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Syria: The 75-Day Siege of Daraa al-Balad

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Syrian government forces and their Russian allies launched a large-scale attack in Daraa, ultimately taking control of the entire city. The attack was accompanied by extensive shelling and a tight siege that lasted from 24 June to 6 September 2021. The military hostilities displaced approximately 80 persons, who fled their houses towards northern Syria. Additionally, the combat took a toll on both civilians and fighters. Attacks by government forces killed at least 25 civilians and injured dozens of others, while clashes killed at least 39 fighters on both sides—the city’s local fighters and government forces—and wounded many others.

Since hostilities began in Daraa, field researchers with Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) have worked to monitor the military progress and its effect on the local populace on the ground, as well as record the casualties. STJ previously published a [detailed report](#) about the recent unrest in the province, which was later named after the Daraa al-Balad area that became a hotspot for military clashes between government forces and local fighters. The report covered the events leading up to the siege of Daraa al-Balad, the neighborhood of Tariq al-Sad, and the Daraa Camp for Palestinian Refugees between 24 June and 27 July 2021.

Building off the first report, our newest investigation addresses the upheavals the city of Daraa witnessed after 27 July and records how government forces eventually established complete control over the city on 6 September 2021.

1. Military Escalation Following the July 24 Agreement’s Collapse

On 24 July 2021, the Daraa Central Committee (DCC)—which negotiates on behalf of Daraa al-Balad’s residents—and the Security Committee (SC)—which represents the Syrian government—signed an agreement to stabilize the situation in Daraa al-Balad. While some of the agreement’s terms were fulfilled, the agreement quickly collapsed only three days later, on 27 July. After the agreement fell apart, government forces summoned massive military reinforcements, notably at least 1000 soldiers from the Syrian Army’s 4th Division, 5th Division, 9th Division, and 16th Infantry Regiments. In addition to army support, government forces were backed by several foreign militias, such as the Lebanese Hezbollah, Lions of Iraq, and Iranian paramilitary groups. Together, these forces stationed themselves around the neighborhoods of Daraa al-Balad, Tariq al-Sad, and Daraa Camp.

On 27 July, government forces indiscriminately bombarded the area with mortar shells, killing a civilian man and injuring a child. Additionally, the shelling triggered a massive internal wave of displacement. Many women, children, and elderly fled their homes and walked to a government checkpoint at al-Saraya. The checkpoint granted them access to the neighborhoods of Daraa al-Mahatta.

Two days later, on 29 July, forces from the 4th and 9th divisions attempted to storm the neighborhoods of Tariq al-Sad and Daraa Camp, as well as the peripheries of Daraa al-Balad,

advancing from the front in al-Bahar area. The attempted invasion was accompanied by surface-to-surface missile (SSM) attacks—locally known as the elephant missiles—on Daraa al-Balad. The shelling killed two men and injured eight people, among them two children.

In retaliation, a group of local fighters—former armed opposition fighters who signed a settlement agreement with the Syrian government— attacked a Military Security Detachment and a government checkpoint near the Saida Hospital, both located in Daraa’s eastern countryside. During the attacks, the local fighters captured at least 25 fighters and two officers from among the Syrian government forces.

Local fighters carried out similar attacks in the western countryside of Daraa, particularly in the town of Yadouda. The fighters attacked several checkpoints in the town and the Irrigation Corporation facilities, which government forces had converted into a military station. The attacks escalated tensions in the area. Government forces responded and indiscriminately hit the town with SSMs. The shelling killed three children, a woman, and two men.

Additionally, in Daraa’s western countryside, another group of local fighters attacked government checkpoints in the towns of Om Elmiathin, Jasim, Tafas, al-Karak, and Nawa. The fighters and government forces exchanged fire. The clashes killed five local fighters and at least 10 from among the government forces.¹ In addition to the deaths, the local fighters captured at least 70 members of government forces and seized two tanks and light and medium weapons.

On 30 July, the area witnessed a relative calm after the DCC and the SC agreed to a ceasefire and began a new round of negotiations. On the same day, local fighters released all government forces they captured in the attacks they carried out the day before. Additionally, the SC demanded the relocation of local fighters to northern Syria.

That day, the DCC and the SC reached a temporary agreement, pending an overall agreement that applies across the province, on the condition that representatives from the central committees in all towns and villages in Daraa province attend the upcoming rounds of negotiation. The representatives were to merge into a new committee, called the Negotiations Committee (NC).

