed opposition-affiliated committee of chiefs of staff. He, then, pledged allegiance to Daesh/Islamic State/ISIS Organization and became one of its commanders in Der ez-Zor, particularly the Security Officer of the Euphrates State. Prior to his capture by the Iraqi Intelligence Service in the spring of 2018¹⁶, al-Jamal was accused of playing a part in burning to death Muath al-Kasasbeh, the Royal Jordanian Air Force pilot, for his aircraft was downed at the area where the al-Jamal was in command of security affairs. The second was Muhaymen al-Tayee¹⁷ who accompanied the armed opposition groups in their invasion of the Ras al-Ayen/Kani, entering the city riding a horse with a sword in his hand, for he was the operation commander of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades. He was featured in a video¹⁸, published on YouTube on December 26, 2012, being interviewed concerning the latest developments in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, with a number of militants posing behind him, wearing black masks, upon which Allāhu akbar/ God is [the] greatest is written, prior to his becoming one of the commanders of Daesh/Islamic State/ISIS. Al-Tayee died in the ISIS battles with the Syrian regular forces in Palmyra, central Syria¹⁹.

¹⁶ "Al-Jamal: Famed Syrian Slaughterer within ISIS Ranks held Captive in Iraq." The Syrian Network for Prints, on May 18, 2019. Last visited: October 28, 2019. https://snpsyria.org/?p=16121&fbclid=IwAR0WRpmy4_G-9nW-RzjzDsDfk9HyeyJrhP7KOAC3u8hg6oBsxWa-exk9ufw.

¹⁷ In a video published on social networking sites, Muhaymen al-Rumaid al-Tayee declared his defection from the ranks of the Syrian regular forces on May 29, 2011. He is also considered one of the founders of the FSA in al-Hasakah, for, after his defection, he joined Riad al-Asaad and was, in the beginning of the military action, responsible for securing support for the brigades in al-Hasakah and a number of the members of the Arabic tribes in al-Jawadiyah town. For further information, refer to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alqDQyfAuIU>.

¹⁸ For further information, refer to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPBzrHIKpVk&feature=youtu.be>.

¹⁹ "Islamic State Commander Muhaymen al-Tayee Killed in Battle of Tadmur." 7al.net, on May 18, 2015. Last visited: November 4, 2019. <https://7al.net/2015/05/18/%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D9%85%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84/>.



Photo no. (8) – The footage is taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), featuring Muhaymen al-Tayee, the commander of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades, behind him a number of militants wearing black masks, upon which *lā 'ilāha 'illā llāh-Muhammad Rasoulu llāh/There is no God but Allah-Mohammad the messenger of Allah*, is written.

In a video²⁰ published on November 11, 2012, Muhaymen al-Tayee, commander of the Ghurana al-Sham Brigades, appeared commenting on the bombardment of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani by the Syrian regular forces after it was taken over.



Photo no. (9) – The footage is taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), featuring the Commander of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades, Muhaymen al-Tayee, while he spoke of the shelling with which the Syrian regular forces have targeted the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani.

²⁰ For further information, refer to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNYHf8NVJ-o&feature=youtu.be>.



Photo no. (10) - the military ID of Muhaimin al-Rameid al-Tae.

A different video²¹, circulated by media activists on November 9, 2012, featured the armed opposition groups raiding the Military Security Service's headquarters in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on the same day. In the video, the militants of the armed opposition groups were repeating slogans such as, Allāhu akbar/ God is [the] greatest, al-'izzatu li-llah/ Glory be to Allah and Qaeduna li-al-Abad, Sayedouna Mohammad/ Forever our leader; our master Mohammad, particularly after the minute (1:20).

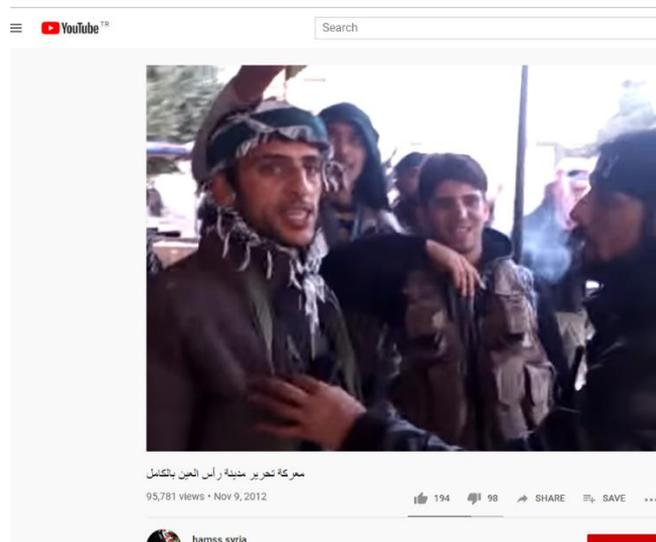


Photo no. (11) – The footage is taken from [the above- mentioned video](#), featuring a number of the armed opposition groups, repeating Allāhu akbar/ God is [the] greatest, upon storming the Military Security Service's headquarters in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani.

²¹ A video published on November 9, 2012. Last visited: November 4, 2019.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOJuoVBeuQ0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1E9rZWOiPv-uuLwu3W49YdR_A7Re7BBgFWq9wWTZcTOiVLaVGBreWrw9o.

4.3. Execution of Security Personnel/Captive Troopers who Handed Themselves in:

The clashes between the armed opposition groups and the Syrian regular forces at the headquarters of the Military Security Service, central Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City, continued for about 48 hours, during which the forces relentlessly resisted. On November 9, 2012, the armed opposition groups took over the headquarters²², after they killed most of the personnel of the Syrian regular forces and coerced the surviving ones into a surrender, to thus control the full range of the city. The armed opposition groups have also confiscated massive amounts of weapons and ammunition, abandoned by the Syrian regular forces at the Military Security Service's headquarters, as shown by a video²³ published on November 10, 2012.



Photo no. (12) – The footage is taken from [the above- mentioned video](#), featuring the militants of the armed opposition groups, taking hold of massive amounts of the weapons and ammunition abandoned by the Syrian regular forces at the Military Security Service's headquarters , after they became in control of it on November 9, 2012.

²² A video, published on November 10, 2012, features the armed opposition groups after they had taken over the Military Security Service's headquarters in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-y5WS9LBd0&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0VmXsldVZG0zKksA5Sn0Ci2HKygGOq3Z25iH5cJlJbulgan8N-hO_Xdg.

²³ The video features the FSA-affiliated armed groups confiscating significant amounts of arms and munition, left behind by the regular forces at the headquarters of the Military Security Service after it was controlled by the FSA on November 9, 2012.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzRlcf3n6I&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR35Y2ucBAab8PZE1QcW_gLlr c4j163gZ4N2h8QpAO_z-XZH42VJ0ijDxDg.

While the confrontations over the Military Security Service's headquarters ended, the clashes between the two sides, aiming to control the Asfar-Najjar Farm, located to the south of the city, continued, as reported by the 40 years old civil activist Ahmad Hesso, who was in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani back then. He described to STJ the scene where the armed opposition groups won hegemony over the city, saying:

"Once in control of the city of Ras al-Ayen/SariKani, the armed groups embarked on sabotaging and inflicting damage onto the contents of the public government centers, both military and civil ones, including the Cultural Center, the Civil Registry and the Trading Block, among others. They also executed a number of the regime's captives, who gave in during the clashes, by subjecting them to a firing squad. In addition to this, on the walls of the city, they wrote extremist slogans, some of which were close to the al-Qaeda's diction, such as 'al-Baghdadi is coming.' The vehicles of the armed opposition groups roamed the city, on board of which were dozens of militants, fully armed, carrying swords and daggers. They were repeating the Takbir, threatening any one that would stand in their way. This inflated the residents' contempt for them and damaged the image that the pro-Free Syrian Army people had in mind."



Photo no. (13).



Photo no. (14).



Photo no. (15).

The three images feature the Government Trading Block in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, after it was sabotaged and set on fire by the armed opposition groups following their control of the city on November 9, 2012. Photo credit: Huna Sari Kani/ Here Is Sari Kani Facebook page.

5. Syrian Regular Forces Withdraw from Several Areas in al-Hasakah Province:

Following the armed opposition groups' control of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani at a sporadic pace in less than a week, the People's Protection Units/YPG declared its gradual control of various areas in al-Hasakah province, which it took over one after the other, including Ad Darbasiyah, Amuda, the two towns of Tall Tamr and al-Maabadah/ Girkê legê, as well as the city of al-Malikiyah/Dayrik, which sought to block the roads before the armed opposition groups that aimed to control these areas, for the latter have accused the Units of coordinating with the Syrian Government and taking over these areas without a fight, as no clashes between the two sides have taken place while they mutually controlled the two cities of al-Qamishli/Qamishlou and the al-Hasakah.

6. The Burial of the Syrian Regular Forces' Dead Bodies:

Once the clashes between the armed opposition groups and the Syrian regular forces reached a halt within the city, the Kurdish National Council in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani embarked on burying the bodies of the dead Syrian regular forces, which spread inside the military facilities or near them. Speaking of the motivation behind the burial, Hikmat Mohammad told STJ the following:

"In the beginning, the FSA-affiliated armed groups refused the idea, and said: 'leave them there, let the dogs feed on them!' However, at the local council, we insisted on gathering the dead bodies and burying them, triggered by the humanitarian values that the Kurdish National Council adopts and to prevent the dead bodies from decaying and, thus, the bad smells they would release from spreading, in addition to the diseases they might cause. Accordingly, we gathered the bodies in a Jack car and dug a mass grave, with the help of a number of the area's people, within the city's graveyard. We, then, buried them there. Before we had the chance to close the grave with dust, the family of one of the dead, who was a recruit performing the mandatory military service, showed up. The family took the dead body of their son, and we continued closing the grave."

7. Desecration of the Kurdish Flag:

Upon celebrating their victory over the Syrian regular forces on November 9, 2012, a militant of the armed opposition groups took on a disrespectful attitude of the flag of Kurdistan, officially adopted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, ordering one of the Kurdish young men who was participating in the festivities to lower it down. This gave rise to indignation within the

Kurdish community, after a video²⁴, which went viral on the social networking sites on November 9, 2012, put the incident in a clear view.



Photo no. (13) – The footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), features the militants of the armed opposition groups, preventing raising the flag of Kurdistan on November 9, 2012.

Commenting on this, the 35 years old journalist Abdulhalim Sulaiman Abdulhalim, from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, told STJ the following:

“Dozens of the anti-government residents of the city went to the headquarters of the Military Security Service, where the militants of the FSA-affiliated armed groups were celebrating their victory, repeating Takbir. The residents followed their suit and repeated the same expressions— some were showing support; other were driven by fear. There was a Kurdish young man, who was holding high the flag of Kurdistan, also in celebration. However, this was before he got attacked by one of the FSA’s militants, who ordered the flag down, saying: ‘Were you men, you would

²⁴ A video featuring one of the FSA-affiliated armed groups’ militants asking a Kurdish young man to lower down the Kurdish flag near the Military Security Service’s headquarters, after the armed groups took it over on November 9, 2012.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZVUMgzgdiY&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1E9rZWOiPv-uuLwu3W49YdR_A7Re7BBgFWq9wWTZcTOIVLaVGBreWrw9o.

have liberated the city by yourselves," which effected a massive wave of contempt among the Kurdish people."

8. Christians Flee; Their Churches Trespassed on:

In early 2012, the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani was a home to 170 Christian families, mostly Syriac-Assyrians, in addition to 27 Armenian families. Nonetheless, after the events that the city bore witness to towards the end of 2012, most of the Christian families abandoned the city and never returned later — following the expulsion of the armed opposition groups out of it. Only a few families marked their way back home, for today there are only 40 Syriac families and no more than 11 Armenian ones in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani.

