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Security Services of the Autonomous Administration Carry out Family Arrests in Aleppo and Raqqa Provinces

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In Aleppo province, the Manbij Military Council arrested members of Nidal Ibo's family to coerce him into surrendering himself on charges of corruption. In Raqqqa province, the Anti-Terror Units arrested members of the al-Tarn family, releasing all detainees over the following three days

The Manbij Military Council, affiliated with the Autonomous Administration, arrested nine members of the Ibo family, including five children, on different dates in January and March 2021. The military council carried out the arrests to coerce Ibrahim Ibo into surrendering himself to security services after he fled Manbij city, Aleppo province, allegedly evading corruption charges. The Autonomous Administration's security services have detained the family for over 60 days, without charges or information on their current whereabouts.

Other family-level arrests were carried out by the Anti-Terror Units, affiliated with the Autonomous Administration, in February 2021 in Bayud al-Tarn village, west of Raqqa province. The units arrested several members of the al-Tarn family and released them in batches over three days following their arrest.

The arrests of the Ibo and al-Tarn families are further examples of previous arbitrary arrests by the Autonomous Administration, formerly of activists in 2019¹ and 2020².

I. Arrests Members of Ibo Family in Manbij City

The Manbij Military Council arrested eight members of the Ibo family over three consecutive days in January. Council personnel raided the family's house in the city on 6 January, around 03:00 am. They arrested Mahmoud Ibo, 60, and Raizan Ibo, 24.

On 7 January, council personnel also arrested Ahmad Mahmoud Ibo, 16, and Muhammad Mahmoud Ibo, 14. In the last raid for the month, the personnel arrested on 8 January Nidal's wife and his three children—Amira Batran 23, and Mahmoud, 6, Lazkeen, 4, as well as Areen, 3.

On 2 March, the military council personnel carried out an individual arrest. They arrested Nidal's mother, Haifaa Houshow, 55, for posting a video, in which she spoke of her family members' arrests and demanded their release.

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) interviewed Germany-based Lazkeen Ibo, Nidal's brother, who recounted the details of the arrest and charges involving his brother. He said:

“My brother Nidal was an employee at the Finance Control Department, operated by the Manbij Civil Council. He was put under all sorts of pressure while working there. He was even threatened with death. At a certain point, he submitted a resignation letter, which was refused. He then asked for protection by the Manbij Military Council, which also denied him its help. This forced Nidal to leave Manbij city on 2 January. When the news that he left the city spread, the military council arrested several of our family members. The arrests were meant to press Nidal and coerce him into

¹ “Syria: Prominent Activists Arbitrarily Arrested in Raqqa,” Syrians for Truth and Justice, 3 September 2019. Accessed 24 March 2021, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-prominent-activists-arbitrarily-arrested-in-raqqa/>.

² “Raqqa: Three Activists Arrested by the Autonomous Administration for Reasons yet Unknown”, Syrians for Truth and Justice, 16 March 2020, Accessed 24 March 2021, <https://stj-sy.org/en/raqqa-three-activists-arrested-by-the-autonomous-administration-for-reasons-yet-unknown/>.

surrendering himself, after rumors started circulating on Nidal's work and that he was involved in corruption cases."

He added:

"I reached out online to several officials of the Autonomous Administration and the Manbij Military Council to inquire about my family's fate. One official has recently told me that my family members will be released as soon as Nidal surrenders himself."

STJ also attempted to contact officials from the Manbij Military Council and managed finally to talk to one of the council's commanders. On the condition of his anonymity, the commander said:

"We did not actually arrest the family members. We brought them for interrogation purposes. We then kept them in our custody and prevented them from contacting any person to press Nidal into surrendering himself. There are corruption and embezzlement cases against Nidal, and the family members are being kept as a source of pressure."



Image 1-The Ibo family members detained by the Manbij Military Council.

II. Arrests Members of al-Tarn Family in Raqqa Province

In a separate incident, the SDF-affiliated Anti-Terror Units arrested several members of the al-Tarn family in Bayud al-Tarn village, west of Raqqa province, on 22 February 2021. The units released all the detainees over the three following days.

