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Afrin: 506 Arrests in the Last Six Months of 2019

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66 arrests documented in December 2019 alone

I. The arrest toll in the last six months of 2019:

At least 506 arrests, among them 30 women and 8 children under the age of 18, were made for various reasons by Turkish forces and groups affiliated with the National Army in the Kurdish-majority city of Afrin, during the second half of 2019, as documented by STJ researchers.¹ 195 of those arrested were released after they or their relatives paid fines/ransoms, which amounts ranged between SP.150.000 to SP.300.000 per person. However, some were transferred to central prisons or district command centers, while the fate of 311 of them still unknown.

According to information collected by STJ field researchers-distributed over seven districts in Afrin-and accounts of some of those released, procedures for the releases were done in two ways:

- **The first way:** the detainee brought before the “justice system” of the National Army, where he/she pays a fine/bail determined by the judge (usually ranges between SP.150.000 and SP.300.000). Most of those who had been made to pay fines, were arrested for performing the self-defense duty of the Autonomous Administration or served in one of its institutions during its period of control.
- **The second way:** a commander of the group, which made the detention, asks the detainee to pay a fine in US dollars (usually ranges from 2,500 to 10,000 USD) and they two conduct negotiations to reduce the amount and then agree on the payment method (in cash or in installments). The detainee then released from the detention center of the group the same day or after a few days. After the release of the detainee, the group members visit his/her house periodically to collect the agreed upon amount within the agreed period.

¹ In its report on August 2, 2018, the Amnesty termed the presence of the Kurdish forces in Afrin an ‘occupation’. For more info: “Syria: Turkey must stop serious violations by allied groups and its own forces in Afrin”, Amnesty, August 2, 2018. (last visit: January 6, 2020).
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/08/syria-turkey-must-stop-serious-violations-by-allied-groups-and-its-own-forces-in-afrin/>



Image (1) statistics of the arrests made in the second half of 2019.