Fraij Kshaishan (59years), the current patron of the Armenian denomination, was one of the few Christians who stayed at the city during the events. He narrated to STJ what he bore witness to when once he went to the St. Hagop Armenian Orthodox Church for the Sunday prayers on November 11, 2012. He said:

"That day, I went to the Church to hold the prayers. I was, however, taken aback by about 15 militants at the churches' yard. They were resting there, for most of them were either sitting down or just lying around. I did not even look at them. I headed to the churches' hall and conducted the prayer. I then went out without even greeting them, so they would understand that the place is scared and that they are not allowed to stay there. They, for their part, tried to make me afraid in an indirect way, through carrying up their machine guns, cocking them and maybe directing them at me. I never looked in their direction. I just hurried to the gate and went back home."

According to STJ's field researcher, the same thing happened at the city's other churches, for the armed opposition groups have at different times raided the Orthodox Syriac Church of St.Thomas (Mar Thoma) and the Church of Mary Magdalene, designated for the Orthodox Syriacs as well, where they sought protection during the clashes.

9. Robbing Civilians' Houses and Possessions:

Having had full control over the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, while the confrontations between them and the Syrian regular forces were yet ongoing concerning the Asfar-Najjar Farm, south of the city, a number of the armed opposition groups' militants embarked on confiscating the houses and the possessions of the security personnel, who either died or

escaped. The armed groups have also emptied several of the civilians' houses of furniture and other household objects, not to mention breaking into and robbing the houses and the shops of many others, and setting ablaze the al-Karam Supermarket, the owner of which was Karam Issa Karmou, a Syriac resident. Ahmad Hesso, 40 years old civil activist, reported to STJ the details of one of the robberies he bore witness to back then. He said:

"One night, I was with my cousin near the Abdulrahman al-Ghafki Elementary School. We heard a noise coming from Hassan Al Rushi's, a pro-regime civilian, house and a light beaming out of it. Upon approaching the house, 12 of the FSA's militants emerged out of it. We asked them what they were doing there. They told us that the owner of the house is a loyalist to the Ba'athist regime, so they were looking for documents and evidence of importance to them. When they left the place, we went into the house, only to see that they have robbed all its contents."

10. Civilian Casualties, Children included, due to the Aerial Shelling of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City:

On the fifth day into the confrontations between the armed opposition groups and the Syrian regular forces, stationed in the Asfar-Najjar Farm, to the south of the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City, particularly on November 12, 2012, the city was subjected to three air raids by the Syrian Air Force, which aimed at the residential neighborhoods. That morning, a MiG Fighter targeted the al-Mahatah al-Shamali/Northern Station Neighborhood, adjacent to the Turkish border strip and close to the granaries. The airstrike rendered dead seven civilians at least and injured many others, in addition to the full destruction of more than six houses. On November 12, 2012, media activists circulated a video²⁵, where the houses at the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood were being subjected to airstrikes by the aircraft of the Syrian Air Force.

²⁵ A video showing the first moments of the aerial shelling with which the warplanes of the Syrian Air Force have targeted the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City on November 12, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTONIqPfx0E&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR29KdU2GIC1LkDBIvK0VkJQ-0k1ygLOhxKvdj1OCNgRW8MJvATC106W7VTc>.



Photo no. (17) – The footage is taken from [the above--mentioned video](#), in which the residential streets at the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, are being subjected to aerial shelling by the warplanes of the Syrian regular forces on November 12, 2012.

According to the local council, operating under the Kurdish National Council, the names of the casualties, who died in the aerial shelling on the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood that day, are: Ali Shaikh Mousa, a key politician of the Kurdish Azadi Party, his son Kaniwar Shaikh Mousa, Dunia Ameen, Ahmad Ismail, Mushirah Marjeh, her son Sulaiman Marjeh and Jwan Nijem ed-Din.

A few hours separated the first aerial raid from the second, which this time targeted the al-Hawarneh Neighborhood, known as Zorava today, located to the northeast of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. The airstrike was conducted at noon that day, which the area's residents did not expect, especially since a part of them were already taking refuge at the neighborhood, leaving their houses at other parts of the city. The shelling was surprising, for there were no militants of the armed opposition groups in the Kurdish majority neighborhood, which back then was held by the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG. The air raids rendered no less than five civilians dead and caused the injury of many others, not to mention the bodies that were stuck under the rubble, for the needed equipment to recover them were not available. In addition to civilian casualties, several houses were either fully or partially destroyed.

The names of the civilians who died in the shelling are: Raiber Aowni, Azzo al-Hajouh, Mahmoud Atti, nicknamed Mahmoud Hajjouh, his son Masoud Atti and the little girl Ayah Masoud Atti.

On November 12, 2012, Bankin Atti (28 years), from the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and is known as Bankin Hajjouh, lost three family members in the aerial bombing that targeted the al-Hawarneh/Zorava Neighborhood. He lost to death, his father, brother and his niece. Both himself and his second brother injured at the day, Bankin reminisced about the incident and recounted the following to STJ:

"We have had just finished lunch and were washing our hands. I heard my brother say: 'Here it is.' It was just a second, and I felt that the sky has crushed against the earth. I could not see anything but dust. There was pain all over my body. A huge water tank and part of the house's wall have fallen above- me. I saw my father and brother on the ground. I also heard my sisters screaming, not knowing where to go. Should they run to me or to my brother and father? I was conscious of all that was going on around me, but did not have the power to move."

Bankin Atti was rushed to a hospital in Turkey, for his body was full of shrapnel. His father, 55 years old Mahmoud Atti, his brother, 30 years old Masoud Atti, and his niece, 5 years old Ayah Atti, were all dead before reaching the hospital. Continuing his account, he added:

"I was first transported to the Turkish city of Jilan Binar, adjacent to Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, but due to my poor health conditions, I was taken from there to the city of Urfa. I heard the doctors saying that one of my legs must be amputated, for it was full of shrapnel and was all damaged, which makes it difficult to treat. I had no idea what happened to my family, as I lost conscious on the way, and did not wake up until five days later. They had actually treated my leg, and I was deposited at the intensive care unit. I saw only doctors and nurses. My body was still exhausted, and I lacked the energy for talking, let alone moving."

Not knowing that he was still alive, which the family became aware of a few days after the shelling, Bankin's death news also spread, and the family, which back then moved to their home city Ayn al-Arab/ Kobani, had already held a funeral ceremony for Bankin as well, along with that of his father, brother and niece. He commented on this, saying:

"On the fifth day from the incident, the nurse placed me on a trolley and took me for a scan. Passing through the hospital's corridors, I heard a voice calling my name. I looked around and saw that it was one of my acquaintances, Murad Abu Sarhad, from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. He noticed me by chance and told me that he will call my family to inform them that I was still alive, for they have lost my trace and have

heard that I was already dead. They have also set up my funeral tent. I remember that I could not speak back then, so I only shook my head in agreement. Two additional days passed, but nothing happened. On the eighth day of me getting wounded, my paternal cousin Hassan showed up."

Hassn Atti hid the truth from his cousin Bankin and told him that it was only him who got injured in the shelling, while the rest of the family were all good, so he would not relapse. However, Bankin discovered the truth after he was released from the hospital and returned to Syria. Crying, he described the shock and the sorrow that filled his heart upon hearing the news of losing three of his family members on that day. He said:

"I trusted my cousin, who succeeded in deceiving me. He stayed with me at the hospital for the day 16 into the shelling incident, on which our neighborhood was a target to the air raid. On that day, I was released and, having somehow recovered, we immediately headed to the border crossing in the Syrian city of Tell Abiad. We crossed it, taking the road to Ayn al-Arab/ Kobanî. The house was crowded with people, dozens of family members, relatives and neighbors, who came to pay us a visit. I could feel it, something wrong was going on and that the things were not exactly okay. I asked my family about my father, brother and niece, after which they could not keep the matter a secret any longer. I heard the heartbreaking news, which back then drove me into a frenzy of tears; the news which yet pushes me to cry."

The shelling that targeted the al-Hwarneh, today known as Zorava Neighborhood, made the rest of the civilians anxious and gave rise to fear, who felt that the airstrikes might target them wherever they are. Due to this, the majority of the city's residents fled to the neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city or to its neighboring villages. Several of the residents also decided to immigrate, triggered by the fear and the tension they went through. Indeed, no more than an hour after the second air raid, the Habash Bakery Street, near the street where the city's main market was located, was subjected to an air raid. It was the third for the day. It caused the injury of two civilians and the damage of several houses and shops on the street, which was almost empty of its residents back then.



Photo no. (18) – The destruction that befell one of the houses on the al-Hawarneh Neighborhood.
Photo credit: STJ, provided by journalist Sardar Malla Darwish.

On the next day, November 13, 2012, STJ's field researcher said, the city suffered three additional airstrikes, one of which targeted the Ras al-Ayen Sports Club's swimming pool and the doctors' residential block at the National Hospital, known today as Roj Hospital. The second raid, however, aimed at the Martyr Kevork Elementary School, while the third focused on the Military Security Service's headquarters, in the city center. The shelling that marked that day effected massive destruction but caused only light injuries, because the city was almost depopulated. Those who remained in the city were watching the happenings from afar, located near the Turkish border to the north of the city or in its suburbs. The People's Protection Units/YPG, for its part, had taken position in the Industrial Area, east of the city, where it set up a military checkpoint. The militants of the armed opposition, nonetheless, were spreading in small numbers in different parts of the city and on its outskirts, both western and southern, for the clashes were still raging between them and the Syrian regular forces at the Asfar-Najjar farm, south of the city.

Visual analysis of one of the airstrike carried out by pro-government jet fighters on residential areas in Ras al-Ayn. Nov. 13, 2019:



Photo no. (19).



Photo no. (20).



Photo no. (21).

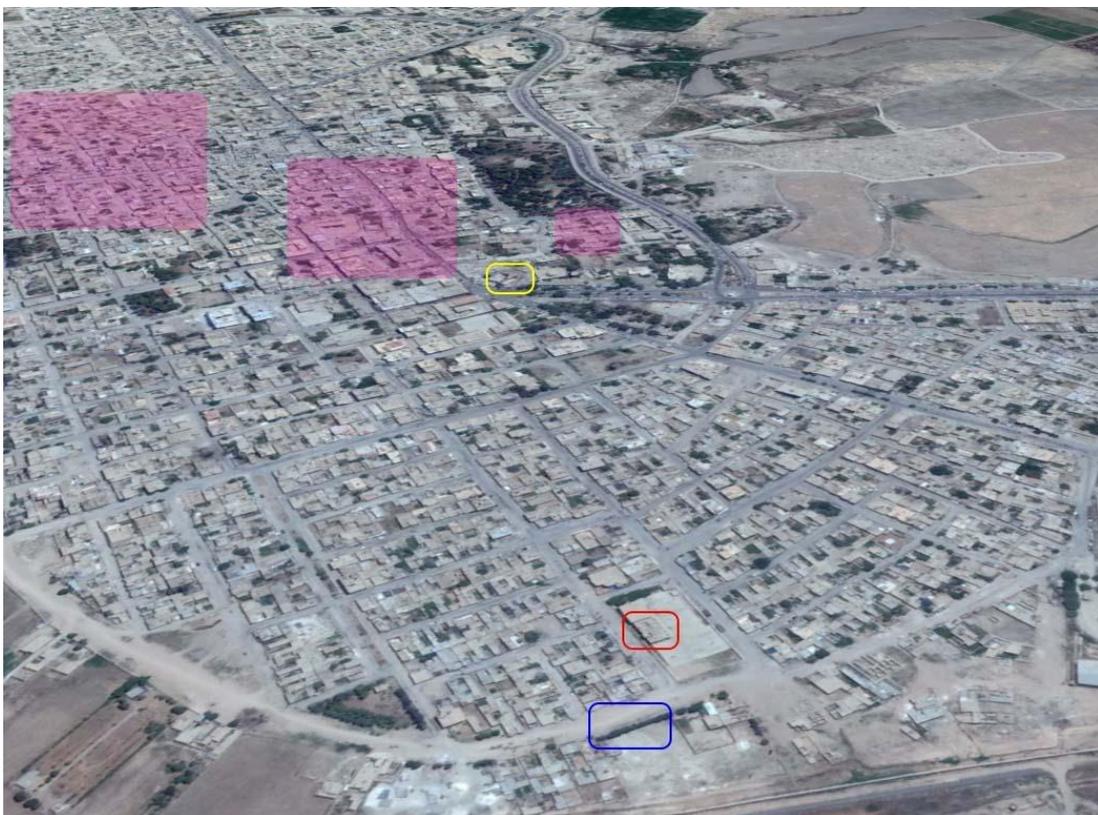


Photo no. (22).

