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سوريون
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Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



Northwest Syria: Syrian Medical Workers Arbitrarily Dismissed

Turkish hospitals fired Syrian healthcare workers, like cardiologist Dr. Othman Hajjawi, demonstrating the extent of Turkish influence in northern Syria

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Turkish officials at Marea Hospital recently dismissed a Syrian cardiologist, Dr. Othman Hajjawi, in an incident which demonstrates the extent of Turkey's influence over northern Syria and its civilian institutions. In this report, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) highlights a few cases of the arbitrary dismissals of Syrian employees by Turkish-run administrations to shed light on the corruption of institutions in northwestern and eastern Syria.

After [occupying](#) parts of northern Syria following Operation Euphrates Shield in 2016, Turkey took control of key security, service, and medical institutions in the region by giving key positions to Turkish citizens and Syrians loyal to Turkey, several of whom were given Turkish nationalities after 2011. Moreover, the Turkish government linked the Syrian institutions with its authorities in Antakya/Hatay, Kilis, Urfa, and other Turkish provinces.

On 6 August 2021, Erol Tekçe, the head doctor of Marea Hospital, arbitrarily dismissed Syrian doctor Othman Hajjawi after Hajjawi supported a Syrian colleague who had a dispute with a Turkish nurse. Hajjawi's firing provoked an angry public response, and when the Syrian Interim Government refused to take action, raised questions about the effectiveness of the Interim Government's control over the region.

The Syrian areas occupied by Turkey are administratively subordinated to adjacent Turkish border provinces — Recep Soytürk, governor/*wali* of Kilis controls the Euphrates Shield area, Rahmi Doğan governor/*wali* of Antakya/Hatay controls the Olive Branch area, and Abdullah Erin governor/*wali* of Urfa controls Peace Spring area.

The community held several [demonstrations](#) demanding the reversal of Dr. Hajjawi's dismissal decision; however, the Turkish authorities did not retract their decision and instead [prevented](#) Hajjawi from practicing medicine in all areas under their control in northwestern and eastern Syria.

The Dismissal of the Community's Only Cardiologist

On 3 August 2021, the administration of the new [Marea Hospital](#) issued a decision dismissing Ali Basha, a Turkish nurse, for insulting Rafi Alwan, a Syrian dentist. The decision followed an investigation conducted into the incident after Alwan filed a complaint. Despite the investigation, Basha's dismissal irritated the hospital's other Turkish staff.

On 6 August 2021, three days after Basha's dismissal, the Marea Hospital's administration suddenly issued a decision voiding the contract signed with Dr. Othman Hajjawi. Originally from Aleppo, Dr. Hajjawi returned to Syria from France to help his community and was the [only cardiologist](#) in the Euphrates Shield area. His dismissal, signed by Musa Kayhan, the hospital's director, Erol Tekçe, the head doctor, and Abdurrahman Hafez, the head doctor's assistant, provided no explanation as to why he had been terminated. The decision is transcribed below, translated from the original Turkish:

Contract Termination Committee Report

As listed below, the contract with the Syrian doctor, who has been working in our hospital since 20 October 2018 as a cardiologist and has the registration number: 7945180134, has been terminated. Signatures of the head and members of the committee:

Musa Kayhan, Erol Tekçe, Abdurrahman Hafez

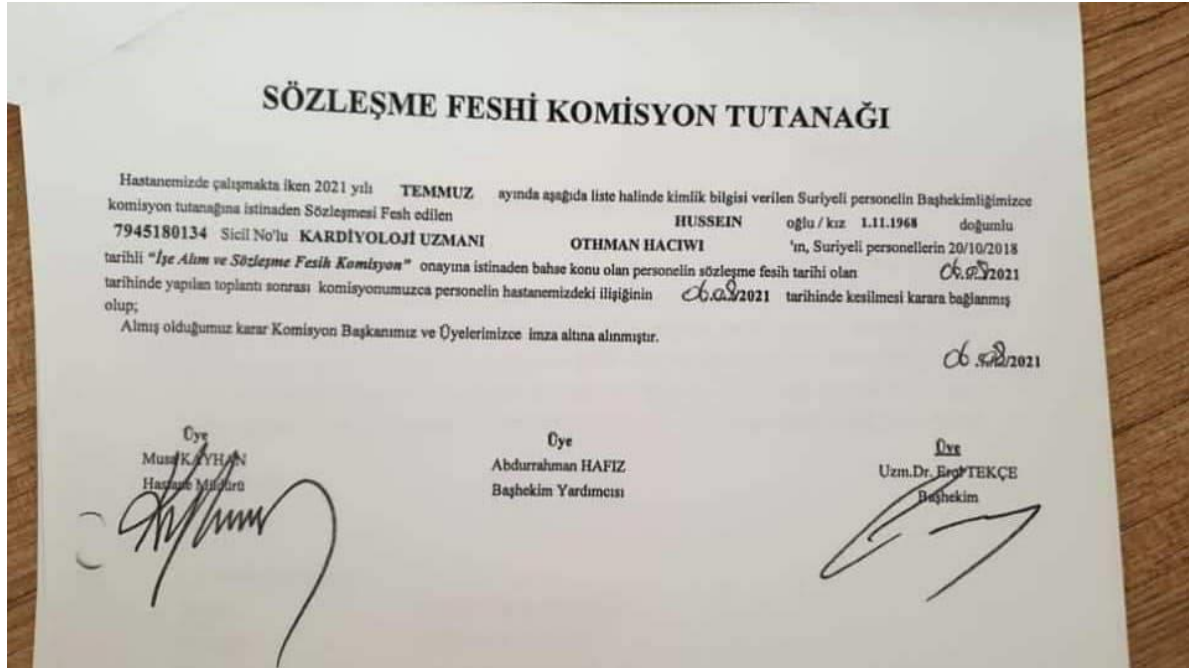


Image 1 - A photograph of the decision to terminate Dr. Othman Hajjawi's contract.

On 6 August 2021, Erol Tekçe, the hospital's head doctor, issued a circular in which he accused Dr. Hajjawi of ignoring his work and mistreating patients. The circular is transcribed below, translated from the original Turkish:

Kilis Province Republic of Turkey
 Presidency of the Syrian Employment Authority
 Marea Hospital Physicians Presidency
 Subject: Termination of employment contract
 2021 – 06- 08
 Mr. Othman Hajjawi, a cardiologist.

Othman Hajjawi, who works for the Marea Hospital as a cardiologist with the registration number: 7945180134, failed to attend his shifts and treat the patients properly, which caused a defect in the performance of the hospital. Thus, the committee decided to dismiss him on 6 August 2021.

To be reported to those responsible for the implementation.