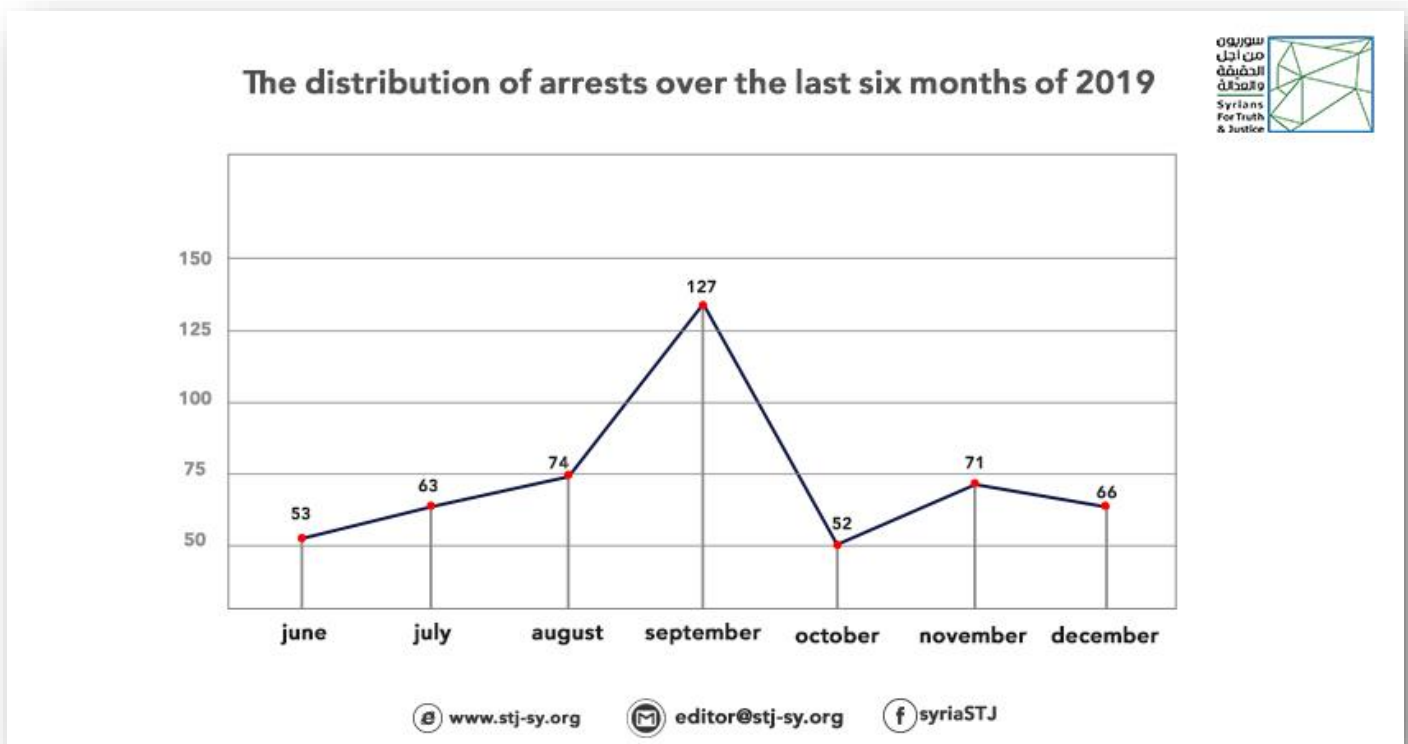


Image (2) the distribution of arrests over months.

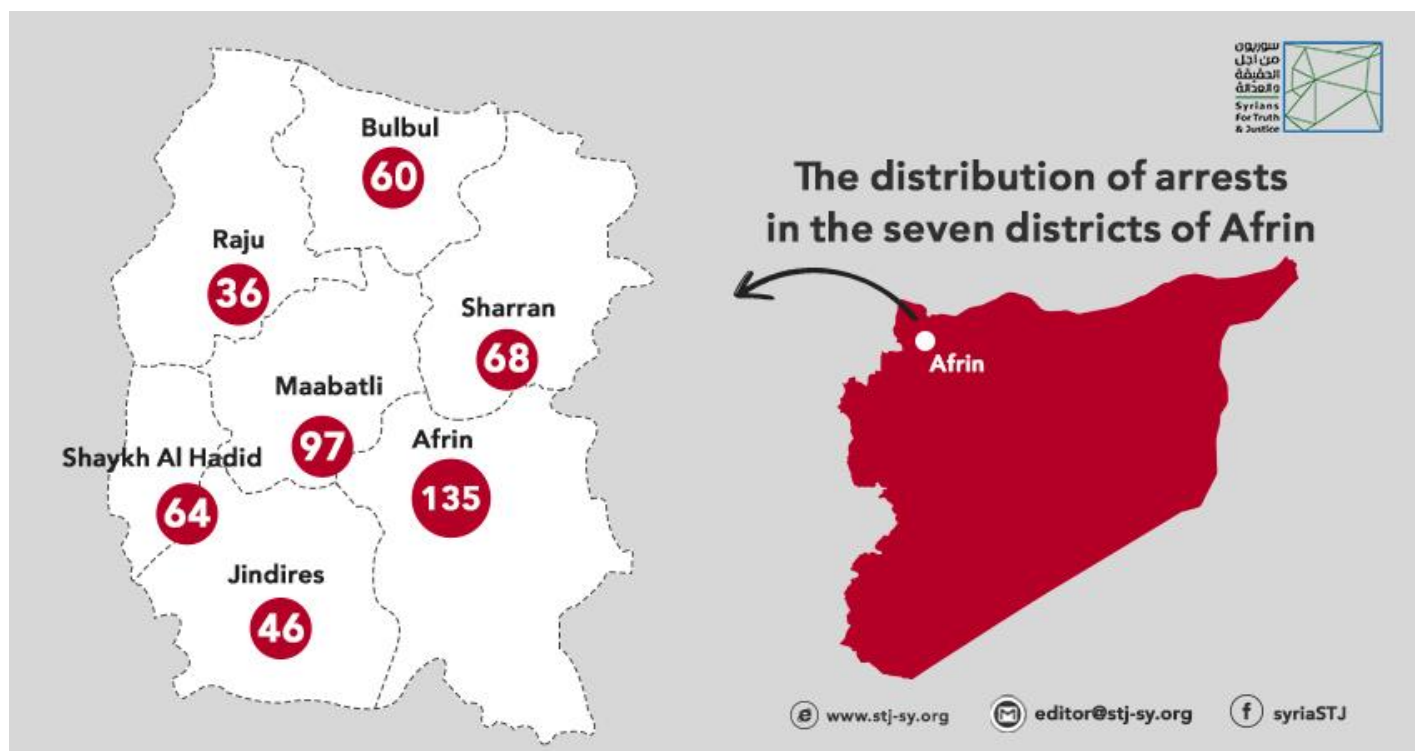


Image (3) the distribution of arrests in the districts of Afrin.