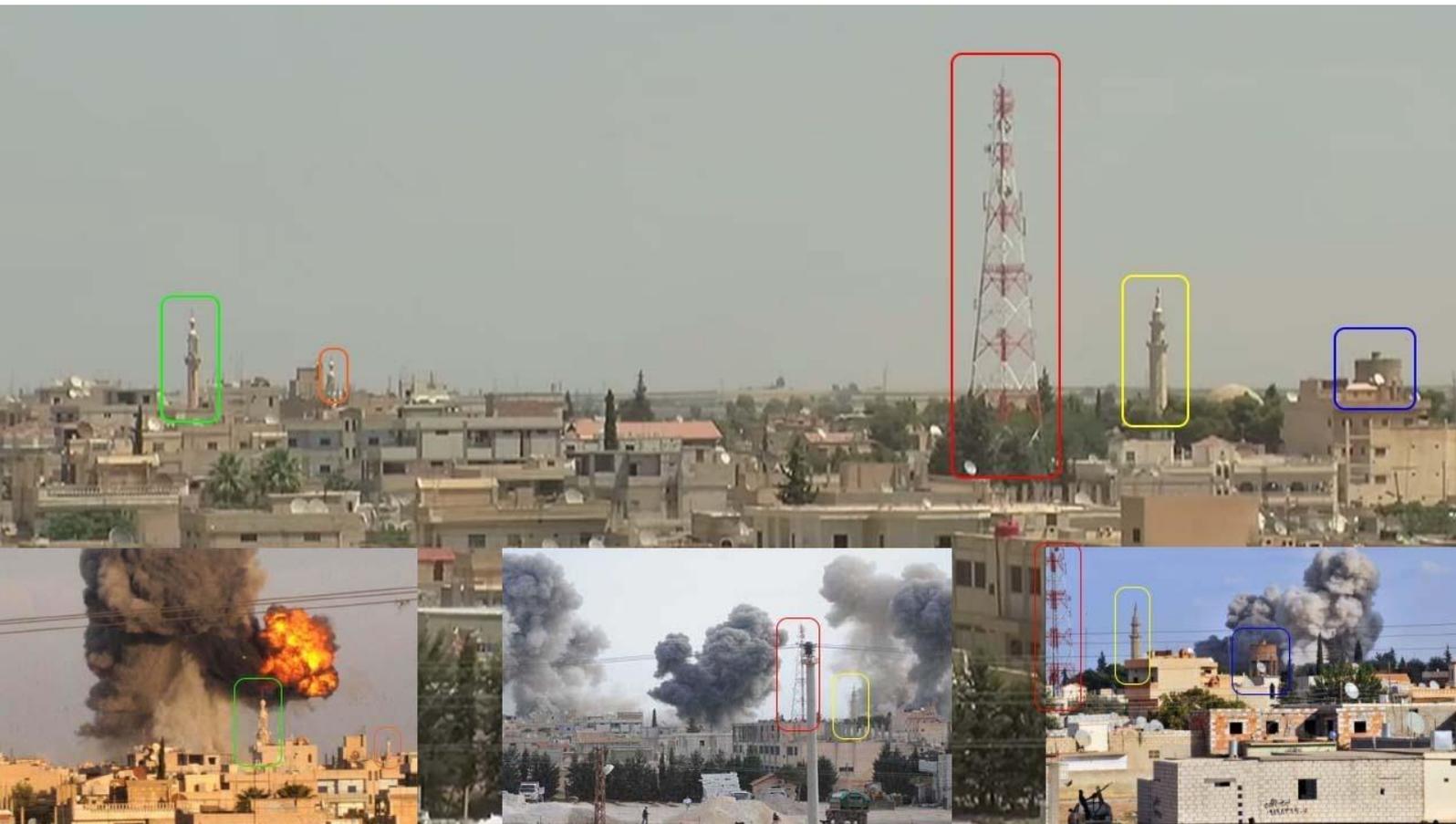


Photo no (23) - a screenshot from a [footage](#) shows bombardments on Ras al-Ayn/Sari Kani. Nov. 13, 2019.



Photo no. (24).



Photo no. (25) – The photos 16 and 17 show an aspect of the destruction that befell the swimming pool at the Ras al-Ayen Sports Club, caused by the airstrikes with which the warplanes of the Syrian Air Force targeted the city on November 13, 2012. Taken on: March 13. Photo credit: Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani Facebook page.



Photo no. (26).



Photo no. (27) – The photos 18 and 19 show an aspect of the destruction that befell the Martyr Kevork Elementary School, caused by the airstrikes with which the warplanes of the Syrian Air Force targeted the city on November 13, 2012. Taken on: March 13. Photo credit: [Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani](#) Facebook page.



Photo no. (28) – The photos shows an aspect of the destruction that befell one of the civilians' houses, located near the Military Security Service's headquarters in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, caused by the airstrikes with which the warplanes of the Syrian Air Force targeted the city on November 13, 2012. Taken on: March 13. Photo credit: [Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani](#) Facebook page.



Photo no. (29).



Photo no. (30) – The photos 21 and 22 show an aspect of the destruction that befell the al-Umal/Workers' Cafe, located near the Military Security Service's headquarters in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, caused by the airstrikes with which the warplanes of the Syrian Air Force targeted the city on November 13, 2012. Taken on: March 13. Photo credit: [Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani](#) Facebook page.

11. Armed Opposition Controls Afar-Najjar Farm:

For decades and until a few months of the armed opposition groups' invasion of the city, the Afar-Najjar Farm, located 5 kilometers to the south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, was a breathing place, to which the city's people and those from outside resorted, for the farm had an amazing natural scenery and abounded with fruitful trees, in addition to the water spring known as Ayen al-Zarqa which it incubated and the Khabur River, which passed in front of it. The farm, however, was doomed to lose its usual purpose, for a force of dozens of troopers, fully armed and equipped with ammunition, took position within it before the incidents that the city bore witness to. The confrontations between the troopers and the armed opposition groups continued for eight days before the latter managed to declare their full control over the farm on November 15, 2012. Following the death of several of the Syrian Arab Army's soldiers and the escape of many others, the armed opposition groups took possession of massive amounts of light and medium weapons, as well as ammunition. Taking over the Afar-Najjar Farm by the armed opposition groups on November 14, 2012, was shown in a video²⁶, exchanged by activists on November 15, 2012.

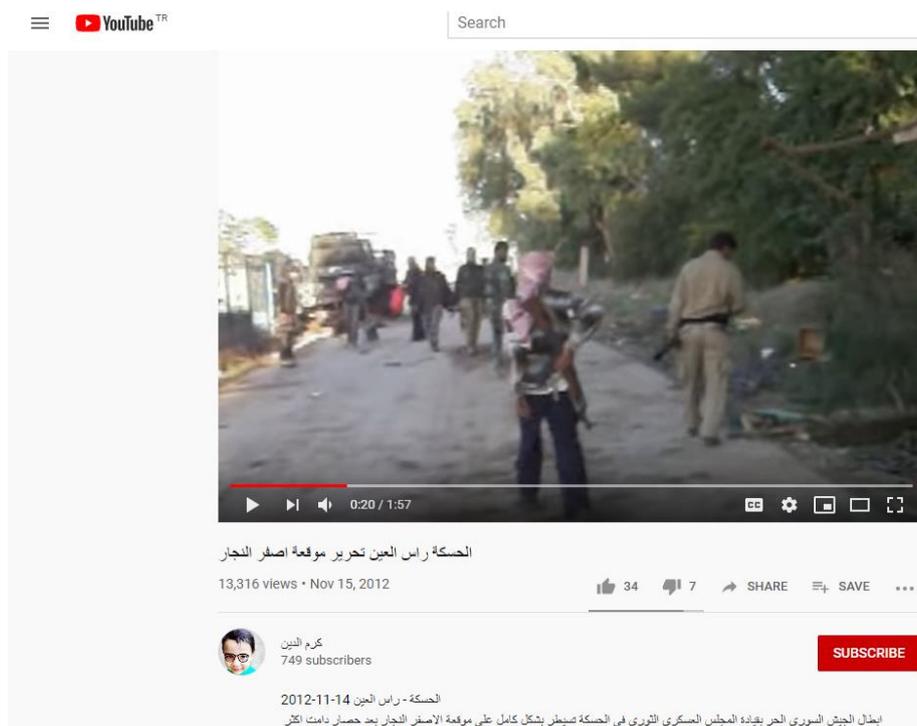


Photo no. (31) – The footage, taken from [the above--mentioned video](#), shows the armed opposition groups taking hold of the Afar-Najjar Farm, south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City on November 14, 2012.

²⁶ In the video, published on November 15, 2012, the armed opposition groups appear after they took over the Afar-Najjar Farm, south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5bM5Xs6E&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3dLEP9HQDl1zp45HJzfUrDgC8d_OnjoACnuMy68jfQO9c68krw75sVYbg.

In a video²⁷, broadcasted by the Al Jazeera on November 16, 2012, commanders of the armed opposition groups' brigades are interviewed, commenting on taking over the suburbs of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City, following violent clashes between them and the Syrian regular forces in the Asfar-Najjar Farm, south of the city.



Photo no. (32).



Photo no. (33) – The photos 32 and 33 show different parts of the Asfar-Najjar Farm, south of the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, taken before the armed opposition groups invaded the city. Photo Credit: Al-Hasakah Website.

²⁷ For further information, refer to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OROjBpH-q7s>.

Before the confrontations at the Asfar-Najjar Farm reached a halt, several of the Syrian Arab Army's soldiers managed to escape. An agreement seemed to have been conducted between the two sides, allowing for the exit of five high-ranking officers, which was preceded by efforts at mediation on the part of a number of the area's dignitaries and renowned personalities, who sought to put an end to the fight and to secure the safe passage of the Syrian regular forces. However, no agreement of the sort was officially announced.

Many of the escaping Syrian regular forces' troopers were killed by the armed opposition groups, which managed to reach them at their hiding places, for some took refuge in the fields; others resorted to nearby houses or farms, asking for help to escape and survive. Back then, several of the residents of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and its countryside helped the Syrian regular forces' troops, who did not wish to fight, to flee into a safe place. On this note, Hikmat Mohammad, the member of the local council, operating under the Kurdish National Council in the city, told STJ the following:

"A number of the Syrian Arab Army's soldiers, who escaped the Asfar-Najjar Farm, resorted to one of the nearby farms back then, which was held by the Free Army, thinking that it was housing civilians. The FSA's militants then arrested these soldiers and shot them to death. Other soldiers of the Syrian Arab Army took refuge in close houses and farms, south and west of the city, where the residents helped them to escape, triggered by humanitarian motives, for the majority of these soldiers were recruits, performing military service. That is they were forced into [fighting]. To our village, Twaimiyeh, south of the city, came four soldiers, after they concealed themselves in the fields for a whole day. The village's people helped them hide and then handed them over to their families."



Photo no. (34) – The dead body of one of the Syrian Arab Army's soldiers, who were shot to death by the armed opposition groups while trying to escape the Asfar-Najjar Farm, south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, before the armed groups' control of it on November 15, 2012. Photo credit: Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani Facebook page.

