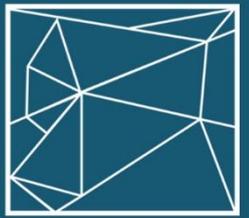


24 November 2020

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Syrians  
For Truth  
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## Afrin: 135 Persons Arrested and Forcibly Disappeared in October 2020

## **Afrin: 135 Persons Arrested and Forcibly Disappeared in October 2020**

*Several parties perpetrated the reported arrests, including the Military Police, Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham, and Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade/Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh*

In October 2020, arbitrary arrests/detentions committed against civilian Kurds in the Kurdish-majority Syrian region of Afrin intensified compared to [September](#), as perpetrators took no heed of the recommendations laid by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to cease such abuses.<sup>1</sup>

Relying on its network of field researchers that operates in areas across Afrin and other credible source, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documented at least **135** arrests/detentions and forced disappearances in October 2020. Among the detained were **five women and a teenage boy**.

Moreover, STJ documented the release of **49 persons**, including **two women and the teenage boy**, after some of these individuals, or/and their family members paid fines/bails, either in Turkish Lira (TL), or in Syrian Pound (SYP).

**Including three women, 86 persons were still locked away incommunicado at the time of writing on 15 November 2020.**

It ought to be mentioned that the reported arrests demonstrate the violations committed in only six of Afrin's districts in October, for STJ failed to document those carried out in Shaykh al-Hadid district.

In the districts in question, the arrests were carried out chiefly by the Military Police, Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya, and Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade/Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh. In additional cases, mostly individual, other security services and opposition armed groups were implicated.

**This report essentially draws on information obtained by STJ's field researchers, active in the six target districts, in addition to interviews with local sources, including family members of the detainees, and others affiliated with the opposition armed groups. The information about and names of the victims were thoroughly crosschecked, including those of 74 detainees that STJ collected, and others that the aforementioned sources provided.**

It is also important to mention that a commander of the Military Police has in a [former testimony reported](#) to STJ that Turkey ordered opposition armed groups in Afrin "not to harass or arrest civilians," as it has tasked the Military Police with carrying out arrests/detentions. However, the reported figures and documented arrests suggest otherwise.

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<sup>1</sup> "UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria: No clean hands – behind the frontlines and the headlines, armed actors continue to subject civilians to horrific and increasingly targeted abuse", OHCHR, 15 September 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=26237&LangID=E> (last visit: 16 November 2020).

## 1. Arrests in Afrin District

In Afrin district and administratively affiliated areas, STJ documented the arrest of **six persons** in October, including a **teenage boy**. The teenager was released, but the **other five** are still held incommunicado. The arrests were carried out as follows:

- On 2 October, in Afrin district's center, the Civil Police arrested Bankeen Muhammad at a checkpoint, set up at the entrance to Afrin city. Bankeen, born in Shaykh al-Hadid district, was transferred to the Maratah Central Prison to be brought before a judge and pay a fine, uninformed of its reason, or motive.
- On 2 October, in Maratah village, Adnan Janji, 23, Mustafa Abdurrahman Khalil, 24, and the teenage boy Bassam Abdo Qlajj, 16, were arrested by the personnel of a Military Police checkpoint, set up near Qestel village, for their alleged attempt at illegal entry to Turkey. At the time of writing, Bassam was already released, but the other two were still held incommunicado.

**All three detainees used to live in Turkey and were forcibly deported for not having a *Kimlik*, i.e. the Temporary Protection Identity Document, when the Turkish government embarked on a campaign against Syrians with illegal residence status nearly a year ago, said a local source, who is a relative of one of these detainees.**

- In the first week of October, also in Afrin district's center, the Political Security Service arrested Ibrahim Hayder Osman at his home in the Mahmoudiyah neighborhood. Ibrahim, born in Juwayq village, was uninformed of the charges against him. Ibrahim's specific arrest date is unidentified, and he is still held incommunicado.
- On 25 October, in Afrin district's center, the Military Police arrested Adnan Mansour Hamza at Haret al-Bubanah neighborhood. He was still locked away in detention at the time of writing.

**Adnan owns a soap plant, and maintains strong ties with the director of the Maabatli Local Council, himself arrested earlier, a local source told STJ.**

## 2. Arrests in Jindires District

In Jindires district, STJ documented the arrest of **37 persons**, including a **woman**. Subsequently, **10, including the woman**, were released, but the other **27** remain held incommunicado. The arrests were carried out by personnel of the military and civil police services as follows:

- On 1 October, the Military Police arrested Muhammad Rashid in the Rmadiyah village on the charge of "performing the mandatory duty of self-defense within the ranks of the People's Protection Units (YPG)." He was transferred to the police station in Jindires district and released two weeks later after paying a fine.