The following table shows the names of the military groups responsible for the arrests against Afrin's people and the number of arrests made by each:

#	Group Name	# of Arrestees	Additional Notes
1	Military Police	114	-
2	Civil Police	124	-
3	Ahrar al-Sharqiya	5	-
4	Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat)	22	-
5	the Levant Front/ <i>al Jabha al-Shamia</i>	45	-
6	the Sham Legion/ <i>Failaq al-Sham</i>	9	-
7	Military Security	12	-
8	Northern Democratic Brigade	10	-
9	Al Waqqas Brigade	27	-
10	Samarkand Brigade	12	-
11	Sultan Murad Division	16	-
12	Lions of the East Army	1	-
13	Mountain Hawks Brigade/ <i>Suqour al-Jabal</i>	2	-
14	Suqour al-Sham Brigades	3	-

15	Men of War	3	-
16	Sultan Osman Brigade	6	-
17	Hamza/Hamzat Division	30	-
18	Sultan Mohammed Al-Fateh Brigade	7	-
19	Mutasim Brigade	2	-
20	1 st Division	1	-
21	113 th Division	1	-
22	Military Police and Levant Front	13	joint action
23	Civil Police and Turkish Intelligence	23	joint action
24	Military Police and Turkish Intelligence	7	joint action
25	Suleiman Shah Brigade and Turkish Intelligence	10	joint action
26	Unknown	1	The detainee's family could not identify the group

II. 66 arrests in December 2019:

STJ has documented the arrest of 66 people, including 6 women, in December 2019. Only 19 of those arrested were released while the fate of the rest still unknown as of the date of this report, January 6, 2020.

According to accounts of locals and observations of STJ field researchers, the detentions were conducted by the Levant Front/*al Jabha al- Shamia*, the Military Security, the Sham Legion/*Failaq al-Sham*, the Mu'tasim Division, the 1st Division, the Sultan Murad Division, the Northern Democratic Brigade, the 113th Brigade, Samarkand Brigade, Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), the Military Police, the Civil Police and al Waqqas Brigade; the last three are responsible for the bulk of arrests

STJ field researchers quoted witnesses saying that detentions and arrests were made arbitrarily and did not respect due process. Also, many of those arrested hadn't been informed of charges against them by written notices or orally, contrary to the statements made by the former spokesman of the National Army that the arrests were carried out within the legal framework.²

² "The practices of the Syrian armed groups between the jurists and the military" Fi al-Uomq, Watan FM., July 8, 2019 (last visit: October 1, 2019). https://soundcloud.com/watanfm/08-07-2019fil3omq?fbclid=IwAR0lxzkTXeXuGXzlDEVr4Fkc3HlXhC_xx6nvU8BsG8lyPeYwwaY-G7RrmQ

1. Arrests in Afrin:

Afrin district witnessed the arrest of ten people, including two women and four members of the local council. According to locals and STJ researchers, the arrests were made by the Political Security, the Civil Police and the Levant Front:

- On December 7, 2019, members of the Levant Front arrested Khalida Ali, 45, who hails from the city of Eshone and resides in al- Ashrafia neighborhood at Afrin city center, for commenting with discontent on the weight of the bread packet near Hamada Bakery. She was transferred to the Military Police department, where she was accused of several crimes, including her involvement in the [bombing in al-Siyassiya Street](#) on November 26, 2019, which resulted in the injury of two people.
- In the city center of Afrin, specifically in Al-Sina'a Street, on December 16, 2019, members of the Levant Front arrested a fuel seller, named Mohammad, for performing the self-defense duty during the period of the Autonomous Administration's control, knowing that he had previously been arrested twice for the same reason and bailed out.
- Also, in the center of Afrin, a patrol of the Civil Police arrested Mohammad Ali, 31, from near the al- Siyassiya street, and beat him severely. A friend of the detainee said to STJ:

“He was previously arrested for performing the self-defense duty, and paid a fine of SP.150.000 for his release. He has been transferred to the central prison of Maratah and brought before the judge and now he is waiting for his release procedures to be completed.”