On 1 August, the NC and the SC conducted two rounds of negotiations. The first was held in the morning at the Municipal Stadium in Daraa city. During this session, the SC insisted on the relocation of Muhammad al-Masalmeh, known as Abu Abdo al-Hafou, and Mouayad al-Harfoush, known as Abu Ta’jeh, along with the approximately 75 fighters they commanded to northern Syria.² However, al-Hafou rejected the relocation. Consequently, government forces breached the ceasefire and indiscriminately bombarded Daraa al-Balad with mortar shells and elephant missiles (SSMs).

¹ STJ obtained this exclusive information from a source in the Daraa National Hospital.

² Sources reported to STJ that the SC’s relocation demands covered 130 to 180 fighters operating in the groups of al-Hafou and al-Harfoush, and/or people wanted by the government’s security services.

The SC and the NC held the second round of negotiations at noon, in the presence of a Russian officer, believed to be Assadullah, a Chechen officer. The two committees agreed to extend the ceasefire for 48 hours.

On 2 August, government forces boosted their presence around Daraa al-Balad and spread military machinery, tanks, and vehicles equipped with medium weaponry. The government also brought reinforcements to the eastern and western sectors of Daraa city.

In addition to these reinforcements and heightened military measures, the government's Minister of Defense, General Ali Ayoub, visited Daraa city and met with the SC. At the same time, a Russian military delegation entered Daraa al-Balad and met with the NC. The NC proposed replacing government forces with members from the Russia-founded 5th Legion. The NC's proposal obtained initial approval from the Russian delegation, who were to discuss the suggestion further with other Russian commanders in southern Syria.

This round of negotiations also failed because the Syrian government's representatives insisted on implementing the terms of the July 27 agreement. The agreement had been controversial because one of its terms allowed government forces to carry out arms inspections in Daraa al-Balad, as well as demanded that the area's residents surrender all their weapons.

With the collapse of the agreement, government forces resumed their shelling of Daraa al-Balad, leading to further displacement from the besieged area. In response to the shelling, local fighters on 3 August blocked the Damascus-Amman International Highway near the two towns of Saida and al-Ghariyeh al-Gharbiyeh. Additionally, two other groups of local fighters attacked stations for the Syrian regular army in Nawa and Dael and assaulted checkpoints for the State Security Branch, Military Security Branch, and Electronic Battalion in al-Harah city.

In addition to Daraa al-Balad, government forces bombarded Saida, Nahta, Buser al-Harir, and al-Maliha in Daraa's eastern countryside, as well as Tafas and Jasim in Daraa's western countryside.

Amidst rising hostilities, hundreds of residents abandoned their homes, taking their furniture. Many of the residents were forced to pay government forces exorbitant bribes at checkpoints to be allowed to escape. Meanwhile, the NC provided the SC with a new proposal. The NC agreed to two terms they previously refused. The first is the presence of forces from the Military Security Branch, 15th Division and 5th Legion within the area; the second is allowing groups from the Syrian regular army to carry out inspections across the residential neighborhoods of Daraa al-Balad. Pertaining to the second term, however, the NC had a condition. They demanded that they accompany the army groups throughout the inspections. For their part, the SC refused the proposal. Ultimately, on 5 August, government forces banned fleeing civilians from passing through al-Saraya checkpoint to other areas.

Over 6, 7, and 8 of August, government forces launched artillery and missile shells, while incessantly attempting to break into the areas they have been besieging since 24 July through ground attacks.

2. A Russian Road Map

On 7 August, the Russian Command changed the officials in charge of the Daraa file. Instead of Assadullah, the command assigned managing Daraa's affairs to a new officer, Alexander Alexandrovich Kinshchak, who is the director of the Middle East and North Africa Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry. On 13 August, the Russian delegation informed the NC that they came up with a road map for the area and delivered them a copy the next day, on 14 August. Heedless of the negotiations, government forces on 14 August shelled the area, killed one man, and injured several other persons.

