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Conflicting Iranian-Russian Expediencies in southern Syria Threaten the Social Fabric

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A special report on the Al Qrayya events of 27 March 2020, which raised tension between the two neighbors; Daraa and As Suwayda

Background

On 27 March 2020, the village of [Al Qrayya](#) in As Suwayda suburbs witnessed clashes and confrontations between fighters of the 5th Corps,¹ headed by Ahmed al-Awdeh, and local armed groups from As Suwayda, which led to the fell of at least 15 people from both sides.

Those engagements occurred following the kidnapping of two young men from the city of [Busra](#) in Daraa province, while on their way to the adjacent village of Al Qrayya for trading in livestock, on 25 March 2020. Then, fingers pointed to a kidnapping gang led by Yahya al-Najim, who hails from Al Qrayya and known to make kidnappings and pillages previously.

On 27 March 2020 militias of the 5th Corps led by Ahmed al-Awdeh entered the village of Al Qrayya. After crosschecking information from several sources, STJ field researcher reported that families of the kidnapped were likely among those militias, but another source from As Suwayda, however, reported that three armed men of the kidnapped guys' relatives sneaked first into the village and shot a car carrying three civilians, with the aim of kidnapping them, then the 5th Corps intervene.

Following that, clashes erupted between al-Awdeh militias and armed people from the village of Al Qrayya and lasted for several hours. Amid the clashes, a local armed group from As Suwayda led by Mahran Ubaid, who is one of the As Suwayda sheikhs, attacked Yahya al-Najim headquarters in the village of Al Qrayya. The latter, however, hid in his neighbor's house and blew himself up with a hand grenade when he got cornered, which led to his immediate death and the kill of the house owner by shrapnel. On this point, a local source from As Suwayda said that the group of Mahran Ubaid may have taken advantage of these circumstances and fabricated what happened, on instructions from the Syrian Military Intelligence Division, with the aim of jamming the events and enhancing its image. A source from Daraa, however, said that the group of Mahran Ubaid surrounded the place of al-Najim after the withdrawal of al-Awdeh and his group.

It's important here to go a little back to the period leading up to these events, particularly to the meeting between the dignitaries, armed groups leaders, and clerics of the village of Al Qrayya, which was held on 9 February 2020, and during which it was agreed to rid the province of kidnapping gangs, according a video of the meeting (see details).

Sources with access to detailed information reported that the meeting was attended by Mahran Ubaid group, which operates under the security office of the 4th Armored Division- commanded by Maher al-Assad- in As Suwayda, and Ayham Shqeer group- from Al Qrayya village- which is loyal to the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, and they agreed to get rid of the group of Yahya al-Najim, among others.

¹ It was formed in late 2016 and is considered the strike force of the Russian army in Syria. After the settlement in southern Syria came into force in July 2018, most of the Syrian armed opposition forces joined it under the leadership of Ahmed al-Awdeh, a former leader of the opposition's Youth of Sunna Forces/*Quwaa Shabaab al-Sunnah*.

Local sources in As Suwayda said that it seems that there are a prior agreement between the groups of Mahran Ubaid and Ayham Shqeer on the one hand and Ahmed al-Awdeh-commander of the 5th Corps in the city of Busra- on the other on allowing the advance of the 5th Corps into the village of Al Qrayya and its settle in the agricultural land there, beside the capture of Yahya al-Najim by the groups of Mahran Ubaid and Ayham Shqeer and handing him over to al-Awdeh. Yet, other sources doubted the prior agreement, as one from As Suwayda said that Russia and Iran are already vying for more control on the region.

To find out and verify what happened in the village of Al Qrayya on 27 March 2020, STJ listened to statements of eight people, including well informed local sources, from the provinces of As Suwayda and Daraa and reviewed several open sources, which reported the incident.

In the province of Daraa, media activists said that an armed group of the 5th Corps stormed the headquarters of Yahya al-Najim in the village of Al Qrayya, aimed at liberating the two kidnapped persons. Some said that the storm came after families of the two kidnapped received videos show the latter being subjected to torture and sexual extortion,² putting pressure on the families to pay ransoms. Nevertheless, after research and investigation STJ confirms that persons shown in the videos are from Darra and were kidnapped and released earlier; that raises questions about the aim of publishing these old clips at that particular time.

On the other hand, several sources from the province of As Suwayda reported that the objective of the 5th Corps' attack on Al Qrayya was to conduct a counter-kidnaping, citing its shooting on three farmers, killing one, named Hisham Shqeer.