- On December 26, a patrol of the Political Security arrested the engineer Walid Hassan, who hails from the village of Mamolu and work at the Department of Transport of the local council of Afrin, from where he was arrested.
- On December 29, a patrol of the Political Security also arrested the engineers, Hamid Musa and Zakwan Hassan, along with an employee of the local council in the city of Afrin, for unknown reasons.
- On December 30, a Political Security patrol also arrested the engineer, Mannan Habib, who is a defector from the Syrian regular forces and currently a staff member of the engineers' office of the Afrin's local council. The two employees of the local council's office of Services and Local Administration, Basil Arab and Mohammad Abdel Hanan, were also arrested with Mannan.

2. Arrests in Shaykh al-Hadid:

The town of Shaykh al-Hadid witnessed the arrest of 11 people by Al Waqqas Brigade along with the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat):

- On December 23, 2019, in the center of the town of Shaykh al-Hadid, Suleiman Shah Brigade arrested Ahmed Mohammad Ibrahim Douni, from al-Hara al-Foqania neighborhood, on charges of working at local councils (in Kurdish: cominat, sing. comin) under the Autonomous Administration, and he was held in a military headquarters of the group inside the town.
- In the village of Anqala, on December 29, 2019, members of the Al Waqqas Brigade, which controls the village, arrested 10 young men on allegations of communicating with people outside the country who incite them to riot in the area. The only information available as of the date of this report, that they were initially transferred to the al-Marawania prison. The arrestees are; Nihad Nashaat Bakr, 55, Aref Kal Abdo, 36, Aref Mohammad Shukri, 23, Hassan Badr, 23, Hassan Shukri Aloush, 19, Nazmi Khalil Ahmed, 18, Ibrahim Shukri Aloush, 17, Riyadh Ali, 17, Izzat Mohammad Umar, 17, and Marwan Anwar Hasan, 17.

3. Arrests in Bulbul district:

The Bulbul district witnessed the arrest of 13 people, including a woman. The civilian police, the Mu'tasim Division, the Sultan Murad Division, and 1st Division carried out those arrests, which were as follows:

- In the city of Bulbul, on December 23, 2019, the Civil Police arrested Abdo Horo Mohammad and Ibrahim Horo Mohammad, for unknown reasons; no further information was provided about the incident.
- In the village of Bilan, on December 26, 2019, the Civilian Police arrested Abd al-Rahman Mohammad, Jaker Aslan Sheikho, Kawa Tatar Mohammad, Tatar Mohammad Mustafa and the young woman Brevan Kula Bint Rashid. Only Tatar Mohammad was released while the rest were transferred to Bulbul Central Prison, and no further information was received about them.
- In the same village, on December 23, the Civilian Police arrested Aslan Sheikho on the pretext of alleged "nationally significant" images on his cell phone.
- On December 2, 2019, the village of Bibaka/al-Taflah witnessed the arrest of two Kurdish citizens- while tilling their fields- by the Mu'tasim Division in control. The field researcher couldn't identify the arrestees.
- On December 23, 2019, the Civil Police in the village of Ahmed Mistah arrested Othman Suleiman Ahmed; we couldn't know the reasons behind his detention or any further information about the incident.
- On December 25, 2019, in the village of Hassan, members of the 1st Division arrested Mohammad Hassan for formerly working at a local council under the Autonomous Administration.
- On December 6, 2019, in the village of Sahra, members of the Sultan Murad Division arrested the civilian Ismail Ismail for his "disrespect for the blood of the martyrs"

who fell while fighting east of the Euphrates, as he was listening to music while cultivating his land. The group members seized his tractor, beat him and took him to Bulbul Prison. However, he was later bailed out - we could not know how much the amount paid- and got his tractor back.

4. Arrests in Maabatli district:

Two villages in the district of Maabatli witnessed the arrest of 14 people for working as guards under the Autonomous Administration. The arrests were made by the Military Police, Northern Democratic Brigade and the Levant Front:

- In Qantara village, on 3rd and 4th December, 2019, the Military Police and the Levant Front launched a wave of arrests against 11 people after finding their names registered in one of the records of guard shifts used during the control of the Autonomous Administration, and they were all released after paying SP.100.000 each.