Dr. Erol Tekçe

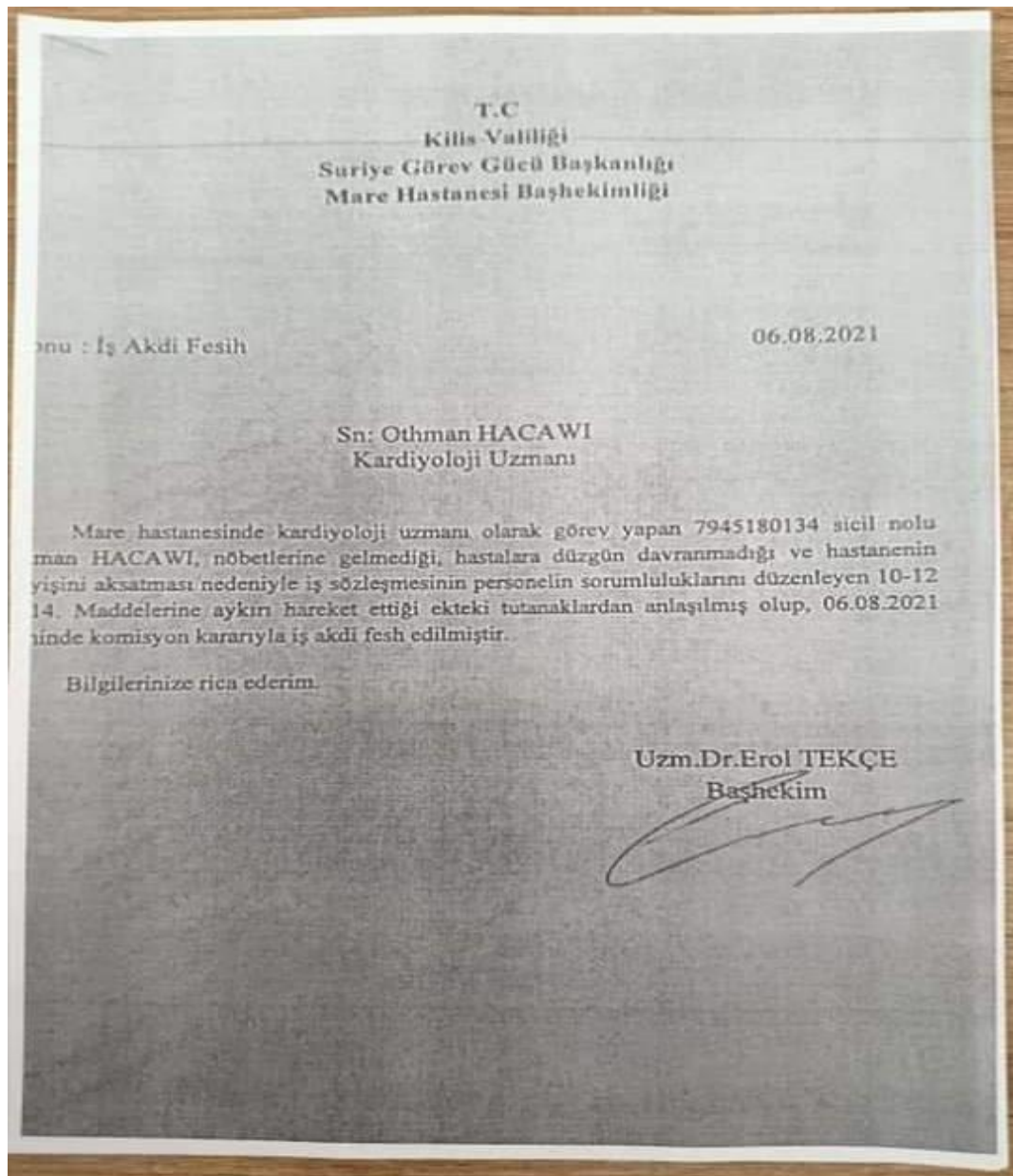


Image 2 - a circular issued by Marea Hospital's head doctor explaining why Dr. Hajjawi was dismissed.

However, Dr. Hajjawi categorially [refuted](#) the accusation in a Facebook post, citing that he often took extra shifts.

10 août, 19:55 · 🌐

وهنا نقول ان هذا الكلام منفي وغير صحيح ، حيث أن سجل دوام المشفى في الشهر الماضي يظهر ان الدكتور عثمان قد اكمل دوامه المقرر له شهرياً وازاد عليه ١٢ منوبة اي أن دوامه ٨ ايام شهرياً وسجل دوام المشفى يظهر ان الدكتور قد اتم دوام ٢٠ يوم

جاء أيضاً في القرار أن هناك مريضة يشرف عليها الدكتور عثمان قد فارقت الحياة وهذا أيضاً غير صحيح وبشهادة كادر المشفى

هزلت ممرض ترکی بوحه انذار لطیب استشاری امراض قلب

I Hastanesi NÖBETİ DOKTORLAR (TEMMUZ 07 / 2021)									
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Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 15.00
Mutluk 10 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 10.00
Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 15.00
Mutluk 10 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 10.00
Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 15.00
Mutluk 10 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 10.00
Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 15.00
Mutluk 10 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 10.00
Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 15.00
Mutluk 10 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL		Aslıt 10.00
Mutluk 15 Saat	Asya Şenel		Asya Şenel		Fatih HANCIÖZ		Mehmet AKGÜL</		