On 31 March 2020, dignitaries and educated people from the two provinces signed a declaration on "good-neighborliness between the plain and the mountain", which emphasizes several points, most notably to close the file of kidnapped people and to form a joint committee to follow up on the issues of the kidnapped and to discuss the details of the events of 27 March 2020.

However, despite the previous agreement, the kidnappings in and between the two provinces did not stop. In April 2020, the number of kidnapped civilians in the two provinces reached 13; seven kidnapped in Daraa and six in As Suwayda, according to the Suwayda24 news network.

In early May 2020, Yazan Jadwa Abu Hassoun, from the town of Jireen in western rural As Suwayda, was killed by his kidnappers-who took him on 3 April 2020- after his family refused to pay his ransom; his body was found dumped near the town of Al Musayfrah in eastern rural Daraa.

² The organization is reluctant to publish these videos because of the violence scenes they contain.

STJ field researcher reported from Al Qrayya that a group affiliated with the 5th Corps is still stationed and erecting earthen berms on agriculture lands in the village in depth of three kilometers; and thus, their owners were deprived from cultivating them. Our researcher suggested the reason behind Al Qrayya events to be the use of kidnapping to trigger tensions between the two neighboring provinces and to let a side impose more control at the expense of another; in reference to the Syrian Army and allied forces.

It's worth mentioning that STJ suggested in a report it prepared in 2017 that kidnappings in and between the two provinces, are led by the security services and allied militias in areas under the control of the government and by organized armed groups in rebel-held areas.³

1. An overview of the period prior the Al Qrayya events

The opening days of 2020 witnessed increased kidnappings in and between Daraa and As Suwayda, as the Suwayda24 news network reported 17 kidnappings against civilians in January 2020,⁴ two of them were conducted in Daraa and the other 15 in As Suwayda, by kidnapping gangs. The same network reported no less than 18 kidnappings against civilians in February the same year, two of them took place in Daraa and the other 14 in As Suwayda.

On 9 February 2020, a meeting was held between dignitaries, armed groups leaders, clerics and families of the kidnapped in the sheikh Sultan al-Atrash guesthouse in the village of Al Qrayya. A video published on 10 February 2020 showed a part of the meeting in which a number of As Suwayda sheikhs appeared,⁵ including Mahran Ubaid, discussing how to put an end to the kidnappings in As Suwayda and issued a fatwa sanctioning the killing of the gang members conducting the kidnappings and pillages, saying that the accused were given enough time to return to the righteous path but they didn't.

³ "Abduction as Mechanism to Disintegrate the Community Fabric", STJ, 25 November 2017, last visit: 19 May 2019 <https://stj-sy.org/en/333/>

⁴ For more info, please check: <https://suwayda24.com/?cat=9>

⁵ For more info, please check :<https://www.facebook.com/871346676289256/videos/494287878189930/>



A screenshot from the [aforementioned video](#), shows a side of the meeting held in Al Qrayya on 9 February 2020.

A local source who have inside information told STJ that the meeting was attended by the group of Mahran Ubaid, which operates under the security office of the 4th Armored Division in As Suwayda and the group of Ayham Shqeer from the village of Al Qrayya, which is loyal to the Lebanese Hezbollah militia and they agreed to rid the province from the kidnapping gangs, including the one led by Yahya al-Najim, who is accused of carrying out kidnappings and robberies. The source indicates that the entire point of the meeting was likely putting an end to the activities of any armed group-actives in the southern rural As Suwayda- whose interests' conflict with those of Iran, most notably al-Najim's group.

Two days prior to Al Qrayya events, on 25 March 2020, As Suwayda witnessed the kill of four fighters from a local armed group called Arman Muftah al-Haraeib and the injury of three others to various degrees, by gunfire from a checkpoint of the Syrian Army in the vicinity of the southern city of Salkhad. Then, clashes erupted and the Syrian Army admitted the kill of one of its fighters in this incident, which led to tense situation in the province's south, as reported by Salam Azzam (an alias), a media activist from As Suwayda, who suggested that the Al Qrayya events were intended to conceal that incident.

The source added that Arman Muftah al-Haraeib released a statement on 27 March 2020,⁶ declaring that a checkpoint of the Syrian Army shot dead four of its fighters while passing by in a car, and denying the alleged accusations against the latter of assaulting those who manned the checkpoint, saying: “this criminal act carried out by the checkpoint proves that the latter has dangerous intentions against this mountain and its gate; the blood of our young people cannot go to waste”.