According to Hikmat Mohammad, the local council, affiliated with the Kurdish National Council, has also gathered the dead bodies of the Syrian Arab Army's soldiers, who got killed during the clashes or while attempting to escape. The bodies were buried in the city's cemetery, so that they would not decay and their smell start spreading. Later on, the families of the soldiers showed up and took back the bodies of their dead sons.



Photo no. (35).



Photo no. (36) – The photos 35 and 36 show the local council in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, affiliated with the Kurdish National Council in Syria, burying a number of dead bodies, belonging to soldiers of the Syrian Arab Army. Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani Facebook page.

12. Armed Opposition Groups Clash with People's Protection Units/YPG:

The city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani went quiet for about 72 hours following the end of the confrontations between the armed opposition groups and the Syrian regular forces. A group of the city's displaced residents have even returned; however, the whole population was waiting for the future to unfold with a heightened sense of caution, given the news that spread about the Syrian regular forces' preparations to regain the city, after they brought in massive military reinforcements, forgetting not the aerial shelling that might target the city once again. Clear tension also marked the relationship between the armed opposition groups and the People's Protection Units/YPG, which promised a clash between the two sides at any moment, at a time when the Kurdish Supreme Committee²⁸ called on the residents of Jazira Region/Al-Hasakah Province to participate in a demonstration, in solidarity with the residents of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 19, 2012, under the title: "Return Back Home," encouraging the displaced people to go back to their houses.

The idea of organizing such demonstrations was not exactly to the armed opposition groups' taste, due to which the armed opposition-affiliated Revolutionary Military Council, al-Hasakah Province, under the command of Colonel Hassan Abdullah held a meeting with the Kurdish National Council in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 18, 2012. According to Hikmat Mohammad, the member of the local council, operating under the Kurdish National Council, who attended the meeting, the demonstration was held, as viewed by the armed opposition groups, to challenge them, demanding that the Kurdish National Council seek to prevent it. The latter, however, refused to do so, asking the armed groups to deal appropriately with the residents and to remove all the armed groups out of the city, calling for the formation of a civil committee, of the locals themselves, to run its affairs.

1.12. First Spark of New Phase of Clashes:

A month before, on October 24, 2012, the General Command of the People's Protection Units/YPG announced the formation of its first affiliated brigade, called Martyr Ardal Brigade²⁹ in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, which was to be commanded by Jamshid Osman. During the events that the city witnessed following its invasion by the armed opposition

²⁸ The Kurdish Supreme Committee: It is a joint committee of the Kurdish National Council in Syria and the People's Council of Western Kurdistan, founded based on a memorandum of cooperation signed by the two councils on July 12, 2012, in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region's capital city Erbil/ Hewlêr, under the auspice of Masoud Barzani, the region's president back then. The committee was dissolved in 2013 due to a dispute between the two sides.

²⁹ "People's Protection Units Announces Formation of Martyr Ardal Brigade in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani." Al-Furat News Agency, close to the Autonomous Administration, on October 25, 2012. Last visited: October 30, 2019. https://anfarabic.com/akhr-l-khbr/ypg-t-ln-n-tshkyl-ktyb-lshhyd-rdl-fy-sryh-knyh-5559?fbclid=IwAR08gSWN86LEa9NOYWNfvQSerlHyPRI-VWnp_i10SzKs3A81ppFwAcrDp8A.

groups, the brigade was stationed in the Industrial Area, east of the city on the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-Ad Darbasiyah road, where it set up a military checkpoint. Later on, the brigade established another checkpoint to the south of the city, on the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-al-Hasakah road.

On the morning of November 9, 2012, before the start of the anticipated demonstration, the armed opposition groups have all been on high alert, mobilizing one of their forces to the Ad Darbasiyah road— the place where the demonstration was to kick off—before taking over the YPG-affiliated checkpoint, which the latter has positioned near the area of Mishrafah, 5 kilometers east of the city. The force lowered the Units’ flag and expelled five of its militants, who were at the checkpoint. Two goals were to be realized through this move, a YBG militant at the time, who refused to reveal his name for security concerns, told STJ: The first was to prevent the people of Jazira, who were on their way to the city, from reaching it, and the second was to cordon the YPG from every direction, as to deny it supplies in case a clash was to break out between the two sides, which was most likely to happen, and thus vanquish the YPG easily.

Following this incident, a committee of the armed opposition, consisting of the commanders of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades and the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, went to the Industrial Area to meet with the Kurdish People’s Protection Units/YPG, following calls between the two sides in an effort to realize a “mutual understanding and put an end to the sedition.” Contrary to the end hoped for, the head of the People’s Council of Western Kurdistan, the journalist Abed Khalil, was killed by sniper fire during the meeting. The Units then accused the armed opposition groups of standing behind the incident, triggering an armed confrontation between the two sides in the Industrial Area, which resulted in the death of one of the armed opposition groups’ commanders/Prince Majed al-Abdallah Abu Assad al-Din, the leader of the Ibad al-Rahman/Worshipers of the Merciful Brigade, under the Dire al-Hasakah/Shield of al-Hasakah Legion, who was born in the al-Ghwairan Neighborhood, al-Hasakah City. In addition to the commander, several of the armed groups’ militants died and many were injured on both sides.

2.12. First Round of Confrontations:

The armed opposition militants then executed Khalid Qwaikan, a member of the Asayish/Domestic Security Forces, who was injured during the clashes, and Salah Ayo, a member of the People’s Council of Western Kurdistan, shooting both to death after they held them captive, when Salah was rushing Qwaikan to the hospital.

A few hours from the confrontations, the armed opposition groups were almost in full control of the city, except for parts of the northern and eastern neighborhoods —al-Hawarneh, known as Zorava today, and al-Kharabat, recently called Ronahi. The armed opposition groups also held captive several of the Kurdish People’s Protection Units/YPG’s militants on the al-Hasakah road, in addition to a number of civilian Kurds. In sync, the armed opposition’s

militants encircled the Industrial Area, where violent confrontations brought them together with the Osman Jamshid-led YPG, for the latter encompassed about 30 militants only, whose munition was limited to small arms and light weapons.

According to information obtained by STJ from commanders of the People's Protection Units/YPG and activists from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, the confrontations led to power cuts throughout the city and dozens of villages in its surrounding, for the cables of the power towers were damaged by bullets. Nonetheless, the confrontations lasted for about 24 hours, over which the People's Protection Units/YPG, after it was backed by reinforcements from the rest of the areas in the Jazira Region/al-Hasakah Province, managed to regain the northeastern part of the city, including the total area of the al-Hawarneh Neighborhood, Zorava today, and parts of the al-Kharabat Neighborhood, currently known as Ronahi, in addition to the full range of the Industrial Area and the Ad Darbasiyah road. The armed opposition groups, however, retreated to their posts.

The outcomes of the confrontations were the death of four of the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG's militants and the Asayish/Domestic Security Forces, and two civilians, the president of the People's Council of Western Kurdistan, the Journalist Abed Khalil, and a member of the council, Sala Ayou, in addition to more than 17 militants of the armed opposition groups. On November 20, 2012, the confrontations reached a halt, owing to a truce between the two sides, following the intervention of several Syrian oppositionists, tribes' dignitaries and social figures. The undeclared agreement, provided for a prisoner swap, to be followed by the withdrawal of all militants from the city and the return of the displaced residents to their homes. The first term of the agreement was put into force, but both sides refrained from implementing the second, thus holding on to their positions within the city.

3.12. Second Round of Confrontations:

One day into the truce, on November 21, 2012, new confrontations broke out between the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG and the armed opposition groups in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani; the reasons to the confrontations were unidentified, however.

According to the information obtained by STJ from local activists, the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front had back then summoned more than 200 militants from the border city of Tell Abiad, west Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, while the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades brought in a 100 militants and military reinforcements, including three tanks which it seized during clashes in Raqqa Province, and transported them through Turkey to the border crossing in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. In return, dozens of Kurdish militants, based in the Kurdish areas in the Jazira/al-Hasakah Province, arrived into the city to back the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG.

This round of confrontations persisted for a few hours only, causing the death of a militant of the People's Protection Units/YPG and eight belonging to the armed opposition groups, which during the fight set on fire a house of a Yazidi civilian called Mohammad Khalil Bouzu and his shops, super markets, on the Tariq al-Hasakah/al-Hasakah Road Street, after robbing all their contents, attributing this to the fact that the owner was selling alcoholic drinks.



Photo no. (37) – One dimension of the house of the civilian Mohammad Khalil Bouzu on the al-Hasakah Road Street in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, after all its contents were robbed and then set on fire by the armed opposition on November 21, 2012. Photo credit: Huna Sari Kani/Here Is Sari Kani Facebook page.

The two sides stopped exchanging fire after a few hours, following the undeclared truce they concluded, which was to be sustained until a permanent agreement is reached between them, which took place in mid-December 2012. The agreement provided for demilitarizing the city, pulling out all military manifestations, and setting up joint military checkpoints at its gates, where both flags, the green/independence flag and the Kurdish flag, were to be raised, which is to be supplemented by the foundation of a civil administration of all the city's coexisting components as to run its affairs. However, none of the two sides withdrew from the city, and the rest of the terms were not put into action, despite the cessation of the clashes.

Contrary to the agreement's terms, the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG has on the next day, November 22, 2012, announced the organization of its forces in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and the foundation of a new force, called Martyr Abed Legion. The armed opposition groups and Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, for their part, stepped up deployment of their militants in the city.

13. Civilian Casualties, Children included, due to Sudden Air Raid:

The city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani did not witness any airstrikes by the Syrian Air Force following the armed opposition groups' control of the full range of its area and the Asfar-Najjar Farm on November 15, 2012, as if the Syrian regular forces have given up on the idea of regaining the city. However, on December 3, 2012, the city was raided by a Syrian Air Force-affiliated aircraft, near the al-A'alaf/Fodder Roundabout. The shelling rendered 12 civilians dead, three of whom were children, and injured 21 others, the majority of whom were transported to the Turkish city of Jilan Binar for treatment.

A video³⁰, published by local pages on social networking sites on December 3, 2012, shows the first seconds of the airstrike that targeted the area near the al-Aalaf Round about, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Knai, on the same day.

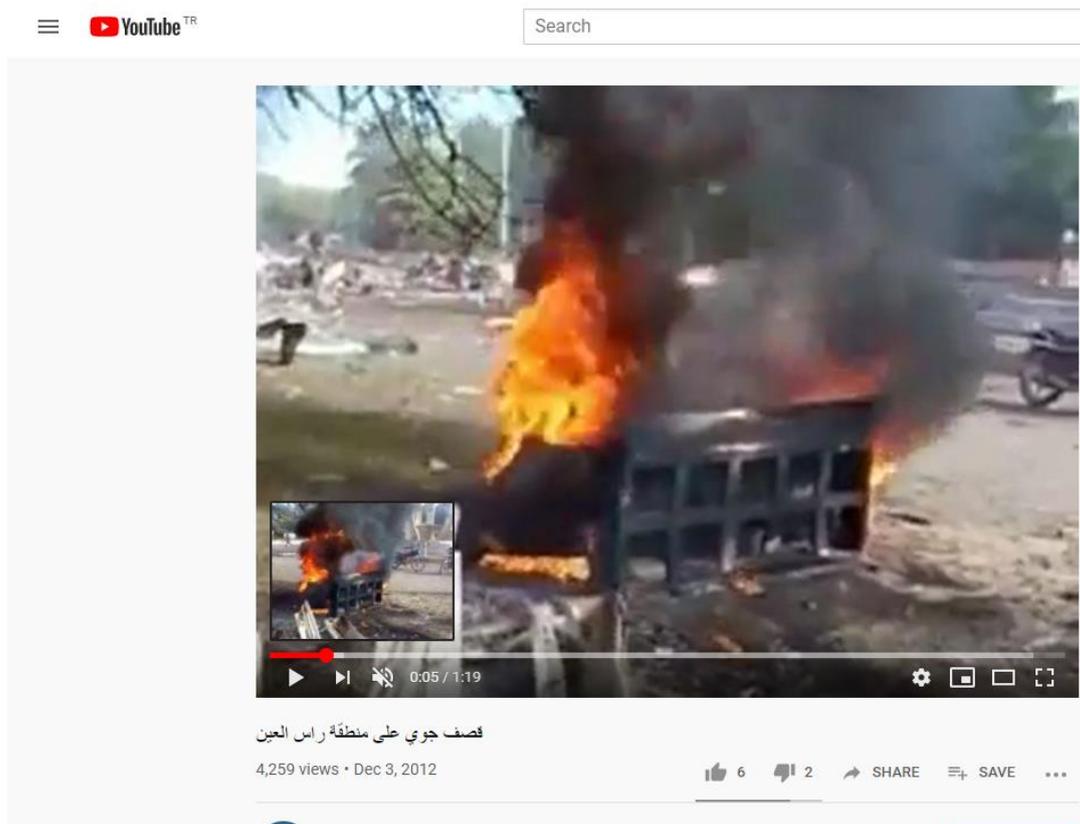


Photo no. (38) – The footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), shows the first a few seconds of the airstrike with which the Syrian Air Force hit the area near the al-Aalaf Round about in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on December 3, 2012.

