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Syria: 52 Arrested in “Olive Branch” and “Peace Spring Strips” in September 2021

This report documents the arrests of 21 persons, one of whom died under torture, in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad, as well as the arrest of 31 people, including women and children, in Afrin

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Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documented the arrests of at least 52 people throughout September 2021 in Afrin, Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad, which are controlled by the Turkish army and affiliated factions of the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA).

In this report, STJ provides the names of the 52 persons who were deprived of their right to liberty, including five women and five children. In its pursuit on the fate of the detainees, STJ discovered that one detainee died under torture. Additionally, STJ registered the release of only 7 detainees, while the remaining 45 continue to be unaccounted for, including the women and children.

The following report documents the arrests and releases across the three target areas, drawing on the information obtained by STJ's network of researchers, as well as the testimonies provided by civil sources, eyewitnesses, and sources from within the SNA, which STJ aggregates into a designated database.

A. Arrests in the “Peace Spring” Strip

In the “Peace Spring” strip—including Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tal Abyad, field researchers with STJ documented that SNA-affiliated factions arrested at least 21 persons, among them three women and three children. One of the detainees died under torture, only two were released, and the fate of the other 18 remains unknown.

1. Arrests in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê

In Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, field researchers with STJ verified the arrests of eight persons. One detainee died under torture, only two were released, and five others remain unaccounted for.

1. Hamid al-Sanad was arrested on 5 September by the Sultan Murad Division somewhere near their dirt mound checkpoint, set up close to al-Aliya Silos area while headed to Raqqa city to visit his children. The division arrested al-Sanad and two other persons. These two detainees were released immediately after paying the checkpoint a sum of money. As for al-Sanad, the division transferred and held him at their headquarters in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê city. Furthermore, the division asked al-Sanad to pay them 3000 USD in exchange for his release. His fate remains unknown.
2. Hussein Ali Kafan was arrested on 5 September from his home in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê city by the Civil Police. A police patrol raided his house and arrested him for unidentified reasons. His fate remains unknown.
3. Louay Abdulqader Thiyab, a teacher at the Umm al-'Adam/al-Mouqren village, was arrested on 13 September by members of the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division, commanded by a person called Abu Arida. The division arrested Thiyab on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration” and held him at their headquarters in Umm Arida village. He was released on the same day.

4. Munaf al-Abdullah was arrested on 14 September from his home in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê city by a Civil Police patrol on the charge of “forging identification documents.” Notably, al-Abdullah is an employee at the Civil Registration Directorate of the Ras al-Ayn Local Council. His fate remains unknown.
5. Rahmou al-Salem, 55, was arrested on 19 September from al-Manajeer town by an SNA-affiliated faction. He was released on 20 September.
6. Abdulkareem Muhammad al-Ibrahim, 40, was arrested on 19 September from al-Manajeer town by an SNA-affiliated faction. He was released on 20 September.
7. Hikmat Khalil al-Da’ar was arrested on 22 September by Suqour al-Sunna/Hawks of al-Sunna armed group on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” He died under torture at the hands of the group’s members. STJ is currently investigating the case.
8. Yahiya Zarif al-Rai was arrested on 23 September near al-Jouzah Roundabout in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê city. The Sultan Murad Division arrested Zarif on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration”, and he remains in detention at the division’s headquarters near the Souq al-Dajaj Souq al-Dajaj (Chicken market) in the city.

2. Arrests in Tal Abyad

In Tal Abyad, field researchers with STJ documented the arrests of 13 people, including three women and three children, by several factions operating in the area. All 13 detainees remain unaccounted for.