A local official familiar with the incident, who asked STJ for anonymity, told our researchers:

He added:

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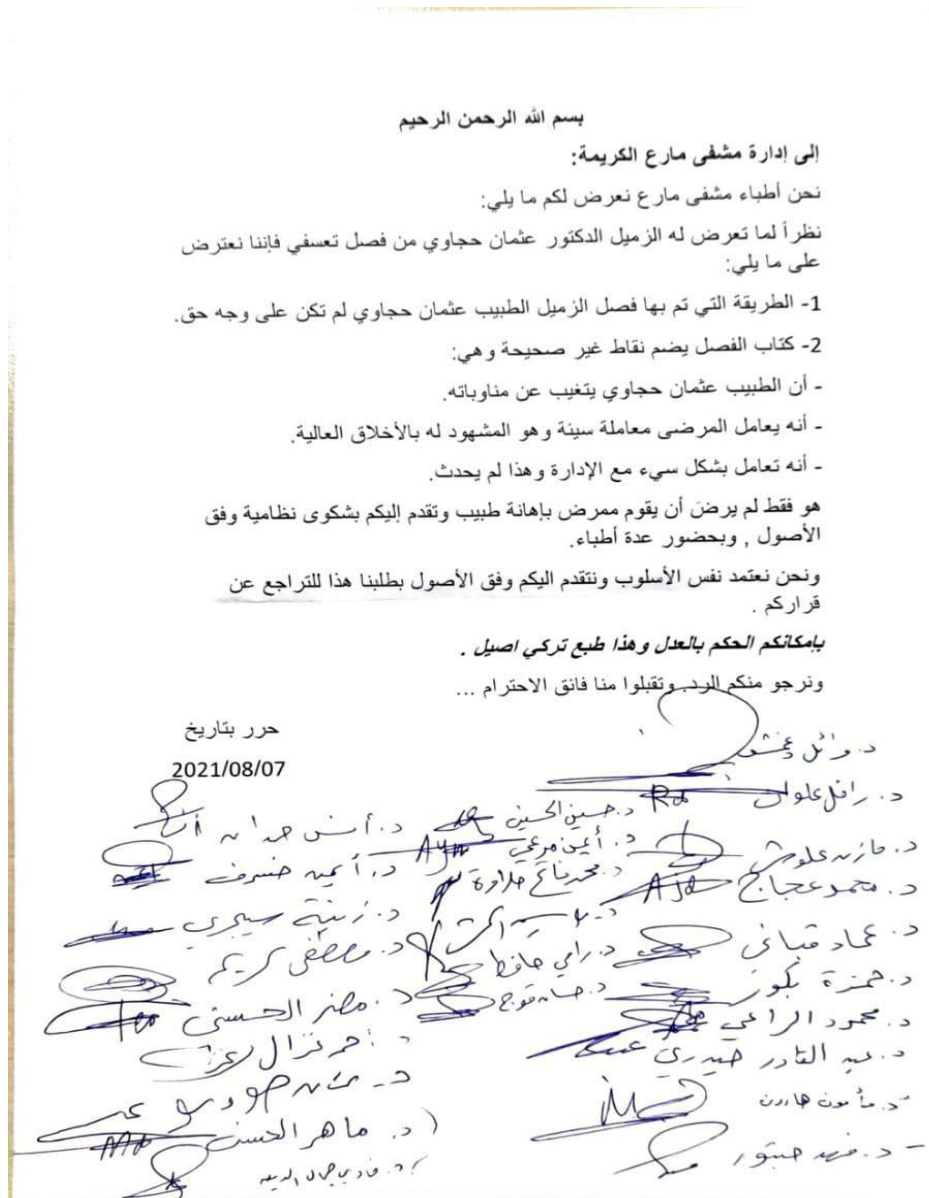


Image 4- the statement issued by the doctors in Marea Hospital, objecting to Dr. Hajjawi's arbitrary dismissal.

