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سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
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Syrians  
For Truth  
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## Idlib: Two Children, One Young Man Shot Dead by Turkish Border Guards in Early 2021

## **Idlib: Two Children, One Young Man Shot Dead by Turkish Border Guards in Early 2021**

*Turkish border guards (Gendarmerie) shot and killed a child playing in his family farm inside Syria. The guards also shot and killed a second child and a young man who attempted to cross the border to Turkey.*

Turkish border guard's (Gendarmerie) shot and killed two children and a young man in January and February 2021. Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documented that a child was shot unjustifiably while playing on his family's farm within Syrian borders. The second child and young man killed were shot while trying to illegally cross the border strip.

The deaths at the beginning of 2021 are part of a larger pattern of the use of excessive violence by Turkish border guards resulting in the deaths of civilians and border crossers. In a former report, STJ documented at least 12 civilians were killed by border guard fire in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the [Violations Documentation Center](#) (VDC) reported that Turkish border guards shot and killed 16 individuals, among them five children and a woman in 2020. We identify the 16 killed in the appendix of this report.

## I. Border Guards Kill a Syrian Child

On 10 February 2021, Turkish border guards shot at a farmer and his two grandsons while they worked on [their farm near the Syria-Turkey border strip](#). The farm is located in al-Adnani village in Jisr al-Shughur suburbs, west Idlib city. The guards killed one of the two boys, Yazan Bakeer, who was shot in the chest. The boy's grandfather recounted the incident to STJ:

"I own 800 meters of agricultural land near the Turkish border strip. On 10 February, I was pruning apricot trees. My two grandsons were there too. They helped me a little and played most of the time. In the afternoon, I heard gunshots. The boys started screaming because the projectile exploded not very far from where they stood. I ran towards them. We immediately headed home, on foot. We walked in reverse direction, leaving the farm and the Turkish border behind us. We walked only 10 meters, when Turkish border guards fired again. My grandson Yazan suddenly collapsed to the ground, bleeding. When I got closer, I could see that a bullet hit his right armpit, leaving through the left side of his chest. I was shocked and started screaming for help, calling to my neighbors in the adjacent farm. Yazan's body began to shake and finally he fell unconscious. My neighbors helped me take him to the hospital. We took him to the Qunaya hospital, north Jisr al-Shughur and 20 kilometers from my farm. The doctors admitted him to the ICU. However, one doctor came out and told me that Yazan died from his wounds."

The grandfather added:

"The shooting had to be deliberate. Turkish soldiers intended to shoot us. Turkish soldiers at the border have been violent and reckless; we have been denied going to our lands because they keep firing their arms."

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<sup>1</sup> "Casualties on the Syrian Border Continue to Fall by the Turkish Gendarmerie," Syrians for Truth and Justice, 11 November 2019, <https://stj-sy.org/en/casualties-on-the-syrian-border-continue-to-fall-by-the-turkish-gendarmerie/> (last visited: 19 March 2021).

Yazan Bakeer is not the first child injured or killed by Turkish border guard fire. In 2018<sup>2</sup>, ten-year-old Bashar Th. and eleven-year-old Abdul Karim N. were shot while playing near their homes. While they recovered, seventeen-year-old Ibrahim B. did not after he was killed by Turkish border fire while walking to work. As of today, there have been no official statements by Turkish officials condemning the deaths and injuries of Syrian children from Turkish border guard fire – including the most recent murder of Yazan Bakeer. The deaths continue with impunity.



Image 1- Yazan Bakeer, a little boy shot and killed by Turkish border guards on 10 February 2021.  
Credit: Local sources.

## **II. Border Crossers Continue to be Killed Attempting to Enter Turkey**

While Yazan was shot and killed on his farm, the majority of civilian deaths at the hands of Turkish border guards have occurred while individuals attempt to cross the Turkish border illegally.

Even though Turkey claims it is still committed to the Open-Door Policy, residents in opposition held areas are denied official channels for seeking asylum. They are left with one illegal and dangerous alternative: crossing the border illegally. Asylum seekers resort to smugglers who facilitate individual or group cross-border smuggling operations to Turkish territories through tunnels or mountainous terrains in exchange for exorbitant sums of

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<sup>2</sup> “Gendarmerie Offences: 7 killed, 17 injured in Ras al-Ayn, al-Hasakah,” Syrians for Truth and Justice, 19 August 2019, <https://stj-sy.org/en/gendarmerie-offences-7-killed-17-injured-in-ras-al-ayn-al-hasakah/>, last visited 22 March 2021.

money. In a 2019 report documenting border casualties, STJ mapped out the routes most used by these smugglers.<sup>3</sup>

Turkey has been aggressively attempting to deter border-crossings. STJ interviewed several local activists to obtain information on Turkish authorities' measures against Syrians attempting to cross the border strip illegally. Notably, the activists said that Turkish forces detonated smuggling tunnels, extending over 400 m under the border wall between Turkey and the villages of Durriya and Ayn al-Bayda.

Activists reported that the first tunnel detonation was carried out on the evening of 31 January 2021. Three blasts were heard but not geographically pinpointed. Later, smugglers knew that Turkish forces detonated three of the tunnels they used. Turkish forces detonated a fourth tunnel, 150 m, on 19 February in Ayn al-Bayda, near Bidama town.