بيرق عرمان مفتاح الحرايب الصفحة الإعلامية

March 27 · 🌐

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
تفاصيل حادثة اليوم التي ادت الى استشهاد اربعة شباب عزل ودون اي مقاومة منهم
اثناء وقوف الشباب على حاجز سد العين تم بينهم وبين عناصر الحاجز خلاف وعندما تركوا الحاجز وساروا
بالسيارة وعلى بعد عشرات الامتار بدأ اطلاق النار عليهم وتصاوبوا الشباب واتصلوا اكثر من هاتف وهم
مصاوبين ثم قام عناصر الحاجز بتصفيقتهم وقتلهم بعد ان صاوبوهم بدم بارد وبكل وحشية ..
على اثر اتصال احد الشهداء وهو متصاوب قبل ان يصفيه عناصر الحاجز بابيه الشيخ ابو سند بديع رشيد قام
الشيخ بديع بالذهاب الى الحاجز لاسعاف الشباب وفور وصوله قام الحاجز باطلاق الرصاص واصابته هو
وابنه فؤاد والشيخ هادي رشيد .
رحم الله الشهداء واشفا جرحانا ..
ان هذا العمل الاجرامي الذي صدر من الحاجز يثبت ان هذا الحاجز وعناصره مبينين نوايا خطيرة لهذا الجبل
ولشبابه ...
دم شبابنا لن يذهب هدر ...

Image 1: the statement issued by the Arman Muftah al-Haraeib group on 27 March 2020. Credit:

[Arman Muftah al-Haraeib's Facebook page.](#)

A medical source confirmed to Suwayda24 news network that the bodies of the four dead fighters have several bullets, mainly in the head, which indicates that they had been shot at close range, as reported by Azzam who added that the Syrian Army set several checkpoints in the surroundings of Salkhad following the tension prevailed in the area after the Syrian security forces kidnapped a fighter from a local armed group and the latter responded in kidnapping officers and fighters of the Syrian Army. However, those kidnapped were later exchanged.

⁶ For more info, please check:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1511329059024154&id=1188586187965111&_tn=-R

Azzam assure STJ that Russia is planning to form an independent corps (the 6th Corps) in the province of As Suwayda, and it would join all the local groups under a unified command affiliated to Russia. He also mentioned that Russia and Iran are vying for control of the region and said that the Syrian military intelligence has been tried since late 2019 to destroy a Russian initiative to settle the situations in the Syria's south and to conduct a reconciliation and hold a national conference between people of Daraa and As Suwayda, through inciting kidnappings.

2. The onset of clashes in Al Qrayya

In March 2020 the Suwayda24 news network reported 15 kidnappings against civilians in the two provinces. Nevertheless, the incident which triggered the clashes between a group of the 5th Corps and a local one in Al Qrayya occurred on 25 March 2020 when contact was lost with Nidal al-Hasan and Khaldoun al-Awad from the city of Busra, in Daraa, while heading to Al Qrayya by a white "Kia 4000" car, carrying cows, as they are livestock dealers. Families of the two guys learned about the kidnapping of their sons by Yahya al-Najim's gang when they were asked by the latter to pay ransoms.

Following this incident, on 27 March 2020, a group affiliated to Ahmed al-Awdeh entered Al Qrayya, which caused engagements between it and people from the village. The clashes lasted for several hours and led to the kill of 14 armed men from As Suwayda and a member of Ahmed al-Awdeh's group as well as the injury of others, as reported by STJ researcher.

Amid those clashes, local armed groups attacked the headquarters of Yahya al-Najim in Al Qrayya, but the latter hid in his neighbor's house and blew himself up in there by a grenade after being cornered, and thus died with the house owner.

According to STJ field researcher, clashes between the two sides were renewed on 27 April 2020, and resulted in the killing of one person from the town of Al Qrayya.

For details, STJ met two well informed local sources; one of them explained:

“The finger of blame was directly pointed at Yahya al-Najim's gang, for its record of kidnapping and robbery. Here, it's important to refer to the meeting held on 9 February 2020, between dignitaries and sheikhs of As Suwayda, and which concluded that the province must be rid of kidnapping gangs, including that of al-Najim. Many sources suspected Ayham Shqeer's gang to carry out the kidnapping against Khaldoun al-Awad and Nidal al-Hasan, aiming to accuse Yahya al-Najim's gang and thus get rid of it. These sources also mentioned a prior agreement between the gangs of Mahran Ubaid and Ayham Shqeer on the one hand and Ahmed al-Awdeh in the other, to let the 5th Corps militias advance into Al Qrayya

and station in its agriculture lands in exchange for facilitating the capture of Yahya al-Najim by the gangs of Mahran Ubaid and Ayham Shqeer, and then handing him over to Ahmed al-Awdeh.”