The arrestees are: Hussein Mannan Omar, Idris Mohammad Naasan, Farid Battal Yousef, Ahmed Hanan Damerji, Karim Mamish, Adnan Omar, Hussein Shukri Hanan, Ali Shukri Hanan, Mannan Sheikho Ali, Hussein Abdo and Mustafa Ali Mukhtar.

- In the village of Afraz, on December 16, the Northern Democratic Brigade arrested three people from the families of Ma`mi, Qara and Tali. Two of them were released a week later after paying a fine of SP.150.000 each, while the one from the Ma'ami family remained in Maabatli prison for not being able to pay the fine.

A villager reported that the same three young men had been arrested several times previously on charges of performing the self-defense duty.

5. Arrests in Rajo:

Rajo district witnessed the arrest of 10 people, including members of the local council. The arrests were carried out by the Military Police, the Civil Police, and the 113th Brigade:

- In the village of Haj Khalil, on December 1, 2019, the village mayor (Mukhtar), Mohammad Ali, was arrested at a checkpoint of the Civilian Police at the entrance to the city of Afrin from the side of Rajo Road, on charges of working with the Autonomous Administration, and he was released two weeks later. It is noteworthy that Mohammad Ali had occupied the mayor position before 2011, and during the control of the Autonomous Administration he was appointed head of the local council of the village, and when the National Army took control of the area, he was re-appointed as a mayor by it.

In the same village, on December 4, Khalil Khalo Abu Rizan was arrested by the Civil Police on charges of working with the Autonomous Administration, and their fate remains unknown until now.

Also, on December 24, Ahmed Fakhry Sheikho, 32, a resident of Haj Khalil village, was arrested at the Civil Police checkpoint at the entrance to Afrin from the Rajo side, on charges of working with the Autonomous Administration and he was transferred to Maratah prison to be brought before the judiciary.

- In the village of Ba'dinli, on the 3rd of December, Mohammad Hamid Ja'far was arrested by the 113th Brigade, which controls the village, on the pretext of performing the self-defense duty, and he was released two weeks later after paying a sum of money, which he didn't disclose.
- In the city of Rajo, on December 1, members of the Military Police arrested a number of local council employees on the pretext of working under the Autonomous Administration, with no further information provided about the incident. The arrestees are: Rashid Ali, a member of the local council - Finance Officer - Noshin Jaafar - lawyer and the director of the civil registry for the district - Khulusi Bsu bin Othman - an employee in the civil registry administration - Athaad Jaafar - an employee in the financial office - Abdo Karra Ali - an employee in the office of administrative affairs - and Mustafa Naasan - a technical employee in the water department- .

6. Arrests in Sharran:

The villages of Maydanki and Dayr Sawwan witnessed five detentions by the Civil Police and the Sham Legion/*Failaq al-Sham*:

- In the village of Dayr Sawwan, on December 27, Hussein Nuri Haddak, nicknamed "Sagher", was arrested by the Civilian Police, knowing that his family had recently returned to the village after he paid a sum of money in exchange for a settlement with the groups through a mediator. On December 29, his wife and mother were arrested and they were all transferred to Sharran prison.
- In the village of Maydanki, on December 10, the Sham Legion arrested Rashid Sido on the charge of cutting olive trees, and he was released a week later, after paying a fine- we couldn't know its amount-. Sido was previously arrested and fined-for release- twice by the same group.

In the same village, on December 5, members of the Civil Police arrested Professor Joan Jabr while on his way to collect his salary, since he is a Turkish teacher at the village school. He was arrested on the pretext of working with the Autonomous Administration, and transferred to the central prison in Maratah and his fate remains unknown.

7. Arrests in Jindires:

The village of Ishkan, under the control of Samarkand Brigade, witnessed three arrests only, made by Samarkand Brigade and the Civil Police:

- On December 8, 2019, a Civilian Police patrol arrested Rahim Ahmed Nasiri on the charge of performing the self-defense duty, knowing that the detainee had recently returned to the village after he was displaced from it during the military operation and was transferred to the Central Prison in Maratah.
- On December 22, 2019, members of the Samarkand Brigade arrested the brothers Mohammad Kamal Omar and Abdo Kamal arrested because of their refusal to pay a tax on oil and olive that was arbitrarily imposed on them, and were subsequently released after they paid a sum of money which we could not know.



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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