³⁰ Video showing the first a few seconds of the airstrike with which the Syrian Air Force hit the area near the al-Aalaf Round about in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on December 3, 2012.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ziw_DnqLlr4&feature=youtu.be.

14. Dialysis Machines Robbed from the National Hospital

A few days into the ceased confrontations, the armed opposition groups made a post of the National Hospital, known today as the Roj Hospital, which was the only public hospital in the city that contained up-to-date medical equipment. The hospital back then continued to provide its services despite the shortage on staffers. But the armed groups stole the hospital's dialysis machines, after which it went out of service. Commenting on this incident, the 55 years old surgeon, Mohammad Khalaf, who was the Director of the National Hospital at the time, told STJ the following:

"An armed group of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades came to the hospital, saying that they were tasked with protecting it. The group consisted of 12 militants. Back then, I hid the major part of the hospital's medical devices and equipment, which were the most important, in one of its departments on the upper floor, to guard them from robberies. However, the dialysis machines were not among the concealed devices, for several patients who needed dialysis still resorted to the hospital for the procedure. A few days of the Free Army's positioning within the hospital, I was surprised that its militants have broken the doors to the Dialysis Section and stolen six of the machines there. They, nonetheless, denied having to do anything with the robbery, despite the fact that they were guarding the inside and the outside of the hospital."

The number of the armed opposition groups' militants in the hospital gradually increased, which rendered it out of service in early 2013. The hospital's closure triggered the surgeon Mohammad Khalaf, who with the help of the few remaining medical staffers, managed to open a First Aid Center in one of the city's dispensaries, which were also rendered out of service after the armed opposition groups invaded Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. The surgeon said:

"The contents of the eastern dispensary were all stolen. The western one, however, still preserved some of its equipment, supplies and medications. We, thus, transported its contents to the eastern dispensary, which we reopened to provide services to critical cases."

15. Foundation of Jbhat Tahriar al-Jazira wa-lFurat/ Jazira and Euphrates Liberation Front:

On December 26, 2012, the formation of the Jabhat Tahrir al-Jazira wa-lFurat/Jazira and Euphrates Liberation Front was announced, under the command of the Nawaf Ragheb al-Basheer, one of the sheikhs of the al-Baqarah/al-Bakarah Arab tribe and the back then-member of the Syrian National Council. The front declared that it encompasses 88 legions and

brigades from the provinces of al-Hasakah, Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, in addition to Idlib, which were to have a joint military leadership under the command of Colonel Khalid al-Wiss. The key points of the Front's statement of foundation were stressing a concord on Syria's unity, a rejection of dividing the country into shares on a sectarian basis and that the president of the upcoming transitional government does not be a defector politician or a militant, who would desert the Syrian Government when it is ousted.

Nawaf Ragheb al-Basheer, one of the al-Baqarah/al-Bakarah Arab tribe's sheikhs, who visited Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani after its invasion by the armed opposition groups, was accused by the city's residents, the Kurds in particular, of being the catalyst for the events that the city bore witness to, supported by the Turkish intelligence services, seeking to remove the Kurdish forces from the area and evacuate it of its Kurdish residents. Al-Basheer, for his part, accused the Kurdish people's Protection Units/YPG of affiliation with the Syrian Government, calling on the armed opposition to liberate the al-Hasakah Province from the grip of these forces.

16. Residents, the Kurds particularly, Getting Harassed:

Contrary to the provisions of the truce, concluded by the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG and the armed opposition groups in the aftermath of the second round of confrontations, both sides embarked on enhancing their military presence within the city, especially in the armed opposition-held area, for the militants of the groups made military posts of the civilians' houses and maximized their efforts at terrorizing and pressuring the city's residents, especially the Kurds. On this note, the civil activist Ahmad Hesso recounted to STJ an incident that he experienced on December 4, 2012. He said:

"I was driving my own car back from the town of Tall Tamr, 50 kilometers to the south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, accompanied by my paternal cousin and my friend Badran Mesto, back then-member of the Area Committee of the Yekiti Party of Kurdistan. Upon reaching the al-Hasakah Road Roundabout, today known as the Martyrs Roundabout, a number of the Free Syrian Army/FSA's militants stopped us and asked for our identity documents. After they inspected the documents, they arrested Badran Mesto and searched the car accurately. I was keeping a high school chemistry textbook in the car, for I am a chemistry and physics teacher. They asked me: 'What do you have that for? Do you plan to make explosive materials?' I explained to them why I had the book in my car. They then allowed me to pass with outmost difficulty. They have also released Badran Mest a few hours later, after subjecting him to interrogation and treating him inappropriately."

17. Third Round of Confrontations and the Longest of All:

Both the armed opposition groups and the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG continued stepping up their military presence within the city until mid-January 2013, amidst scarcity of electricity and shortage on daily life needs, which resulted from the deteriorating economic activity on the markets. This facilitated for another round of confrontations, the third, on January 16, 2013, following the death of a militant of the Ahrar Ghwairan/Rebels of Ghwairan Brigade at one of the brigade's checkpoints and accusing the People's Protection Units/YPG of the incident. It is important to mention that the brigade operated under the Nawaf Ragheb al-Basheer-led Jbahat Tahriar al-Jazira wa-lfurat/ Jazira and Euphrates Liberation Front, which reinforced its posts in several of the city's neighborhoods and the National Hospital, known today as the Roj Hospital, after it brought in military backup from Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa and Tell Abiad, in addition to three tanks and heavy artillery. The Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG has also buttressed its strongholds on the northeastern neighborhoods of the city, including al-Hawarneh/Zorava and the al-Kharabat/Ronahi.

In a video³¹, exchanged by media activists on January 17, 2013, one of the armed opposition groups' tanks appears as being stationed in the city's cemetery while randomly launching mortars on the YPG-held northeastern neighborhoods.



Photo no. (39) – The footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), shows an armed opposition group-affiliated tank stationed at the city's cemetery, randomly launching mortars at its northeastern neighborhoods.

³¹ The video shows a tank belonging to the opposition armed groups as being stationed in the city's cemetery on January 17, 2013, while randomly firing mortars at the YPG-held northeastern neighborhoods. https://youtu.be/aoml_qrBuyg.

More than 2000 militants of 48 armed opposition-affiliated brigades, on top of which were Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades, al-Farouq Brigade, Ahrara Ghwairan/Rebels of Ghwairan Brigade and Ahfad al-Rasoul/ Grandchildren of the Messenger Brigade, encompassing militants who are originally from Idlib Province, participated in the third round of the confrontations with the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG, which involved hundreds of militants, both Kurds and Arabs, and dozens of the city's locals, especially the Kurds. When the armed opposition groups robbed the houses belonging to the Kurdish residents in the part they held of the city, in addition to showering its Kurdish-majority northeastern neighborhoods with mortar shells, which marked no difference between civilians and militants³², dozens of the Kurdish young men volunteered to defend their neighborhoods. A number of the volunteering young men, about 30 persons, joined each other and formed an independent group they called the al-Kharabat Group, which fought on the side of the People's Protection Units/YPG. The Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, however, did not take part in this round of confrontations, according to the information that STJ obtained from local activists and militants who fought on both sides back then.

In another video³³, published on January 23, 2013, a militant of the armed opposition groups in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani appears, firing mortar shells at the YPG-held northeastern neighborhoods of the city.



Photo no. (40) – In the footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), a militant of the armed opposition groups in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani fires a mortar shell at the northeastern neighborhoods of the city.

³² In a video, a militant of the Free Syrian Army/FSA in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani appears, launching a mortar shell at the YPG-held northeastern neighborhoods on January 20, 2013.

<https://youtu.be/bikX2qMYEGw>.

³³ In the video, one of the Free Syrian Army/FSA's tanks is stationed within the city on January 20, 2013. It is randomly firing mortars at the YPG-held northeastern neighborhoods of the city.

https://youtu.be/8Z2_hbkiY_Y.

18. Director of the National Hospital Held Captive in the Confrontations' Area:

With the breakout of the third round of confrontations on January 16, 2013, the militants of the Ahrar Ghwairan/Rebels of Ghwairan Brigade, affiliated with the Jbahat Tahriar al-Jazira wa-lfurat/ Jazira and Euphrates Liberation Front, arrested the surgeon Mohammad Khalaf, director of the National Hospital, known today as the Roj Hospital, inside the Maou Pharmacy, near the hospital, and held him captive in the confrontations' area for three days in a row. Commenting on this, the surgeon said:

"Two militants of the brigade arrested me after they accused me of helping a person to escape, who shot at them from my car. They also impounded my car and threatened to kill me, despite the testimony of the pharmacist and another person that I was on their side. However, they did not believe me and transported me to the house of a civilian called Khalid Khilou, which they had confiscated back then. They held me captive inside the house. The confrontations were at their peak in that area, near the al-Hasakah Road Roundabout/known today as the Martyrs Roundabout."

Surgeon Mohammad Khalaf never contemplated leaving the city during the incidents, struggling to practice his profession and meet his humanitarian duty towards the city's people, despite the various difficulties that challenged him. But still, the three days he spent in captivity in the area, where he was stuck in the crossfire of the armed opposition groups and the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG, where the cruelest of all the days he had to endure during this phase. He gave STJ a short account of the days of captivity, saying:

"Bullets constantly hit the walls of the house where I was held captive, which was stinky, full of cigarette butts, food leftovers and empty munition. The house itself was a post for the clashes, and the brigades' militants told me that I will be killed if I tried to escape. I did not eat or drink a thing for three days, after which they transported me to the border crossing west of the city. I was on the verge of death on the road to the crossing, as we walked a long distance in the confrontation areas. Arriving at the crossing, I saw militants from different parts of Syria; others were Turkish or foreign. They released me there. And, later on, I got my car back, after the People's Protection Units/YPG has retrieved it during the confrontations and killed several militants on board of it."

A few days into his release, the surgeon Mohammad Khalaf joined the makeshift medical post established by the people's Protection Units/YPG near the Mishrafah, 5 kilometers east of the city, on the Ad Darbasiyah road. The post was run by several doctors and nurses, containing a few beds and only a small amount of medications. They hosted wounded civilians and militants, transferring critical cases to the hospitals in the Ad Darbasiyah and al-Qamishli/Qamishlou.