1. Hatim Ra’ad al-Hassi was arrested on 1 September on a checkpoint at the entrance to Tal Abyad city by members of the Glory Corps/Faylaq al-Majd on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration”. His fate remains unknown.
2. Nazal Jada’an al-Assaf, 33, was arrested on 2 September from Tal Abyad city by members of the Mu’tasim Division. He is currently held at the division’s headquarters in the eastern neighborhood in the city and his fate remains unknown.
3. Duaa Jasim al-NaKdal was arrested on 3 September by members of the al-Jabha al-Shamiya/al-Shamiya Front on the charge of “using fake identity documents to enter the city”. Her fate remains unknown.
4. Hazim Jasim al-NaKdal was arrested on 3 September by members of the al-Jabha al-Shamiya/al-Shamiya Front on the charge of “using fake identity documents to enter the city”. His fate remains unknown.
5. Walid Rashid al-Ittri, 20, was arrested on 5 September by members of the Glory Corps/Faylaq al-Majd on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration”. He remains detained at one of the Corps’ headquarters in the al-Mahatta neighborhood in Tal Abyad city.
6. Amjad Hussein al-Ubaidi, 28, was arrested on 11 September from Ain al-Arous town by members of the al-Jabha al-Shamiya/al-Shamiya Front on the charge of “filming military headquarters and trading in arms”. His fate remains unknown. Notably, the detainee suffers from visual impairments due to his lost right eye.

7. Shirin Sharif Zaino was arrested on 16 September from al-Kanisah neighborhood in Tal Abyad city by members of the Glory Corps/Faylaq al-Majd on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration”. Her fate remains unknown.
8. Hassan Ezzedin, 60, was arrested on 18 September from al-Munbateh town by members of the al-Jabha al-Shamiya/al-Shamiya Front allegedly because “his son had joined the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Raqqa city”. His fate remains unknown.
9. Kawthar al-Abed, 17, was arrested on 19 September at Umm al-Kharateem checkpoint, set up near Ali Bajliyah village by members of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East for unidentified reasons. Her fate remains unknown.
10. Fatima Mustafa, 35, and her two children— (detainees 11 and 12)— were arrested on 19 September at Umm al-Kharateem checkpoint, set up near Ali Bajliyah village by members of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East for unidentified reasons. Their fate remains unknown.
13. Abdulrahman Daham al-Lafi, 31, was arrested on 20 September from Suluk town by members of the Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” Notably, the detainee has been a nurse at the Suluk Public Hospital since 2020, and he remains held at one of the armed group’s centers in the town.

In addition to arrests, the field researcher obtained verified information on the release of two detainees arrested earlier in Tal Abyad city.

1. Asmar Thieb al-Shelash was released on 20 September. Al-Shelash was arrested on 8 July from Tal Abyad by Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East on the charge of “dealing with the Autonomous Administration.” A source from the armed group recounted to STJ that the detainee was released after he paid the group 3000 USD.
2. Imad Jamal al-Alosuh was released on 27 September. Al-Alosuh was arrested on 5 March from Ain al-Arous town by Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Free Men of the East on the charge of “perpetrating blasts in Ain al-Arous town.” A source within the armed group recounted to STJ that the detainee was released after he paid the group 4000 USD.

B. Arrests in the “Olive Branch” Strip

In the “Olive Branch” strip—including Afrin, SNA-affiliated factions arrested at least 31 persons, including two women, across six of the area’s districts. Only five detainees were released, while the remaining 62 continue to be unaccounted for.

To investigate the arrests in Afrin region, STJ’s field researcher spoke to a military source within the SNA. The source claimed that the arrests were perpetrated by several of the SNA-affiliated factions, each targeting persons in the districts they control. The source added that while some of the factions surrendered several of the people they arrested to the Military Police, they kept the remaining detainees in their custody. Those who were not surrendered continue to be unaccounted for. The military source recounted:

“We cannot define the exact day a person was arrested, nor the period detainees spent in the hold of a certain faction before they are transferred to other places...on several occasions, the detainees, who were relocated from one detention center to another, displayed marks of excessive beating and torture, and had their clothes torn...”

1. Arrests in Afrin District

In Afrin district, a military faction arrested six persons, including a woman. A number of these were relocated to centers of the Military Police, Subsequently, two men were released while the remaining four detainees continue to be unaccounted for.