According to the witness, on 27 March 2020, an armed group of the 5th Corps in the city of Busra infiltrated into Al Qrayya and shot three farmers, who were in their lands, killing one named Ahmed Shqeer and injuring another. An hour after this incident, 15 armed people from Al Qrayya came to remove Hisham Shqeer’s body, but they were trapped by the 5th Corps, which directed heavy machine gun fire and snipers at them, killing nine instantly.

The witness went on to say that during that engagement between the armed group and the 5th Corps, gangs of Mahran Ubaid and Ayham Shqeer surrounded Yahya al-Najim’s house, but the latter managed to escape to his neighbor’s, where he blew himself up with a grenade and died immediately. Mahran Ubaid’s gang transferred al-Najim’s body to As Suwayda; meanwhile Ahmed al-Awdeh forces strengthened their positions in the lands of Al Qrayya at a depth of 3 km and a width of 10 km, erecting dirt berms at the plain sight of the Russian forces:

“On 27 April 2020, fighters of the 5th Corps shot Firas Maleeh, a farmer from Al Qrayya, for him approached its dirt berms. Maleeh, however, exchanged fire with them and consequently was killed. His killers stole his gun and tractor, dragged his body to Busra, and later handed it over to the Russian forces in the area. The 5th Corps is still stationed in Al Qrayya to date.”

Another statement on the incident was given by Salam Azzam (an alias), who recounted that the Al Qrayya events started when families of the two kidnapped men infiltrated into the village with the aim of kidnapping three civilians in retaliation. That led to a fire exchange between the latter and the families causing the kill of a civilian from the village named Hisham Shqeer, and the injury of two others. This necessitated the intervention of local armed groups from Al Qrayya, in order to save the wounded, but they fell under the fire of the 5th Corps (which later intervened), and clashes erupted between the two sides, which resulted in the kill of 15 people among them, and the arrest of 6 others. STJ also heard the statements of two media activists from Daraa, who are familiar with the incident, one of them detailed that the 5th Corps directly attacked headquarters of al-Najim on Al Qrayya territories with the aim of releasing the two kidnapped persons. Al-Najim, however, deployed vehicles with machine guns in the village vicinity inciting armed people from the village to involve in engagements with them. Al-Awdeh forces, however, managed to release the kidnapped and in turn kidnapped people from the other side to use them as shields on their way back. He added that the Russian forces were aware of this attack.

On the same incident, Basel al-Ghazzawi, an activist from Daraa gave STJ a statement saying:

“The gang of Yahya al-Najim which actives in As Suwayda, kidnapped the two young men Khaldoun al-Awad and Nidal al-Hasan, who hails from the city of Busra, and robbed their car, the cows it was carried and the money they had. Armed groups affiliated with Ahmed al-Awdeh who works for the Russian-backed 5th Corps, attacked al-Najim’s headquarters in Al Qrayya,⁷ after sending videos to the families of the two kidnapped showing the latter being tortured. The attack resulted in the kill of the fighter Abdulrahman Mahmoud al-Dous and the injury of Saleh Mohammad Khair al-Essa, Abdul-Latif al-Miqdad and Mohammad Zuhair al-Miqdad. From the other side, Yahya al-Najim was killed along with seven members of his gang which perpetrated the kidnapping and their bodies were transferred to Busra by fighters of Ahmed al-Awdeh who handed them over to As Suwayda dignitaries on 28 March 2020, and subsequently the two kidnapped persons were released.”

3. Circulating old videos during Al Qrayya events

Concurrently with the advance of Ahmed al-Awdeh's forces in Al Qrayya, WhatsApp news groups circulated videos, reportedly filmed by kidnappers, of the two young men; al-Awad and Hassan being subjected to torture and sexual extortion, with the aim to pressure their families to pay ransoms. However, after verification, STJ field researcher confirmed that the videos circulated are of other guys kidnapped in earlier periods, including Abdulmawla Askar and Alaa Kasabrah, from Daraa, who were kidnapped on 19 December 2018 and released later for ransoms.

For more details in this regard, STJ met Seif Shihab, who is an activist close to Men of Dignity/*Rijal al-Karama*,⁸ which is one of the largest local armed groups in As Suwayda, he explained:

⁷ Another source from Daraa province told STJ that clashes had broken out between fighters of the 5th Corps led by Ahmed al-Awdeh and armed groups from the village of Al Qrayya on March 27, 2020, after intercepting a security patrol of al-Awdeh on Busra-Al-Qrayya road, with the intention of stopping kidnappings in that area, especially after the kidnapping of two people from the city of Busra.