19. Civilians Arrested; Some Used as Hostages:

On the confrontations' first day, January 16, 2013, the armed opposition groups arrested four civilians, belonging to the same family, because they refused that the militants enter their house and use their rooftop for fighting the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG. The detained persons, Mahmoud Hassan, Daham Hassan, Ali Hassan and Barazan Hassan, all from the Khilou family from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, informed STJ that they have been subjected to brutal beating by the militants of the armed groups, while the latter stormed their house. The beating is documented in a video³⁴ published by the armed groups on January 18, 2013, in which they claimed holding captive four YPG militants. The video itself implicitly shows the armed opposition groups' militants storming the house and hitting the four persons. The four men spent 25 days in detention, suffering beating and torture until they were released on February 10, 2013 — 10 days after a ceasefire that was put into force under the truce between the armed opposition groups and the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG.

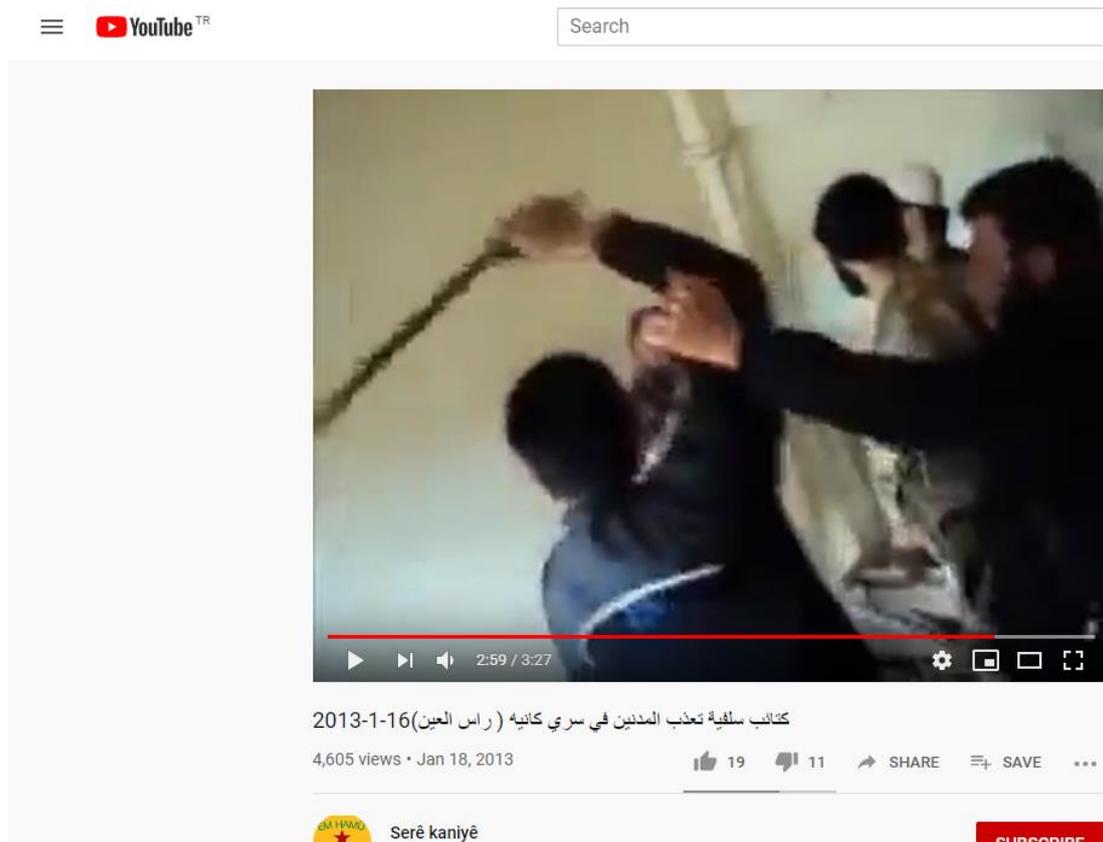


Photo no. (41) – The footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), shows the armed opposition groups' militants storming the house of the Khilou family and beating four of its members, claiming that they held captive militants of the YPG.

³⁴ The link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd3zTmXZkTg&feature=youtu.be>.

The armed opposition groups, during the confrontations, have also arrested more than 40 civilians, who they held as hostages, planning to use them as a pressure card to coerce the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG into allowing them reach the dead bodies of a number of their militants, who died in the fight and whom the groups failed to remove, for the YPG militants were shooting at any one who would come near these bodies.

On the confrontations' second day, January 17, 2013, the armed opposition groups held captive three transportation buses, on board of which were about 37 Kurdish passengers from the city of Ayn al-Arab/ Kobani, who were traveling to the Iraqi Kurdistan. The buses were impounded in the western part of the city. According to the information obtained by STJ from local activists, the passengers were held captive by the armed opposition for a week, before they were released on January 23, 2013, after the Liwa Ahrara al-Kurd/Rebels of the Kurds in Ayn al-Arab/ Kobani communicated with the armed opposition groups, playing the intermediary. The passengers, as a result, were released in return for three dead bodies of the armed opposition groups' militants that died in the confrontations, delivered to the opposition by the YPG.

In a video³⁵, circulated on January 23, 2013, a militant of the armed opposition groups appears asking several of the Kurdish passengers, from Ayn al-Arab/ Kobani, who were held captive by the armed opposition groups in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, if they have been subjected to any sort of harassment or beating by the armed opposition militants. The passengers, for their part, would all answer with a "no". The video was used as a part of the groups' propaganda.

On January 25, 2013, the militants of the armed opposition-affiliated Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades arrested a key politician of the Kurdish Azadi party, a member of the local council of the Kurdish National Council, Hikmat Mohammad, the latter's brother Hassan, his son Ahmad, and his nephew Sarbast from their house, located in the Twaimiyeh village, 5 kilometers south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. Commenting on this, Hikmat Mohammad told STJ the following:

"The brigade's militants cordoned the village. They, then, stormed the family house, arresting me, my brother, my son and nephew. They transported us to a farm belonging to Ismat Swairkli, which was close being located south of the city. They have seized the farm after their incursion into the city. Once we arrived there, they started repeating Takbir/ Allahu akbar, as if we were prisoners or spoils of war. They threw me and my brother Hassan into a small room. They, however, took my son and nephew to another place. They did not explain us the reason for our arrest."

The witness Hikmat Mohammad also stressed that they were inappropriately treated by the militants of the armed opposition groups, for the latter have threatened to kill them and have insulted them and the Kurdish People in general, before they told them why they were being detained, for they were to be used to pressure the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG into

³⁵ In the video, passengers, from Ayn al-Arab/ Kobani, on board three transport buses are held captive by the armed opposition groups in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. The passengers were released on January 23, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0mzFiimmNI&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAROpakEHL0wKVbTXREKA6Zy5kJLRAdCQQ78jjh8AtdjvBQETrbZBYLmlWs>.

allowing them to reach for the dead body of one of the groups' commanders, who died at the beginning of the confrontations near the al-Hasakah Road Roundabout, known today as the Martyrs Roundabout. Mohammad continued his account, adding:

"Less than an hour after detaining us, one of the militants put a sword to my back, saying: 'Would you like me to kill you?' Another started cursing us, before a number of the brigade's commanders would come in and start interrogating me concerning my political activity. I answered their questions and told them that by doing so they would be abusing the revolution. One of them answered, saying: 'If we are to rule Syria, we will treat you in a manner more hideous than that of Saddam Hussein, former president of Iraq, who committed heinous massacres against the Iraqi Kurds. After the interrogation, they told us that the snipers of the people's Protection Units/YPG are not allowing them to remove the dead body of that commander and asked us to seek a way to deliver them the dead boy in exchange for our release."

The commanders of the Ghuraba al-Sham Brigades refused to believe the witness Hikmat Mohammad, who told them that he had no power over the YPG. However, they allowed him to call his party, acquaintances and the Kurdish National Council to find a way to hand them over the dead body. Going into details, the witness added:

"We made several calls and informed the local council of the Kurdish National Council of what was going on. Then, they released my brother Hassan, near our village, Twaimiyeh, who was supposed to work on delivering them the dead body. My brother did actually meet the commanders of the People's Protection Units/YPG and convinced them of halting the sniper fire in that area. Accompanied by a friend of mine, called Mahmoud Wali, they raised a white flag and dragged the dead body at a time when both sides stopped shooting. The body have already started decaying, as it was abandoned there for ten days, my brother told me later."

Hikmat Mohammad was released on the same night, after the Ghuraba al-Sham received the dead body, his son and nephew were, however, let out the next day, on January 26, 2013. After their release, the two said that the brigade's militants have held them captive in the city's granaries and were both beaten a little when they were first detained there.

20. Civilian Casualties, Children and Women Included:

The third round of confrontations was the longest and the cruelest of all, for light, medium and heavy weapons were deployed, and the armed opposition groups intended to randomly fire dozens of mortars at the neighborhoods controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG, while both sides to the conflict spread skilled snipers around the city.

According to the information obtained by STJ from field activists and doctors, who were in the city back then, nine civilians at least, including children and women, were rendered dead during these confrontations. The armed opposition groups' were responsible for the death of

the majority, such as Ahmad Khalifeh from the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood, who died by sniper fire, whose affiliation was not identified. On January 20, 2013, Ahmad was shot dead while heading from the al-Mahatah Neighborhood to the Tariq al-Hasakah/al-Hasakah Road to visit his sons. On the next day, January 21, 2013, the 20 years old Orhan Hami Mukhtar, who had a mental disorder, was shot dead by one of the armed opposition groups' snipers while roaming the al-Kharabat/Ronahi Neighborhood. The latter's body was abandoned on the street for two days because the armed groups' snipers aimed at any one who approached it, before a group of the city's young men succeeded in recovering it later on.

On the same day, three additional civilians died in the al-Kharabat Neighborhood, called Ronahi today. One of them was Jalal Hussain, 28 years old, who was shot dead by the armed opposition groups near his house on January 21, 2013. The two siblings, Shahed Habash, 3 years old, and Omar Habash, 10 years old, also died due to a mortar shell, fired by the armed opposition groups that day, which hit their house near the Ahmad Kan Café Street. While the two children died, their mother sustained serious injuries. In a video³⁶, published on January 21, 2013, the residents of the al-Kharabat/Ronhi Neighborhood, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, appear as trying to hospitalize a child who was injured due to one of the mortar shells, with which the armed opposition groups hit the YPG-held neighborhood.

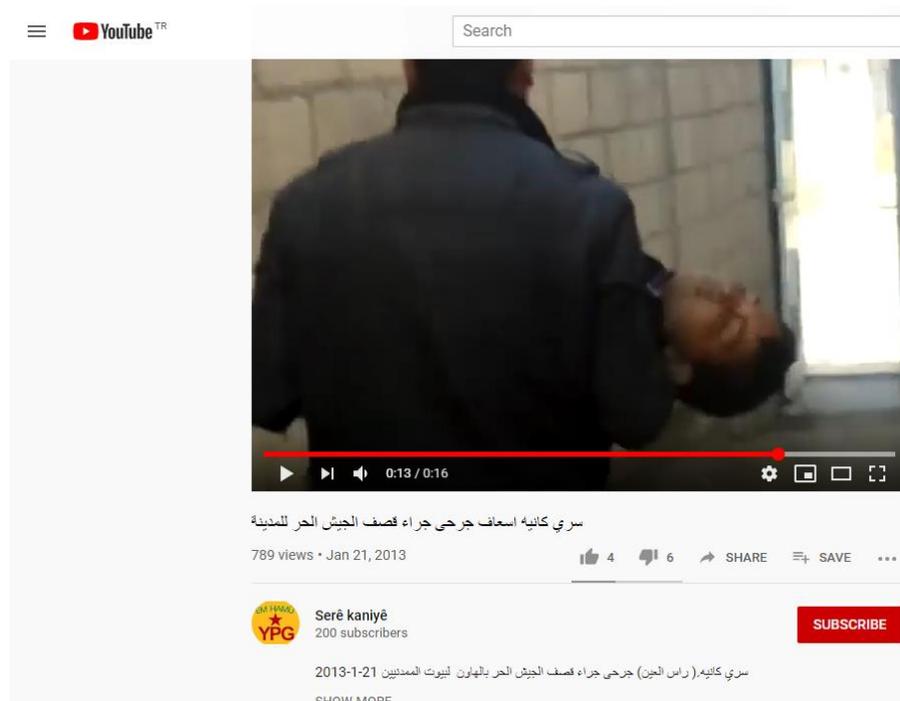


Photo no. (42) – The footage, taken from [the above-mentioned video](#), shows the effort at hospitalizing an injured child, who got wounded due to a mortar shell, fired by the armed opposition groups at the YPG-held al-Kharabat/Ronhai Neighborhood on January 21, 2013.