Local activists reported different versions on the reasons for the arrests and the charges pressed against the family members, particularly that the arrested included the civil activist Majed al-Tarn, who works for the We'am (Harmony) programme, funded by the US State Department.

STJ tracked the arrest incident and interviewed one of the released family members. Refusing to reveal his name for security reasons, he said:

“We were arrested due to a malicious report filed by persons we disputed with over the cultivation of a plot of agricultural land. We were not beaten or treated in a humiliating manner, neither through the arrest operation, nor during the interrogation. We were released three days later and without any charges. The General Security in Raqqa clearly knew that the report was malicious.”

The detainees were:

1. Majid Ismail al-Tarn, born in 1948, is married and has one child. He is a civil activist and a former Syrian Red Crescent employee. Majid today works for the We'am (Harmony) programme, funded by the US State Department.

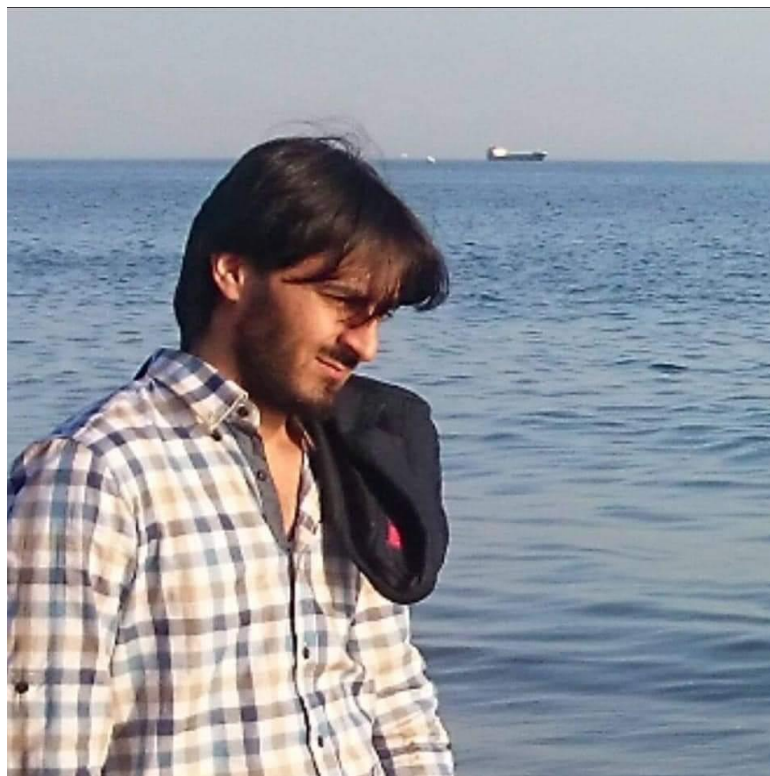


Image 2- Civil activist Majid al-tarn.

2. Fawaz al-Tarn.
3. Mamdouh al-Tarn and his wife. The above-quoted source said that the wife was arrested for resisting the units' personnel and was released a few hours later.
4. Maizer al-Tarn.
5. Mu'taz al-Tarn.
6. Abdulhakim al-Tarn.
7. Abdulrauf al-Tarn
8. Abdulrahman al-Tarn
9. Ahmad al-Tarn
10. Muhamad al-Tarn
11. Muhammad al-Tarn
12. Ahmad al-Aboud al-Tarn
13. Mahmoud al-Abdou al-Tarn
14. Hamid Issa al-Tarn
15. Ahmad Aloush al-Tarn
16. Aloush Aloush al-Tarn

STJ continues to advocate for clear and transparent arrests which protect the rights of civilians and activists.

Recommendations:

1. The Autonomous Administration must explain and clarify the legal basis for arrests and detentions- especially those made against civilians and activists- and publish it in a clear language that is understandable for all citizens.
2. Detentions and arrests must only be conducted by the competent authorities, under official permits issued by the public prosecutor's office or by those authorized to issue such orders.
3. Detainees must be allowed to contact their relatives and lawyers, without delay. They also must be informed of the reasons for their detention. Besides, it should be insured that they will either be formally charged and promptly presented before a judge or be released immediately.
4. If charged, the accused must be given a fair trial before an independent court, monitored by domestic and international human rights organizations.



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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