Despite the deterrence, Syrian civilians continue to attempt crossing the border strip in the hope of pursuing a better life in Turkey, on the levels of economy and security. While civilians escape regime-held areas to evade security prosecution, civilians from opposition-controlled areas risk their lives by crossing the strip to overcome poverty and lack of job opportunities, or to flee the shelling on their areas by regime forces and their Russian affiliates. Many of these border crossers have been beaten, tortured, and killed<sup>4</sup>.

One victim of these deterrence measures is teenager Mustafa al-Bakrou, 17, from the Hila village. He was shot and killed by the Turkish army on 3 February 2021 for attempting to access Turkish territories illegally. A close relative told STJ the following:

“Mustafa comes from a poor family. Due to their tight finances, Mustafa decided to enter Turkey, hoping to work and help his parents. On 3 February, he left his village, Hila, headed to Harim city in Idlib. He made an agreement with some people to take the journey through the Khirbet al-Jouz border crossing. Arriving there, he was surprised that he will enter Turkey at night and illegally. With the smuggler and a group of other people, he walked through mountainous bushy terrains near Khirbet al-Jouz. Once they set foot in Turkish territories, the army started shooting. Mustafa was shot in the chest and died on the spot. The smuggler and the other guys who accompanied him all ran away. Turkish soldiers retrieved Mustafa's body and handed it over to the Syrian officials running Bab al-Hawa crossing. The crossing's administration then contacted officials in our village and delivered them Mustafa's body. He was buried in Hila village.”

The previous month, another young man, Ahmad Mahmoud al-Hassan, was shot and killed by Turkish border guards attempting a border crossing. Ahmad was originally from Rasm

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<sup>3</sup> “Casualties on the Syrian Border Continue to Fall by the Turkish Gendarmerie,” Syrians for Truth and Justice, 11 November 2019, <https://stj-sy.org/en/casualties-on-the-syrian-border-continue-to-fall-by-the-turkish-gendarmerie/> (last visited: 19 March 2021).

<sup>4</sup> “Gendarmerie Offences: 7 killed, 17 injured in Ras al-Ayn, al-Hasakah,” Syrians for Truth and Justice, 19 August 2019, <https://stj-sy.org/en/gendarmerie-offences-7-killed-17-injured-in-ras-al-ayn-al-hasakah/>, last visited 22 March 2021.

Sahrij, in Aleppo's southern countryside, and died on 14 January 2021 as he attempted to cross to Turkey through Harim in Idlib. He was shot before he reached the border wall. The young men who had been accompanying Ahmad during the crossing informed his family. Witnesses and family sources informed STJ that Ahmad was buried in Syria.



*Image 2- Ahmad Mahmoud al-Hassan, a young man shot and killed by Turkish border guards on 14 January 2021.*

Much like the case of the civilians killed while going about their daily lives, Turkish officials have rarely made official statements condemning the torture, beatings, and killings of those crossing the border. Instead, the death toll continues to rise.

### III. Appendix

The VDC provided STJ with the names of the 16 persons documented as shot and killed by Turkish border guards in 2020. They are:

	Name	Status	Gender	Province	Region	Death Date	Death Location
1	Qusai Abdulrahman al-Shihab	Civilian	Male-child	Aleppo	Afrin	12-09-2020	Idlib
2	Hussain Juma al-Hamad	Civilian	Male-child	Aleppo	Afrin: Jindires	10-14-2020	Aleppo
3	Ibrahim Muhammad al-Barhou	Civilian	Male-adult	Al-Hasaka	Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê: Arada	10-07-2020	Aleppo
4	Moumen Muhammad Hazimeh	Civilian	Male-adult	Al-Quneitra	Jubata al-Khashab	10-06-2020	Idlib
5	Muhammad Ramadan Sharif al-Housh	Civilian	Male-adult	Deir ez-Zor	Al-Bu Omar	27-09-2020	Deir ez-Zor
6	Humam Mustafa al-Sdair	Civilian	Male-child	Idlib	Ma`arat al-Nu`man	17-06-2020	Idlib
7	Ayoub Muhammad al-Zuaiter	Civilian	Male-child	Aleppo	Abad	20-05-2020	Idlib
8	Maher Abbas al-Abed	Civilian	Male-adult	Aleppo	Kobane	17-05-2020	Aleppo
9	Muhyeddin Abdullah Abdulrazaq	Civilian	Male-adult	Al-Hasakah	Al-Jawadiyah	17-05-2020	Al-Hasakah
10	Abdulrahman Muhammad Ramadan al-Marandi	Civilian	Male-adult	Aleppo	Azaz	11-05-2020	Aleppo
11	Muhammad al-Sourani	Noncivilian	Male-adult	Aleppo	Azaz	05-05-2020	Idlib
12	Abdulsalam Fawaz Etriyeh	Civilian	Male-adult	Hama	Fan Shamaly	07-03-2020	Idlib
13	Amjad Fawaz al-Ahmad	Civilian	Male-adult	Hama	Qalaat al-	21-01-2020	Idlib

					Madiq: Sahriyah		
14	Swaidan al-Faraj	Civilian	Male-adult	Hama	Qalaat al-Madiq: Sahriyah	21-01-2020	Idlib
15	Muhaimeed Fawaz al-Faraj	Civilian	Male-child	Hama	Qalaat al-Madiq: Sahriyah	21-01-2020	Idlib
16	Fatima Khaled Azoun	Civilian	Female-adult	Idlib	Ma'ar Shoreen	19-01-2020	Idlib



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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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