³⁶ The residents of al-Kharabat/Ronahi Neighborhood, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, attempting to hospitalize a child injured due to a mortar shell fired by the armed opposition groups at the YPG-held neighborhood on January 21, 2013. The link to the video: <https://youtu.be/8-5AFUvVQd4>.

On the ninth day of the confrontations, January 24, 2013, Alaa al-Qasem, 37 years old, received several bullets, fired by the armed opposition groups' snipers while he was on the streets of the al-Kharabat/Ronahi Neighborhood. Al-Qasem was rushed to a hospital in the city of al-Qmishli/Qamishlou, but he passed away on February 2, 2013, affected by his serious wounds. It is important to mention that al-Qasem was a member of the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party, which politically directed several of its members to fight beside the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG as to protect the city.

Another indiscriminate mortar shell, fired by the armed opposition groups at the residential northeastern neighborhoods, also rendered two sisters dead: Hailin Shaikhmous Shaikhu, 18 years old, and Berivan Shaikhmous Shaikhu, in addition to the injury of five others in the al-Hawarneh/Zorava Neighborhood. These incidents happened on the twelfth day of the confrontations, January 27, 2013, the details of which were provided by the civilian activist Ahmad Hesso, who was in the city back then, helping in hospitalizing the injured on board his own car. He narrated to STJ the happenings that the street, where he lived, bore witness to on that day:

"Several mortar shells landed on our street on the 11th and 12th days of the confrontations. One of which has split down a perennial pine tree on the street. Another shell ended near my house, causing no damage, however. On the 12th day, I heard the sound of a mortar shell, which finally fell near my house, too. My father-in-law, Shaikhmous Hussain, and I rushed outside. We saw 7 persons, mostly women, lying on the ground. They were injured. I hospitalized four of the wounded, Shaikhmous Shaikhu and his daughter Hailin, from the Koujari family, on board my car. My father-in-law hospitalized the other three, including the young woman Berivan Shaikhmous Shaikhu also on board his own car. We transported them to the medical post. They all survived, except for the two sisters Hailin and Berivan, for both had sustained critical wounds and died on the same day."

At a later date, after the confrontations reached a halt on January 30, 2013, the city's residents, discovered the dead body of the civilian old man Ahmad Shaikh Sinan, near Tariq al-Hasakah/al-Hasakah Road. Ahmad, who used to live on the al-Mahatah/Station Street, was killed, after being handcuffed and tortured. The family accused the armed opposition groups of the murder, for Ahmad was in the groups-held area during the confrontations.

21. Civilians' Suffering during the Confrontations:

The few residents, who stayed in the city during the confrontations, suffered due to the lacking water, total power cuts and the almost none existent daily necessities, according to Fraij Kshaishan, the current patron of the Armenian denomination, who was one of the people

who did not leave the city at all, for he was based at the western part of it —the part held by the armed opposition groups. Commenting on the service reality in the area back then, he told STJ the following:

"On the last four days of the confrontations, the clashes reached the street where I lived. The sound of bullets never abated on those days. I was alone at home, without water or electricity. I even run out of food. Above all, I had not the slightest idea about my family since the beginning of the clashes. I lost hope in survival and turned anxious. I was like a prisoner in my own room. One day before the end of the confrontations, on January 28, 2013, an armed group raided my house through the neighbors' rooftops, which was the Ahfad al-Rasoul/ Grandchildren of the Messenger Brigade."

The witness thought that the militants of the brigade were there to kill him. But, they left his house, while he knew the reason neither to their visit nor to why they left. He added:

"They were eight in number and were surprised to find someone in the house. They asked me, wondering what I was doing there. I asked them the same question. Despair has overcome all the fear in my heart. They put my face to the wall and stood behind me as if ready to kill me. I did not say a word and awaited God's mercy, while they cocked their machineguns and aimed at me. They never fired. They might have been trying to scare me only. And to my surprise, they just left the house "

22. Battle Outcomes and Turkey's Role in the Incidents:

The third round of the confrontations between the People's Protection Units/YPG and the armed opposition groups, continued for 14 days, reaching a halt on January 30, 2013, with the YPG's advance and control of about 70% of the city's area —the region expanding from the eastern part to the al-Kanaeass/Churches Street, west of the city — except for a part of the al-Ibrah Neighborhood and the full range of the al-Mahatah/Station Neighborhood, which were still held by the armed opposition groups and the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, which took a neutral position and did not participate in the third round of confrontations, condemning what it described as the "Sunnis fight amongst themselves".

According to STJ's field researcher, during the third round of confrontations, 10 of the militants of the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG were killed, and many others were wounded. The number of deaths within the ranks of the armed opposition groups, however, went beyond 40 militants, in addition to the dozens who got injured. The YPG also managed to confiscate massive amounts of weapons and ammunition, while the armed opposition groups robbed all the modern medical devices and equipment at the National Hospital, known as the Roj Hospital today, which they controlled during the clashes.

According to the information obtained by STJ from the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG and civil activists from the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and its neighboring Turkish city of Jilan

Binar, the armed opposition groups which invaded the city were receiving a significant support from Turkey, which offered the groups' injured militants medical care at its hospitals, in addition to supplying them with food and ammunition through the border crossing, for the Turkish ambulances would pass the crossing into the city loaded with weapons and ammunition and would leave it to transport the militants in need for treatment.



Photo no. (43) – A militant of the armed opposition groups transported to the hospital in the Turkish city of Jilan Binar, where he is to receive medical care, after he got wounded during the confrontations with the Syrian regular forces near the Asfar-Najjar Farm, south the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on November 14, 2012. Photo credit: The journalist Abdulhalim Sulaiman Abdulhalim.



Photo no. (44).



اصابة الارهابي خالد رمانة قيادي في مايسمى دولة العراق والشام في رأس العين

Photo no. (45).



Photo no. (46) - The three last photos show Khalid Rumaneh's, a commander of Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, attempt at concealing his identity while receiving medical care in Turkey. In the video, his efforts at hiding his face are apparent. Khalid, later on, joined Daesh/Islamic State/ISIS Organization, when the al-Nusra Front was expelled from Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. According to the available news, Khalid lost his arm, and he is currently based in Idlib Province.



Photo no. (47).



Photo no. (48).



Photo no. (49).



Photo no. (50) – The last four photos show the Kurdish People’s Protection Units/YPG control of the al-Kanaess/Churches Street in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and the damage that befell the houses and possessions of the street’s civilians during the third round of confrontations. Taken on: February 7, 2013. Photo credit: The journalist Abdulhalim Sulaiman Abdulhalim.

23. The War Did not Obliterate Coexistence:

The incidents witnessed by the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani back then were sufficient to trigger a sedition between the social groups, sects and ethnicities that lived in the city. However, the coexistent that highlighted the residents' life in the city rendered this impossible, despite the efforts made by persons on both banks of the conflict, who sought to sever the strong ties that brought the city's residents together. For example, several of the Kurds who stayed in the city were cautious to protect the houses and properties of Arab and Christian neighbors, which applied to the latter as well. Fraij Kshaishan, the patron of the Armenian denomination today, one of the people who stayed in the city during the events, accentuated the bonds attaching the city's people to each other through an incident he experienced back then:

"One day, on the third round of the confrontations, I was not left any bread to eat. I asked the neighbors, if the bread seller had shown up or no? They said that he had not. I went back in and had no idea that the neighbors were spreading the news that I was run out of bread. It was a matter of a second, and I heard a knock on my door. I opened it, and it was one of my neighbors with one sheet of flatbread; another followed having in hand a loaf of tourist bread; the third, for his part, has split the last loaf of bread he preserved with me. Most of the people who stayed in the neighborhood did the same, so I had an extra amount of bread. In turn, I shared part of the bread I had with other neighbors who needed it. None of us thought of himself or their family only, though our components and religions differed. And if this is to prove anything at all, it would be the healthy construct of the society."

Just like the rest of the people in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, the houses and the possessions of the Christian residents' were not spared robberies or sabotage, even their churches were made into sites for the clashes, such as the Orthodox Syriac Church of St.Thomas (Mar Thoma) and the St. Hagop Armenian Orthodox Church, which were a destination for bullets and an object for sabotage because the armed opposition groups were fortified in them before they were expelled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG in the end of the battles. The witness Fraij Kshaishan commented on the positive role played by the city's residents, who contributed to the reopening of these churches and the celebration of Christians' religious events. He said:

"When the third round of the confrontations ended, many of the non-Christian residents of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani helped us clean our churches. We were then surprised by a number of young people, who came to the St. Hagop Armenian Orthodox Church equipped with cleaning tools and detergents. I was really overjoyed by this initiative, for me it represented a motive to stay and faith in the importance of coexistence, a thing that is enhanced on every occasion, for the people are present on all our occasions."



Photo no. (51).



Photo no. (52) – The last two photos show the windows of the St. Hagop Armenian Orthodox Church, Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, which glass is yet broken becoming a witness to the confrontations the church bore witness to in January 2013, despite their being restored later on. Taken on: September 2019. Photo credit: STJ.

24. Post-truce Agreement Signed by Sides to the Conflict:

The confrontations between the armed opposition groups and the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG stopped at the dawn of January 30, 2013, owing to a temporary truce, within the efforts seeking to reach an agreement between the two sides under the auspice of the National Committee for the Protection of Civil Peace and the Revolution in Syria, which was recently founded by Syrian oppositionist headed by Michel Kilo, also an oppositionist. On February 5, 2013, the committee held a meeting with the Kurdish Supreme Committee in the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, during which the two sides agreed to resort to dialogue as to reach a peace and reconciliation agreement that covers all the areas in Jazira Region/al-

Hasakah Province. The meeting was followed by the release of the detainees and the captives held by both sides on February 10, 2013.

On February 17, 2013, twelve days later, the two sides to the conflict —the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG and the armed opposition groups— signed an agreement under the guardianship of the National Committee for the Protection of Civil Peace and the Revolution in Syria. The agreement consisted of 10 provisions, the key of which provided for the withdrawal of all armed entities from the city and the removal of all military manifestations, the foundation of a local council that represents all the city's components to run its affairs, including the administration of the border crossing between Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and the Turkish city of Jilan Binar, in addition to setting up joint military checkpoints, involving both the YPG and the armed opposition groups, at the gates of the city, which management is to be handed over to the local council when it is ready, as well as cooperation and coordination between the two sides to liberate the Syrian areas yet held by the Syrian Government, of which Ad Darbasiyah, Amuda, the two towns of Tall Tamr and al-Maabadah/ Girkê legê, as well as the city of al-Malikiyah/Dayrik are excluded, considered liberated. However, most of the agreement's provisions³⁷ were not put into force or partially implemented, for the military manifestations and the armed group held to their posts within the city. Additionally, the local council was founded, but it never met the duties it was tasked with.

25. Several Civilians Kidnapped for Ransom:

In the aftermath of the confrontations, a relative calm reigned over the city, and the residents started to return gradually. The markets also recovered energy, and the Electricity Corporation's maintenance teams did their best to repair the high tension electrical towers and to reconnect the power cables, which were cut during the confrontations. The city was indeed divided between the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG, which held its eastern parts, and the armed opposition groups and Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, which controlled its western parts. Each of the two sides was trying to secure public services to the part it has taken over by degree, as to encourage the people to return and to settle down, as well as to win their sympathy.