The statement saw no response; consequently, the doctors declared a strike. On 10 August the doctors issued a statement announcing that they would cease working in the clinical department but continue to receive critical cases in the emergency room. However, the strike was also unsuccessful in pressuring the hospital administration to reverse its decision.

بيان صادر عن أطباء مرقع
 إلى شعبنا العظيم :
 نحن الأطباء الذين اخترنا البقاء مع شعبنا وقضيتنا
 نعلمكم بأننا نتحمل الكثير
 تحملنا لعملنا بأحسن الظروف
 تحملنا العمل بشروط وظروف وعقود عمل مجنونة لا تعطينا
 هي حق الدفاع عنه ~~والله~~ حقوقنا
 ولكنه الأمور وصلت لحد الطغاة على كرامتنا
 وبناءً على ذلك نعلمكم بما يلي
 سيتم إيقاف العمل في مرقع مرقع اعتباراً من يوم الأربعاء
 ١١/٨/٢٠١٤ وهذا استمرارية
 سيكون العمل متوقفاً بالسيارات تماماً
 والإستضافات سيتم لتقديم الخدمة للحالة الطارئة والمجدة
 للحياة فقط .
 ولله الحمد للعمل هي عودة إلى قورعنا من الجاوي
 وما سنذفقه من ثمرة لن يكونه أنجلي من دم مليون ونصف شهيد
 ونصف مليون قتيل وملايين المحبسين

Image 5- A statement issued by Marea Hospital doctors in which they declared a strike in response to the arbitrary dismissal of Dr. Hajjawi.

In addition to hospital staff, activists and local community members in northern Syria protested in front of Marea Hospital against Dr. Hajjawi's dismissal. The protesters called for the Syrian Interim Government to intervene and redress Dr. Hajjawi. However, the Syrian Interim Government issued a statement on 9 August in which it denied responsibility, citing that the hospital was built by Turkey and run by Turkish doctors and that the Syrian doctors were employed in it under special contracts. The Government denied that it controlled or supervised the institutions in northern Syria, and even denied that the territory was Syrian.



الرقم: 323

التاريخ: 09 / 08 / 2021

بيان توضيحي

إلى أهلنا في المناطق المحررة حول قضية الدكتور عثمان حجاوي نوضح لكم الآتي:

إن الدكتور عثمان حجاوي من أوائل الكوادر الطبية العاملة في المحرر والمشهود لها بالثورية والنزاهة والكفاءة.

كما أنه كان ولا يزال يشغل في الحكومة السورية المؤقتة منصب عميد كلية الصيدلة وعضو مجلس التعليم العالي. ومرحب به في كل المشافي التي تتبع لوزارة الصحة في الحكومة السورية المؤقتة، وله كامل الحق في الحصول على ترخيص مزاولة المهنة في عيادة خاصة.

بالإضافة إلى أن المشفى الذي تم فصله منه لا يتبع لوزارة الصحة في الحكومة السورية المؤقتة، وهو ضمن عدة مشافي في المحرر ساهمت الدولة التركية الشقيقة في إنشائها في إطار دعمها للتطاع الصحي بغية تقديم أفضل الخدمات الصحية لأهلنا في المناطق المحررة، والتوظيف فيها يكون وفق عقد عمل خاص مع الإدارة وليس من قبلنا.

وفي هذا الإطار نشيد بالدعم الكبير الذي يقدمه الأخوة الأتراك لأهلنا في القطاع الصحي ونؤكد أن دور كافة المؤسسات الصحية في المناطق المحررة دور تكاملي ومتمم لبعضه البعض.

أخيراً نشن دور كل الكفاءات الطبية في خدمة أهلنا في المناطق المحررة، ونؤكد دعمنا لهم .

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.