⁸ One of the largest local groups in As Suwayda, where it is spread over the majority of its regions. It was founded in 2012 by Fahad Waheed al-Bal'ous, and the religious leaders; sheikh Rakan al-Atrash and Sheikh Yahya al-Hajjar. One of the most prominent reasons that led the religious authorities and the sheikhs to form it is the deviation of the religious leaders-from their point of view-from the path of neutrality, and their identification with the Syrian government in many situations. Its founder Waheed al-Bal'ous promulgated the slogan “the blood of a Syrian is inviolable for another Syrian”. Men of Dignity/*Rijal al-Karama* intervened several times and pressured the Syrian government forces in order to release detainees from the Druze community. Its founder Waheed al-Bal'ous was killed in September 2015, in a car bomb with dozens of fighters

“The 5th Corps attacked Al Qrayya to kidnap people from it in retaliation. The videos circulated are out-of-date and the people appearing in them were all released. The crucial question here is why those videos re-appeared in such a time of great tension between Daraa and As Suwayda. Kidnapping gangs in the two provinces are closely linked and each obviously belongs to a certain security authority. For Yahya al-Najim, he was cornered by a local group in As Suwayda called itself the National Religious Committee in Jabal al-Arab; it is headed by the sheikh Abu Mansour Fadlallah Nammour, and consists of sheikhs, among them Mahran Ubaid who led the group in trapping al-Najim. It is evident that the purposes behind those kidnappings were destroying the community of As Suwayda and spreading terror among its people, bringing them to ask the government to intervene for their protection. Such incidents were also intended to portray As Suwayda as a hotbed for kidnapping and crime. The presence of such gangs and the occurrence of such incidents, which would lead to a sectarian war between the two neighboring provinces is in the Syrian regime’s best interests.”

4. Statements denouncing and condemning Al Qrayya events

On 27 March 2020 clans of Daraa, and Busra in particular, released a statement calling for the formation of joint committees with clans of As Suwayda to discuss the issue of kidnapping between the two provinces and the latest clashes, which resulted in the killing of several people from both sides. On this, A. al-Wadi, an activist from Busra talked to STJ saying:

“Clans of Busra issued a clear statement holding the kidnapping gangs in As Suwayda and Daraa responsible for what happened, especially after the spread of humiliating videos of the kidnapped. On 31 March 2020, clans of Daraa issued a video statement rejecting sectarianism and urging a resolution of the dispute in cooperation with the wise sheikhs in As Suwayda.⁹ It also called for preserving coexistence, good neighborliness, and standing with the people of As Suwayda against every aggressor.”

from his group in As Suwayda province; fingers pointed at the Syrian government intelligence, considering that al-Bal'ous had sharp positions concerning the admission of the youth of As Suwayda to compulsory service, and his death came weeks after his famous declare: "Our dignity is more precious than Bashar al-Assad."

⁹ For more info, please check: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?t=78&v=659916434808962>



Image 2: a screenshot from the [aforementioned video statement](#).

On the other side, the movement of Men of Dignity/*Rijal al-Karama* of As Suwayda issued a statement,¹⁰ on 1 April 2020, on the latest events in Al Qrayya, blaming the 5th Corps and Russia for what happened, saying:

“War criminals eliminated six of the captives from the mountain, which is a conclusive proof for us that the attack from our brothers, the sons of Hauran, was not intended to liberate the kidnapped from the kidnapping gangs in As Suwayda. Our movement confirms beyond any doubt that the responsible for Al Qrayya massacre is the 5th Corps of Daraa, which is led by the terrorist Ahmed al-Awdeh, affiliated to the Syrian Army and backed directly by the Russian forces. Accordingly, the direct responsibility for the massacre committed by the Corps is borne by the Russian forces in Syria, and it is their responsibility to hold the perpetrators accountable”.

The statement added:

“Men of Dignity/*Rijal al-Karama* sees that the attempts made, during and after the events, to hold the responsibility to parties other than the mentioned above, are suspicious attempts push towards local fighting, whether between the people of the two provinces, or between the people of As Suwayda themselves.”