However, in the western and southern rural parts of the city, held by the armed opposition groups back then, several of the city's people, who belonged to the rich class were abducted by armed groups, which would request a ransom in return for their release. The sums demanded varied between five million and 100 million Syrian pounds. The witness

³⁷ For further details concerning the terms of the deal concluded by the armed opposition groups and the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani after their meeting on February 17, 2013, refer to the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGZmmoYxg70&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1fFcUyrsVZ0HrCnAc7knoRtW0fSJDodzNnseHdTLJ_SENyglON-8zJNiQ..

Mohammad Attiyeh, a victim to a kidnapping attempt in February 2013, which he miraculously survived, told STJ the following:

"I was alone, driving my car to my agricultural land in the village of Tell Jemmeh, on the road to the al-Mnajeer town, 20 kilometers south of the city. I noticed that a car was chasing me. It all became true, for the car blocked my way and armed men, which boarded it, asked me to get off. I did not listen to them and drove backwards so fast. However, they shot at the tires, piercing all four."

The witness Radwan, who was keeping a pistol and a machinegun in the car, for the farmer who was running his land has already warned him that something of the sort might happen, exchanged fire with the gunmen, trying to flee. He added:

"I fired in their direction randomly, just to create myself an escape. Then, I drove the car again, trying to flee, but they kept following me. Once I reached the banks of al-Khabour River, near the al-Marandiyeh village, I abandoned the car and started running towards the al-Safeh village, kilometers away. I called my family, which arrived in a few minutes. This is how I miraculously survived."

The witness Radwan Attiyeh accused the armed opposition groups of the kidnapping incident, for he managed to get back his car which he left at the granaries of the al-Manajeer town at a later date, after he paid a sum of 50.000 Syrian Pounds to one of the armed opposition groups' commanders in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani.

26. The Struggle against Extremist Organizations:

Following the third round of the confrontations, the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG had control over the eastern enclave of the city. The armed opposition groups, however, shared control over its western enclave with Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front, which tightened the noose on the rest of the groups, swallowing them by degree, for it was pledged allegiance by a number of the armed groups. The remaining ones left the city, heading towards other areas, abandoning it to the rule of the al-Nusra Front. This preceded the internal intellectual dispute within the ranks of al-Nusra Front, which was divided into two sections—one joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/ISIL, dubbed Daesh, and another that stuck to al-Nusra—without any clashes between the two sides, which both had affiliation to the al-Qaeda Organization.

On July 16, 2013, the 7th day of Ramadan, a fresh series of clashes broke out between the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG on the one hand and the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh on the other, which stopped a military vehicle of the YPG and arrested its driver —other sources mentioned that the reason for the clashes was al-Nusra's violence against a Kurdish young man who was not fasting. The clashes took place in the two

neighborhoods of al-Ibrah and al-Mahatah, which were controlled by the two jihadist organizations.

Over the 24-hour-long clashes between the two sides, the Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG managed to take over all the strongholds, where the jihadists were stationed, including the border crossing, to, thus, have full control over the city, which Ankara considered a source of concern, threatening its borders. A few days later, Turkey built a cement wall inside the crossing, on its side, closing it once for all.

The clashes resulted in the death of 9 jihadists and two militants of the People's Protection Units/YPG. In addition to this, the majority of the militants, operating under Daesh and al-Nusra Front, withdrew to the town of Tell Halaf, 5 kilometers southwest of the city, and the Asfar-Najjar Farm, 5 kilometers to the south of the city, where they used to have posts and from where they retaliated for their expulsion from the city by shelling it with improvised missiles. They also attacked the YPG-affiliated checkpoints in some of its nearby villages.

27. Daesh Organization's Mortars Incur Civilian Casualties; Children Included:

Following the YPG's control of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, its clashes with the two organizations of al-Nusra and Daesh moved to the outskirts of the Tell Halaf town and the Asfar-Najjar Farm. The jihadists, for their part, deprived the city of electricity and rained it with mortars and improvised bombs, which rendered three civilians, two of whom were children, dead in less than a week, while injuring many others. On the 12th day of Ramadan, July 21, 2013, the old man Abdulqahar Shukri lost his life near the al-Taqwa Mosque in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, for a mortar landed near him while he was on his way out of the mosque after the prayers.

The next day, on July 22, 2013, one of the mortar shells, fired by the jihadists just before the Iftar³⁸, hit the house of the civilian Mahmoud Taqraq, near the al-Hasakah Road's arch, causing the death of his 12 years old daughter Narin Taqraq and the severe injury of her 7 years old sister Shireen Taqraq, which led to her death as well on the next day, in addition to the injury of the two sisters Adlah and Dalsha Hussainuh.

³⁸ The evening meal with which Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast at sunset.



Photo no. (53) – The little girl Narin Tqraq, 12 years old, after she died in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani on July 22, 2013, due to a mortar shell, launched by the two organizations of al-Nusra and Daesh, which hit her house near the arch of the al-Hasakah Road. Photo credit: Internet.



Photo no. (54) – The little girl Shireen Taqraq, 7 years old, who died in Ras al-Ayen/Kani on July 23, 2013, affected by the critical wounds she sustained due to a mortar shell, launched by the two organizations of al-Nusra and Daesh, which hit her house near the arch of the al-Hasakah Road. Photo credit: Internet.

28. Killing, Displacing and Confiscating Property of Yazidi Residents:

The clashes between the People's Protection Units/YPG and the militants of Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh Organization in the countryside of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani escalated gradually, following the expulsion of these extremist armed groups out of the city, which continued to randomly target the city's residential neighborhoods with mortars and to raid several villages in its western and southern rural parts, to set up posts and spread militarily.

On the dawn of August 16, 2013, the Jihadist armed groups stormed the village of al-Assadiyeh, 10 kilometers south of the city, populated by a majority of Yazidi residents, more than 20 Yazidi families. The attack rendered the two Yazidis Ali Sadou and his brother Murad Sadou dead, an official of the Yazidi House in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani told STJ, adding the following:

"The Sadou family was one of the most well-to-do families in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, and it knew very well that the jihadist factions were seeking to expel the village's residents and seize their possessions, on the claims of their being infidels. It was for this reason that Ali and Murad Sadou decided to combat the jihadists' attack. A confrontation broke out between the latter and the armed groups, which managed to arrest Ali and his brother Murad when the second sustained serious wounds. The armed groups then transported them to the village of Tell Halaf, where Murad Sadou died on the same day, for he lost a lot of blood and did not receive any treatment. The brother, Ali Sadou, however, was shot to death the next day by the militants of these groups."

According to the Yazidi House in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, it was after that incident that the Yazidi residents of the village were displaced and their properties confiscated by the militants of the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and the Daesh Organization.



Photo no. (55) – Kurdish Yazidi women from the Yazidi village of al-Assadiyeh, south of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, looking sad after they left their village, in the aftermath of the attack it suffered by the jihadist organizations on August 16, 2013. They were displaced to the village of Tall Sakhr, east of the city. Photo credit: The journalist Abdulhalim Sulaiman Abdulhalim.

29. Targeting an Ambulance Kills Two Kurdish Red Crescent Staffers:

On the same day, August 16, 2013, the attack by Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and the Daesh Organization on the Yazidi village of al-Assadiyeh was followed by another, for the militants of both sides targeted an ambulance of the Kurdish Red Crescent on the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-Ad Darbasiyah road, rendering the nurse Khabat Farhan and the driver Sulaiman Attiyeh dead, in addition to the injury of another person, who were performing their humanitarian duty. Commenting on this incident, Radwan Attiyeh, the paternal cousin of the victim Sulaiman Attiyeh, recounted the following to STJ:

“On that day, my cousin Sulaiman Attiyeh had volunteered to drive one of the ambulances of the Kurdish Red Crescent, in addition to his two colleagues, the nurse Khabat Farhan and the driver Abdulraziq Qauwass. They were on their way back from the city of al-Qamishli/Qamishlou, heading to Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani after they hospitalized civilians injured due to the mortars launched by the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh at the city. On the way back, the militants of the two

organizations targeted the ambulance by an improvised explosive device they planted on the highway, near the al-Shaikh Filling Station on the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-Ad Darbasiyah road. As a result of this, my cousin Sulaiman and his colleague Khabat were dead while the driver Abdulraziq Qauwass got injured."

30. The City Besieged:

Seeking to regain control over Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, the two organizations of the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh imposed a suffocating siege on the city on September 14, 2013, following their invasion of the Alouk village, 7 kilometers to the east of the city, and the Yazidi Java village, southeast of the city, and stationing their militants there. By this, the two organizations have had blocked the road between the city and the Ad Darbasiyah, considered its lifeline and through which its residents were usually provided with food materials, medicines, fuel and other daily necessities, given the fact that the two organizations were already posted in the western and southern parts of the city. The two organizations also sought to deprive the city of electricity and water, in addition to repeatedly and randomly bombarding it with mortars, artillery bombs and improvised missiles, which promised the city with a real humanitarian catastrophe.

During the siege, the witness Radwan Attiyeh used to voluntarily hospitalize the people injured by the shelling that targeted the city on board his car and was shot at and injured himself, near the village of Alouk, east of the city, while rushing the injured to the hospital, for, back then, he had not any idea that the two organizations — Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh—have attacked the city. He barely survived. Recounting to STJ the details of that day, he said:

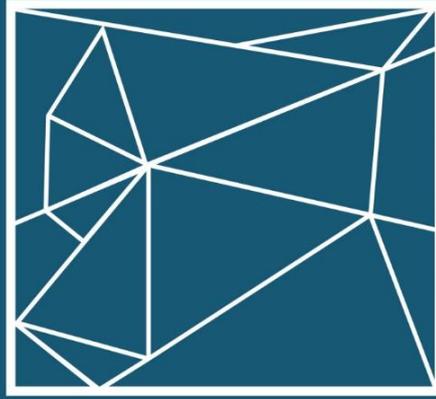
"On that day's morning, a number of injured persons arrived in the medical point, which was established at the al-Masken/Residences Area in Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani. One of them was seriously injured, and the doctors demanded that he be transported to a hospital in al-Qamishli/Qmishlou. I asked if the road was open; one of the commanders of the People's Protection Units/YPG answered me that it was. I, accordingly, hospitalized the injured, accompanied by a nurse called Sido and a journalist called Muwafak. We barely reached the village of Alouk, when we were showered by bullets. I saw the militants of al-Nusra and Daesh on both sides of the road, but I did not stop. I was shot in the shoulder, and the nurse in the ram, which made us three wounded persons. It was with utmost difficulty that I managed to drive until my village Rashou al-Attiyeh, 7 kilometers from the city, for the car's tires were pierced. I reached the village barely conscious, and my wound was bleeding. My maternal uncle rushed us to the hospital in al-Qamishli/Qmishlou, where they removed the bullet from my shoulder and stitched the wound and treated the other two injured men. It was a miracle that we survived."

The Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG managed to break the siege imposed on the city and to fully secure the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-Ad Darbasiyah road on September 24, 2013, after it managed to expel the militants of the Jabhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and Daesh

Organization from the Yazidi village of Java, a week after they were sent out of the Alouk village, east of the city. The YPG also had full control over the Tall Halaf town, 5 kilometers southwest of the city and the Asfar-Najjar Farm, 5 kilometers, south of the city, in mid-September 2013, following almost a month of clashes with militants of the two extremist organizations.

The Kurdish People's Protection Units/YPG, which was joined by members and groups of the different components of the Jazira Region/al-Hasakah Province, then conducted successive attacks, aiming to control the villages and towns of the countryside of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani and to get rid of the militants of Daesh Organization, which at the time, won over the Jbhat al-Nusra/al-Nusra Front and coerced its militants into pledging allegiance. Up to May 27, 2015, the YPG managed to take over the town of Mabroukah, 35 kilometers to the west of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, with which it declared full control over the city's countryside as well.

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من أجل
الحقيقة
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Syrians
For Truth
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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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