Image 6- a statement by the Syrian Interim Government on the dismissal of Dr. Othman Hajjawi.

The efforts of the community and of local officials to pressure Marea Hospital to reverse Dr. Hajjawi's dismissal ultimately failed. On 25 August 2021, Dr. Hajjawi posted on his Facebook account that his dismissal was confirmed in a meeting between the head of the local council with the Turkish governor and that they also agreed on preventing him from working in all Turkish hospitals and medical centers.



Image 7- a post published by Dr. Hajjawi on 25 August 2021 confirming his dismissal, as well as the decision to prevent him from working in all other Turkish-run medical institutions.

The Dismissal of a Medical Worker in Afrin Hospital

Dr. Hajjawi's case is not an isolated one, with another similar incident occurring in Afrin hospital. A medical worker was arbitrarily dismissed for criticizing the mistreatment of Syrian patients and nurses by Turkish employees. The dismissal was issued on 25 February, citing that the medical worker had misused X-ray equipment. As of this report, no Syrian civil or media body has either investigated or objected to this dismissal.

A person familiar with the case told STJ:

"The dismissed medical worker has a certificate from Damascus University. He worked in hospitals in the suburbs of Damascus for seven years before he fled Eastern Ghouta for northern Syria in 2018. There, Turkey was establishing hospitals and was in need of medical staff. The medical worker was assigned to two hospitals in Afrin due to his vast experience."

The source added:

"The medical worker used to work with a Turkish doctor and an X-ray technician who treated him badly. Furthermore, the Turkish workers in Afrin Hospitals treated the Syrian patients in a provocative and disrespectful manner, as if they were their slaves. In one case, a pregnant Syrian woman came to Afrin Hospital to X-ray her broken leg and she was mistreated by the Turkish X-ray technician. The Syrian medical worker asked the technician to treat the woman properly, but the technician responded to him with shouts and insults. Following the incident, the Syrian medical worker was brought before a disciplinary committee and dismissed under the pretext of misusing medical equipment."

He added:

“The establishment of Turkish hospitals in northern Syria was a good step but their staff’s poor attitude turned those hospitals into a mess. Discrimination between the Syrian and Turkish workers is also a big problem, as despite being less qualified, Turkish workers receive much higher salaries than Syrian workers.”

Administrative Corruption and Chaos

A worker in a local council in the Euphrates Shield area said that there is a wide-spread prevalence of administrative corruption in service sectors. For instance, favouritism and bribes are the means to be employed in these sectors:

“Most of the workers in the service sectors were employed through mediation with a Turkish official or after paying sums of money to local Syrian officials. I have witnessed several cases of the dismissal or transfer of employees whom the Turkish administration staff did not like. We, in the local council, often ask to find a vacancy for the dismissed unwanted employee; you know, transferring the employee is better than dismissing him/her.”

Researchers with STJ met with a former official in one of the education directorates in northern Syria to learn about the current status of the education sector. The official said:

“During the period when Turkey was establishing schools in northern Aleppo, I was appointed as an educational consultant in a local council there. The educational system was headed by a Turkish consultant responsible for equipping and staffing schools and also for choosing the curricula. From the first days of my work, I noticed a great corruption and absurdity in the educational system.

Since the establishment of the schools, I saw corruption in the process of appointing the teachers. Officials in charge of the teachers’ entrance exams used to take bribes in exchange for allowing cheating, leaking exam papers and forging certificates. I detected several forged certificates and told the officials in charge about them, but the latter would categorically ignore my reports. Furthermore, most of the schools’ staff were unqualified and unable to run the institutions. I saw incidents of skewing the number of students, registering the number as higher than it actually was in order to employ more teachers affiliated with members of the Syrian National Army (SNA), who control the area.”

He added:

“I saw really shocking cases which prompted me to submit many objections, but to no avail. I constantly argued with the Turkish consultant and the other Turkish employees. Eventually, I resigned my job when I learned that the Turkish consultant submitted a decision to dismiss me to be signed by the head of the local council.”

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.