¹⁰ For more info, please check:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2550913008490614&id=1616658815249376&_tn=-R



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وَلَا تُخْسِنَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لَوْلَا رِزْقُهُمْ لَيَزَيَّغُونَ

بدايةً نترحم على أرواح الشهداء الأبرار اللذين مُنحوا شرف الشهادة في المجزرة التي اقتترتها يدُ الغدر والخيانة بحق مدنيي بلدة القريا في جبل العرب يوم الجمعة 27 آذار 2020 وما تلاها من فعلٍ ينتهك كلاً من الميثاق الدولية والإتصالية حين قام مُجرمو الحرب بتصفية 6 من الأسرى من أبناء الجبل، الأمر الذي يشكل دليلاً قاطعاً لدينا بأن الهجوم لم يكن بهدف الخطف المضاد لتحرير المخطوفين من إخواننا أبناء حوران لدى العصابات المدعومة التي امتهنت الخطف في السويداء.

إن حركة رجال الكرامة بقيادة الشيخ أبو حسن يحيى الحجار في جبل العرب - جبل حوران، وتعقيباً على أحداث المجزرة التي حصلت في القريا تؤكد النقاط التالية:

1. إن الحركة تؤكد بالبيان الموثوق أن الجهة الوحيدة المسؤولة عن مجزرة القريا هي التشكيل التابع للـ "الفيلق الخامس" في محافظة درعا الذي يقوده الإرهابي "أحمد العودة" وهو تشكيل من مرتبات "الجيش العربي السوري" ومن المعلوم للقاصي والداني أن هذا الفصيل يتبع مباشرة للقوات الروسية في سوريا. وعلى هذا فإن المسؤولية المباشرة عن المجزرة التي ارتكبها الفيلق التابع لها تتحملها القوات الروسية في سوريا؛ ويقع على عاتقها محاسبة المرتكبين بدءاً من حليفها الإرهابي "أحمد العودة" وصولاً إلى عناصره اللذين ارتكبوا المجزرة بحق المدنيين وتقع على عاتق هذه القوات بشكل خاص محاسبة من قام بإعدام الشهداء الذين تم أسرهم وقتلهم إلى بصرى الشام ليلة المجزرة حيث تم إعدامهم صباح يوم 28/3/2020
2. إن الحركة إذ ترصد للتهديدات التي يمثلها وجود التنظيمات الإرهابية شرقي المحافظة، وتواجد قوات تتبع لتشكيلات الفيلق الخامس في قرى أم حارات وجاراتها من قرى المحافظة الشمالية الشرقية؛ فهي تؤكد جهوزيتها التامة للتعامل مع أي اعتداء؛ وفي الوقت نفسه تطالب الجهات المسؤولة بتحديد وإبعاد هذه القوى والتشكيلات عن حدود المحافظة الشرقية والغربية.
3. إن كل المحاولات التي شهناها خلال الحدث وما تلاه لتحميل المسؤولية لجهات ثانوية غير الجهة المسؤولة الوحيدة التي ذكرناها أعلاه، ترى فيها حركة رجال الكرامة محاولات مشبوهة للدفع باتجاه حصول اقتتال محلي، سواء بين أهالي المحافظتين، أو بين أهالي السويداء أنفسهم. وإن حركة رجال الكرامة تحين هذه المحاولات للاستثمار في المنصب وتحملها مسؤولية كل التصرفات المنافية لعاداتنا المعروفة التي حصلت لاحقاً من خطف مئتين من ضيوفنا أبناء درعا في السويداء إضافةً للمأجورين اللذين نفذوا هذه التصرفات.

Image 3.



٤. إن حركة رجال الكرامة لم ولن توفر جيداً في محاربة الظواهر المنافية لعاداتنا المعروفة الأصيلة، التي كُرست مؤخرًا في عصاباتٍ تمثّل الخطف بحق المدنيين من أبناء الجبل ومن ضيوفهم، وفي هذا السعد لا بد لنا أن نقول:

أولاً، إن مسؤولية "الفراغ الأمني" في محافظة السويداء تحملها بشكل كامل الجهات الحكومية السورية المختصة والرسمية في المحافظة، وننوه إلى أننا لم نطلب يوماً من هذه الجهات أن تتوقف عن عملها لوجب عليها في ضبط الجنائيات وحفظ أمن المواطنين من منتهكي القوانين.
ثانياً، بل إننا في حركة رجال الكرامة، لطالما أظهرنا استعدادنا لتكون عوناً للجهات الحكومية الرسمية في تطبيق القانون. كما أننا لطالما أكدنا في قولنا وفعلنا أننا إن تكون عوناً لأي جهة رسمية أو غير رسمية في انتهاك القانون بالقضاء وإمتحان كرامات الناس.
ثالثاً، إن ضيوفنا من الوالدين من كل المحافظات السورية وخصوصاً ضيوفنا من جبرائيل في سهل حوران الكرام هم أهلنا.. وقد أثبت أهالي الجبل خلال تسع سنوات من امت الصراع في وطننا السوري أنهم على عهد سلفهم الصالح يكرمون ضيوفهم وجيرانهم على السواء، وتذكر الحركة بالأحداث العديدة التي حصلت عبر السنوات الماضية وكان وراءها دوماً متألمون... ولو أن أهالي الجبل والسهل لم يدركوا هذا معاً في حينها لوقعوا في فخ الاقتتال الأهلي منذ زمن طويل.