**This is the second time Muhammad is arrested on the same charges, a local source, close to the detainee, told STJ.**

- On 2 October, the Civil Police arrested Ahmad Darwish at Jindires district's center, uninformed of the charges against him. Muhammad is born in Idlib city; however, he has been a resident of Jindires for over 20 years.
- On 8 October, the Military Police arrested Haytham Hayder at Jindires district's center. Haytham, born in Hamam village, works as an English teacher. No further details were obtained regarding the reasons for his arrest, or even whereabouts.
- On 9 October, the Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham arrested Khalil Bilal, Hussain Muhammad Qabklak, Nabi Aziz, Idris Nabi Aziz, Bahri Yazo, Sabri Rashid, and Ahmad Darwish at Jindires district's center, for refusing to pay the armed group a monthly royalty. They were all released a week later.

**All seven detainees own shops in the al-Sina'a neighborhood (industrial area), downtown Jindires, a local source told STJ.**

- On 10 October, the Military Police arrested Khalil Bjaleh, 51, and Mahmoud al-A'ali, 67, at the center of Jindires district, on the charge of "dealing with the Autonomous Administration". Both are still held incommunicado.
- On 18 October, a source affiliated with the Syrian National Army (SNA) reported that Murad Abdurrahman Rashid, 24, was kidnapped at the center of Jindires district. There is no hint as to the young man's whereabouts.
- On 19 October, the Civil Police arrested Jamil Zaki at the Hêkiçê village on the charge of "performing the mandatory duty of self-defense within the ranks of the YPG," when the latter was still in control of the area. He remains held incommunicado.

**Jamil was arrested earlier by the al-Waqqas Brigade and was subsequently released after paying a fine, a local source told STJ.**

- On 24 October, Aminah Hassan Ayoub was arrested on the charge of "dealing with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)," while Fatimah Muhammad Abdurrahman Darwish was arrested, uninformed of the charges against her, with Murad Said Khello, Hassan Ayoub Abdo, 50, Salah Rashid Mahmoud, and Basheer Khalil Murad at the Kafr Safra village, in Jindires district. Neither the perpetrators, nor the detainees' whereabouts are identified.
- On 25 October, the Military Police arrested Raizan Hussain Youssef and Suleiman Hikmat Hannan at the Koran village, administratively affiliated with Jindires district. Arrested on the charges of "dealing with the Autonomous Administration," both are still held incommunicado.
- On 25 October, the Civil Police arrested Mustafa Khello, Akid Mustafa Khello, Shiyar Abdurrahman Khello, Abdo Akhras, Murad Muhammad, and Hassan Ayoub Abdo, who has a disability, as well as Salah Murad Muhammad, Mrs. Almas Toumy, and Mustafa Ja'afaresh. They were all arrested at the Kafr Safra village, uninformed of the charges against them, and transferred to the police station in the Jindires district. Only Mrs. Almas Toumy and Hassan Ayoub Abdo were released, while the rest continue to be detained.
- On 25 October, the Military Police arrested Ahmad Hussain Muhammadkouh, Riyad Murad Kadrou, Jihad Shukri, Mahmoud Ahmad Hajj Brim, and Muhammad Nabi Suleiman. They were all arrested at the Koran Village on the charge of "dealing with the Autonomous Administration" and were transferred to the police station in Jindires district. All are still held incommunicado.
- On 25 October, the Military Police arrested Idris Aziz Hajji in the Koran village, Jindires district. Arrested on the charge of "dealing with the Autonomous Administration," he remains held incommunicado.

### 3. Arrests in Rajo District

In Rajo district, STJ documented the arrest of **23 persons**. Subsequently, **20** were released, while the **three others** remain held incommunicado. Most of these arrests were perpetrated by the Military police as follows:

- On 2 October, the SNA-affiliated Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade/Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh arrested Taher Mustafa Kalkawee at the Omar Oshagi village, in Rajo district. Uninformed of the charges, he is still held incommunicado.
- On 5 October, the Military Police arrested Ahmad Hassan Deko, Akmal Hannan Ahmad, Hannan Shaikh Brim, Shams ed-Din Mustafa Muhammad, Ahmad Qader Sido, and Khalil Baker Bilal at the Qasim village, on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration and performing night guard services,” when the latter was still in control of the area. They were all released after paying a fine between 700 and 1000 TL.
- On 6 October, the Military Police arrested Battal Deko, Muhammad Sha’aban Deko, and Masoud Hussian Deko at the Qasim village on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration and performing night guard services,” when the latter was still in control of the area. They were all released after paying a fine between 700 and 1000 TL.
- On 8 October, the Military Police arrested Ahmad Mustafa Izzat at a checkpoint set up at the entrance to Rajo district, on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration earlier”. At the time of writing, he was still locked away in detention.
- On 11 October, the Military Police arrested Taher Deko at the Qasim village. He was released two days later.
- On 22 October, the Military Police arrested Abdeen Khloussi, Muhammad Hayder Shaikho, Muhammad Ma’rouf, Ahmad Haj Mousa, Ahmad Izzat Osman, Salah Mannan, Tawfiq Muhammad Mousa, Doughan Ahmad Suleiman, Mustafa Suleiman, and Rif’at Haj Mousa at the Qude village, uninformed of the charges against them. They were all subsequently released.
- On 22 October, the Military Police arrested Masoud Ali Kilo, 25, at the Ba’dinli/Ba’dina village on the charge of “advocating the Autonomous Administration”. He was transferred to the Rajo town prison, where he remains held incommunicado.