1. Muhammad Mannan Ebish, 45, was arrested on 1 September from Afrin city. The Military Police released Ebish after he was brought to their center by the faction that arrested him in the first place.
2. Muhammad Murad was arrested on 1 September from Afrin city. The Military Police released Murad after he was brought to their center by the faction that arrested him in the first place.
3. Arin Dali Hassan, 22, was arrested on 17 September from Kimar village by the controlling faction. Her fate remains unknown.
4. Gharib Ismail Hassan was arrested on 19 September from Kamrouk village by the controlling faction. His fate remains unknown.
5. Abdo Muhammad Omar was arrested on 19 September from Kamrouk village by the controlling faction. His fate remains unknown.
6. Muhammad Hussein Sheikho was arrested on 19 September from Kamrouk village by the controlling faction. His fate remains unknown.

2. Arrests in Rajo District

In Rajo district, military factions arrested 10 persons. A number of these were relocated to centers of the Military Police, but none of them were released. Accordingly, all 10 remain unaccounted for.

1. Luqman Rashid Baker, 45, was arrested on 1 September from Baadina village. His fate remains unknown.
2. Shaker Hassan Ja’afar, 27, was arrested on 1 September from Baadina village. His fate remains unknown.
3. Muhammad Zakaraya Muhammad, 25, was arrested on 1 September from Baadina village. His fate remains unknown.
4. Nazmi Hourow was arrested on 1 September from Baadina village. His fate remains unknown.
5. Ahmad Alo was arrested on 2 September from Dumiliya village. His fate remains unknown.
6. Maher Muhyeddin Miqdad, 19, was arrested on 12 September from Qarababa village. His fate remains unknown.

7. Habash Rashid Heesh, 26, was arrested on 19 September from Baadina village. His fate remains unknown.
8. Walid Muhammad Na'ssan was arrested on 20 September from Omar Ushagi village. His fate remains unknown.
9. Adnan Muhammad Qanbar, 30, was arrested on 24 September from Mast Kouteh village. His fate remains unknown.
10. Muhammad Othman Toubal, 47, was arrested on 25 September from Mamuleh village. His fate remains unknown.

3. Arrests in Bulbul District

In Bulbul district, the Military Police arrested at least two men. One was released, while the other remains unaccounted for.

1. Mannan Ahmad Bayram, 42, was arrested on 1 September from Kêla/Kila village by the Military Police. His fate remains unknown.
2. Salah Muhammad Sido, 32, was arrested on 20 September from Qreekol village by the Military Police. He was subsequently released.

4. Arrests in Maabatli/Mabeta District

In Maabatli/Mabeta district, the Military Police arrested three persons, including a woman. One man and the woman were released, while the remaining detainee continues to be unaccounted for.

1. Muhammad Abdulqader Sido, 40, was arrested on 2 September from Brimice village by the Military Police. He was subsequently released.
2. Shiyar Fadel Ali, 32, was arrested on 14 September from Brimice village by the Military Police. His fate remains unknown.
3. Farida Mustafa was arrested on 14 September from Kourka village by the Military Police. She was subsequently released.

5. Arrests in Sharran District

In Sharran district, the Military Police arrested two persons. They remain unaccounted for.

1. Farouk Muhammad, 30, was arrested on 7 September from Kurt Kulak village by the Military Police. His fate remains unknown.
2. Khalil Taher Muhammad was arrested on 21 September from Erşqîbar/Arshqîbar village by the Military Police. His fate remains unknown.

6. Arrests in Jindires District

In Jindires district, several of the military factions operating across the district arrested eight persons. All eight detainees remain unaccounted for.

1. Rashid Banafsheh, 28, was arrested on 7 September from Celemê village. His fate remains unknown.
2. Kinjo Subhi Kinjo, 27, was arrested on 7 September from Celemê village. His fate remains unknown.
3. Hassan Subhi Alo was arrested on 7 September from Celemê village. His fate remains unknown.
4. Mustafa Ahmad Mouri was arrested on 7 September from Celemê village. His fate remains unknown.
5. Jello Mustafa Jiro was arrested on 7 September from Celemê village. His fate remains unknown.
6. Muhammad Waqfi Murad, 33, was arrested on 8 September from Kafr Safra village. His fate remains unknown.
7. Hassan Kalo, 70, was arrested on 14 September from Kafr Zait village. His fate remains unknown.
8. Bairqedar Muhammad Mustafa, 51, was arrested on 17 September from Ashkan village. His fate remains unknown.

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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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✉ editor@stj-sy.org