وفي هذا السياق، ندعو حركة رجال الكرامة أبنائنا وإخواننا في المحافظتين إلى المحافظة على هذا الوعي الوطني الذي حفظنا جميعاً من مزالق لا تُحمد عقباها.

٥. إن حركة رجال الكرامة، إذ تؤكد للعاديين أن تجارتهم بأرواح الناس تكلفتها أرواحهم، وهذا ليس تهديداً، إنما هو أمرٌ من مبدأ الخلق وشئاً له في خلقه. فهي تؤكد لأبناء الجبل وقاطنيه جميعاً أنها على أتم الجاهزية للدفاع عن كرامة من يثقُ عند كرامته، وأن "سلاحها" كان ومزال وفقاً لوصون الأرض والعرض وحماية الشفور.

٦. لا بد أن نوجه كلمة أخيرة لمن باع نفسه وأهله ودينه ووطنه من الشاين في السويداء الذين لا يمثلوننا: إن الأقاليم منكم ممن امتنوا التعدي للإثراء على حساب أرواح الناس وكراماتهم، والمجاورين الذين ينفذون أجداب مشبوهة ومعروفة للجميع... لهذا نقول:
أنتم و"الحمد العودة" في حساباتنا واحد.

ونحن إذ لا نؤثرُ منطلق "الانتقام" فإن "حق المحاسبة" والعدالة لدينا مقدسان.... والله ولي التوفيق

قيادة حركة رجال الكرامة في جبل العرب

حرر بتاريخ ١ نيسان ٢٠٢٠م الموافق ل ٨ شعبان ١٤٤١ هجرية

Image 3 and 4: the statement issued by Men of Dignity/Rijal al-Karama on 1 April 2020.

Credit: [Men of Dignity/Rijal al-Karama's Facebook page](#).

5. Signing a statement of “good-neighborliness between the plain and the mountain” and the killing of a signer in As Suwayda

STJ field researcher reported that after Al Qrayya events of 27 March 2020, dozens of educated and notable people from the two provinces signed a statement on “good-neighborliness between the plain and the mountain”, which emphasized several points, the most important of which are:

- 1- To close the file of kidnappings and form a joint committee to follow up on the kidnapped affairs.
- 2- To dig deeper into the events of 27 March 2020 and form a joint investigation Committee to uncover the truth and hold the perpetrators accountable.
- 3- To establish a standing committee that seeks to revive economic and social relations, and calls on the community to assume its responsibilities in good-neighborliness issues.

بيان حسن الجوار بين السهل والجبل

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
« وجعلناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا أن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم »

لقد عاش أهلنا في حوران وأهلنا في السويداء بحسن جوار وتبادل تجاري وتزاور لعقود طويلة ولا يزالون على ذلك العهد مهما حاول أصحاب النفوس المريضة زرع الفتنة لأسباب دينية يتبرهن عنها كل حر وعاقل في السهل والجبل لأن هذه الفتنة لا تخدم أي أحد وستكون آثارها المظلمة على الطرفين لفترة طويلة والرابح الوحيد والمتفرج هو أجناس خفية لا تريد الخير لأهلنا وقد فشلت كل محاولات إشعال الفتنة في السابق بين السهل والجبل وذلك بفضل وعي العقلاء من الطرفين لهذه المخططات الخبيثة وهذا من شيم أهل حوران وشيم بني معروف وبدورنا نؤكد أن من يفتعل تلك الفتنة من الطرفين من قتل وخطف من أجل المال ومنافع خاصة هم عصابات مارقة لا تمثل الجبل ولا السهل وليس من أفعالهم وأخلاقهم فعل ذلك