**Masoud used to live in Turkey, and returned to Rajo only when it was taken over by the Turkish military, a local source told STJ. In return, a source affiliated with the SNA reported that Masoud was kidnapped by unidentified persons at the Ba’dinli/Ba’dina village.**

### 4. Arrests in Maabatli/Mabeta District

In Maabatli/Mabeta district, STJ documented the arrest of **59 persons**, including **three women**. While **16**, including **a woman**, were released, the **other 43**, including **two women**, remain locked away incommunicado. The arrests were perpetrated by the military and civil police services, as well as the Turkish Intelligence and the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya.

- On 1 October, the Military Police arrested Siyamand Hannan, 35, at the Mahmoudiyah neighborhood, in Afrin city. A resident of Dalu village, Maabatli district, Hannan was charged

with “dealing with the Autonomous Administration” and released after paying a fine.

- On 1 October, the Military Police rearrested Muhammad Rashid Qarbouz, 80, Aref Rashid Qarbouz, 75, Walat Muhammad Oskilo, 61, Subhi Ali Mamesh, 60, Adnan Muhammad Ali, 60, Ali Hussain Yousef, 57, Muhammad Ali Yousef, 54, Sidki Mustafa Hambasho, 51, Luqman Izzat Habbash, 50, at the Maabatli district on the charge of “possessing individual weapons.” It ought to be mentioned that the Military Police has arrested them on similar charges and released them in September after they paid a fine each.
- On 4 October, the Civil Police arrested Wael Jamil, Muhammad Ali Bilal, Izzat Mukhtar, Ali Hamm Zaino, Lila Rashid Qarandel and Hikmat Mamesh at the center of Maabatli district on the charge of “working for the Autonomous Administration earlier on.” They were released after they each paid a fine between 400 and 600 TL.
- On 4 October, the Military Police arrested Muhammad Hassan Bilal, the Mukhtar, i.e. the governor, of the Maabatli district on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” He was released two weeks later.
- On 6 October, the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya arrested Muhammad Khalid Abdo, Zuhair Dayan Abdi, Adnan Yousef Muhammad Ali, 60, Luqman Izzat Sha’abn, Issmat Khouja, Ahmad Mishko, Imad Hussain Khanjar, Ibrahim Sidki, Shukri Hassan Humoto, Izzat Ahmad, Ahmad Hannan Deko, Juwan Walid Sido, Muhammad Rasho, Hussain Muhammad Ali, Sidki Wahid, and Jum’a Tatar at the Mirkān village on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” All are still held incommunicado.
- On 6 October, the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya arrested Khalil Mustafa Hamoud at the Diwan Tahtany village, Maabatli district, on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” He is still held incommunicado.
- On 6 October, Ibrahim Khanjar and his wife Nareen, the parents of the Local Council employee Midiya Khanjar, were arrested, uninformed of the charges laid against them.

**The Military Police arrested the parents, a local source told STJ. In return, a source of the Military Police reported that the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya has perpetrated their arrest.**

- On 7 October, the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya arrested Muhammad Khalid Abdo, Zuhair Dayan Abdi, Mustafa Mahmoud, Samir Dawoud, Muhammad Shaikho Dado, Farouk Mustafa, Hannan Haj Hassan, Shaikho Hassan, and Farouk Hemaliko on the charges of “working for the Autonomous Administration earlier on and performing guard services.” It is important to mention that they are all elderly and were transferred to the armed group’s headquarters in the center of Maabatli district. They were released in batches after paying fines.
- On 11 October, the Turkish intelligence arrested Muhammad Ali Shaikho Na’san at the center of Maabatli district, on charges relating to a corruption case involving the local council. He is still held incommunicado.
- On 11 October, the Turkish intelligence arrested a number of Jidires District Local Council employees. They are Salah Sha’bo, deputy director of the local council, Muhammad Ali Shaikho, an employee at the Education Office, Midiya Khanjar, Muhammad Mesto, an employee at the Relief Office, Rashid Qasim, an employee at the Procurement Committee, Rami Ibrahim, and Kaniwar Muhammad, a janitor. They were arrested on charges relating to the aforementioned corruption case and are still held incommunicado.
- On 12 October, a source of the SNA reported that Kaniwar Kamal Rashid, 27, was kidnapped by unidentified persons at the Şêxûtka/Shaiikh Hatku village, with no further information as to his whereabouts.
- On 14 October, the Military Police arrested Furat Ahmad and Zouzan Mesto Kabak at the

Afraz village, in Maabatli district, on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” Both are still held incommunicado.