ونؤكد على ضرورة

- 1 . إنهاء ملف المخطوفين بالكامل، وتشكيل لجنة مشتركة لمتابعة شؤون المخطوفين
- 2 . البحث في تفاصيل ما حصل يوم الجمعة وتشكيل لجنة تحقيق مشتركة لتبيان الحقيقة ومحاسبة المخطئين
- 3 . تشكيل لجنة دائمة، تسعى لإعادة إحياء العلاقات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية، وإنشاء مشاريع مشتركة، وتدعو المجتمع لتحمل مسؤولياته في قضايا حسن الجوار

وأخيراً فإننا مؤمنون ببقاء الجبل و السهل يد واحدة ضد من يزعزع تلاحمهم
الرحمة لأرواح الشهداء والصبر والسلوان لذويهم
الموقعون من أبناء الجبل و السهل

السويداء	درعا
1. الاستاذ حسن الأطرش	1. د موسى الزعبي
2. الأستاذ نبيل عامر	2. الشيخ ناصر الحريري
3. الدكتور كمال سلوم	3. الشيخ ياسر المقداد
4. الدكتور سعيد العك	4. المهندس بديع أبو حلاوة
5. المهندس مهند دليقان	5. الأستاذ عدنان مسالمة
6. المحامي بسام العيسمي	6. الأستاذ خالد العتيبي
7. المحامي فوزي مهنا	7. الروائي محمد فتحي المقداد
8. المحامي أيهم عزام	8. السيد ايمن فهد الشنور
9. الاستاذ شادي عزام	9. السيد محمد القاضي
10. الاستاذ عهد مراد	10. السيد نبيل الصباح
11. المهندس زياد أبو حمدان	11. السيد رزق طالب الزعبي
	12. السيد أحمد مجاريش
	13. المستشار عدنان الحسين
	14. المستشار عدنان الطراد
	15. السيد برهان الحريري
	16. القاضي اسماعيل مهاوش الحريري
	17. السيد أبو صلاح جمال الحريري
	18. السيد عبد الله الزعبي
	19. السيد علي أبو أحمد
	20. د عماد الدين مصيب
	21. المهندس نور الدين محاميد

حرر بتاريخ
30 آذار\2020

Image 5: the statement of “good-neighborliness between the plain and the mountain”, which was signed on 30 March 2020. Credit: the activist Y. Saleqa, from As Suwayda.

Signing the statement was the reason Nabeel Amer was killed and his car robbed by unknown persons on 20 April 2020, while he was on his land in the town of Al Thaala, west As-Suwayda.



Image 6: The victim Nabeel Amer. Credit: activists from As Suwayda.

With the aim of calming, notables of Hauran met on 19 April 2020 in Busra in an attempt to find solution to the mutual kidnappings between the provinces of Daraa and As Suwayda.¹¹ The meeting resulted in a number of decisions, most notably; forming a committee to solve all of the outstanding problems between the two neighboring provinces of Daraa and As Suwayda, conditioning the release of al-Hajj Nawaf Shihadah al-Hariri, who was kidnapped by local gangs in As Suwayda on March 25 March 2020, for initiating its work.

¹¹ For more info, please check: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmA7EQuWVT4&feature=youtu.be&t=1>



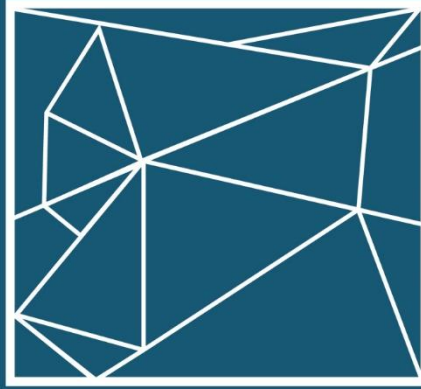
Image 7: a screenshot from the [abovementioned video statement](#).

Indeed, Nawaf Shihadah al-Hariri, was released on 26 April 2020, for a ransom of 5 million Syrian pounds, according to STJ field researcher, who indicated that people in Daraa and As Suwayda are still waiting to see the tangible results of the committee's efforts to close the file on kidnappings between the two provinces, because of its negative effects on co-existence between them.

Our researcher added that, despite the signing the statement of "good-neighborliness between the plain and the mountain", kidnappings and mutual kidnappings are still ongoing between the two provinces. In April 2020; after the clashes in Al Qrayya, 13 civilians were kidnapped in the two provinces; seven from Daraa and six in As Suwayda, according to the Suwayda24 news network.

In early May, Yazan Jadwa Abu Hassoun from the village of Jireen in western rural As Suwayda was killed after being kidnapped on 3 April 2020, and his ransom wasn't paid; his body was found dumped near the town of Al Musayfrah in eastern rural Daraa.

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



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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