- On 14 October, the Turkish Intelligence services arrested Abdulmutaleb Shaikh Na’san, the director of the Maabatli district Local Council, and his chauffeur Hassan Ishano. The latter was released, while the director remains held incommunicado.
- On 25 October, Adnan Mansour Hamza was kidnapped at the Şorbe/Shurba village, in Maabatli district, without a hint as to his whereabouts or the perpetrators.

## 5. Arrests in Sharran District

In Sharran district, STJ documented **9 arrests**. One person was released, while the rest remain held incommunicado. The perpetrators are the Anti-Terrorism Service, Civil Police, and Sultan Murad Division, who carried out the arrests as follows:

- On 2 October, the Political Security Branch arrested Idris Walid Muhammad at Afrin city. Born in Qara Tepe village, in Sharran district, Muhammad is still held incommunicado.

**Idris was sent a warrant, necessitating that he shows up at the branch for interrogation two weeks before his arrest, a local source told STJ.**

- On 8 October, the Sultan Murad Division arrested Abdo Shaikh Na’san, 25, at the Qastal Kishk village on the charge of “performing the mandatory military service within the ranks of the YPG.” He was transferred to the center at Sharran district to be brought before a judge, but he remains held incommunicado.
- On 9 October, the SNA-affiliated Anti-Terrorism Service arrested Shiyar Musalam Jum’a, 36, while rushing his father to the IDA hospital in the nearby city of Azaz. He was released a week later after paying a fine.
- On 12 October, the Military Police arrested Nabi Ja’afar, the Mukhtar of Ikidam village, on the charge of dealing with the Autonomous Administration earlier on and involvement in smuggling activities between 2012 and 2018. He remains held incommunicado.

**Nabi Ja’far was arrested last year as well, and had paid a fine of \$5,000 in exchange for his release at the time, a local source told STJ.**

- On 15 October, the Civil Police arrested Amin Hussain, Nidal Hussain, Nadim Hussain, and Mustafa Muhammad as it run a drive in search of weapons in Gobeleke village. The four were arrested for possessing hunting rifles and were transferred to the police station in Sharran district to complete their interrogation. They remain held incommunicado.
- On 15 October, the Military Police arrested Mustafa Muhammad at the Gobeleke village, in Sharran district, on the charge of “possessing weapons.” He is still held incommunicado.

## 6. Arrests in Bulbul District

In Bulbul district, STJ documented a **single arrest incident**, with the detainee subsequently released.

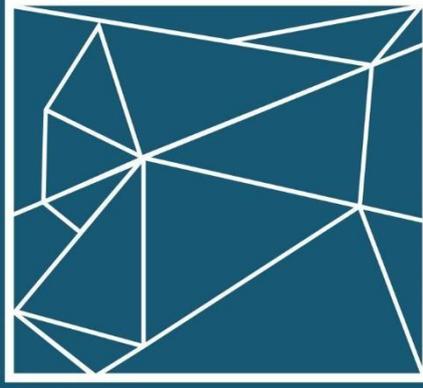
- On 5 October, the Military Police arrested Abdurrahman Muhammad at the Baylān village, based on a complaint filed against him following an altercation with a displaced person. He was detained for a week and released after paying a fine.

## 7. Arrests perpetrated by Other Parties to the Syrian Conflict

STJ documented the arrest of **three Kurdish citizens** by the Syrian government forces and members of the Autonomous Administration. They were carried out as follows:

- On 11 October, personnel of a the State Security Service, affiliated with the Syrian government, arrested Amina Shaikho at a checkpoint not far off Sheikh Najjar village, near Aleppo city. Born in Hamam village, in Jindires district, Amina was charged with “illegally entering Aleppo city,” and is still held incommunicado.
- On 28 October, the Autonomous Administration arrested Juwan Hassan at Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood, in Aleppo city. Born in Kourda village, in Jindires district, Juwan was charged with “undermining the prestige of the Autonomous Administration,” according to local sources.
- On 9 October, the Air force Intelligence Branch, affiliated with the Syrian government forces, arrested Niveen Osman at the Kafr Janneh village, administratively affiliated with Sharran district. She remains locked away incommunicado.

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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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