On 15 August, the NC and the SC held a meeting in downtown Daraa. The SC delegation included Major General Husam Louka —Head of the Syrian General Intelligence Division and the Daraa's SC, Major General Marwan Sharbak, Governor of Daraa province, and Brigadier General Louay al-Ali, Head of the Military Security Branch. The NC and the SC agreed to initiate a fresh round of negotiations and a two-week ceasefire and deployed a Russian patrol to the area surrounding Daraa al-Balad to monitor the ceasefire. Additionally, the two sides agreed to reopen the al-Saraya checkpoint for civilians escaping the area. Subsequently, the checkpoint allowed women and children—who had previously fled their homes and were stuck behind the checkpoint—access to Daraa al-Mahatta, where they were transported to makeshift housing centers. After the relocation of civilians, government forces closed the checkpoint again.

Negotiations over the proposed Russian road map included discussing the option of limiting the activities of local pro-government para-military groups through binding them to official service contracts with the Syrian government's defense ministry. These discussions also addressed the SC's repeated demand of carrying out weapons inspections. The negotiators suggested that a Russian delegation enter Daraa al-Balad to scan the area to check whether the opposition-affiliated groups had retained any heavy weapons. Eventually, the road map talks resulted in the following terms:

1. Surrendering heavy, medium, and light weapons, which armed opposition fighters retain, and that these fighters carry out settlement agreements [with the Syrian government].
2. Searching for wanted persons who did not undergo settlements with the government, as well as searching for arms and ammunition warehouses.
3. Deploying joint patrols, from the Syrian intelligence services and the Russian police, between the two sectors of Daraa city; namely, between Daraa al-Balad and Daraa al-Mahatta.
4. Reoperating the government-affiliated executive entities/law enforcement agencies in Daraa al-Balad.

5. Settling the status of army defectors by sending them to their concerned military divisions, with guarantees that they would not be prosecuted.
6. Settling the status of military service evaders and granting them a respite to join the military (if necessary).
7. Establishing checkpoints in the areas surrounding Daraa and organizing the movement of civilians.
8. Providing former gunmen and their families with job opportunities and considering their employment a priority.
9. Facilitating the reestablishment of the rule of the law and reoperating local administration directorates in the villages and towns that "witnessed unrest."
10. Laying the ground for announcing a general pardon for former gunmen.

Initially, the NC consented to the terms proposed in the Russian Road Map, and the NC and the SC agreed to prepare two lists of names—one with the names of people wishing to leave Daraa for northern Syria; the other with the names of people willing to sign a settlement agreement with the Syrian government. However, the next day, the NC revoked its approval and protested the term providing for the relocation of residents to northern Syria. The NC stated that they were unwilling to contribute to any operations aimed at inflicting demographic changes upon the area.

For their part, the SC presented a list of 180 names of persons wanted by the government's security services and who resided in the besieged area. The SC gave these people two choices— either undergo a settlement with the government or relocate to northern Syria.

خارطة الطريق لتسوية الوضع في درعا البلد									
العمل					العمل				
تاريخ التنفيذ	27 - 30	20 - 26	13 - 19	6 - 12	1 - 5	23 - 31	16 - 22	12 - 15	الأعمال المخطط تنفيذها
الأعمال التي ستلحق مع المسلحين (من بينهم المتصلحون)									
							من 8-15		تشكيل لجنة لتنفيذ مهمة سحب السلاح والذخيرة
							من 8-19		إخراج المسلحين إلى منطقة خفض التصعيد "أدلب"
							من 8-25		تنظيم المفاوضات مع قادة المجموعات المسلحة لإجبارهم على تسليم الأسلحة الثقيلة والمتوسطة والخفيفة، واعتناؤهم مستقبلاً من المسؤولية و شطب أسمائهم من اللوائح الأمنية، و العودة إلى الحياة الطبيعية.
							حتى 8-25		إجبار المسلحين على تسليم السلاح
							من 8-15 - 8-12		تنفيذ عمليات تفتيش لكافة فئات المسلحين (كذلك مع المتصلحين الغير راضين عن وضعهم)، الاقتصادي والاجتماعي والمنكولون من قبل الأجهزة السورية
									تنفيذ ما تم الاتفاق عليه للمصالحة
									تفعيل أعمال تسوية الأوضاع المسلحين وذلك بتقديم ضمانات اجتماعية باعطائه حقوقه المدنية حتى فترة 3 أشهر
الأعمال المشتركة المنفذة من قبل قيادة تجميع القوات الروسية والجيش العربي السوري									
							من 31-20		تنفيذ أعمال تسوية الأوضاع لفترة ما بعد النزاع. المرحلة الأولى: تنظيم وتنفيذ عملية التفاوض بالتسوية السلمية للوضع الراهن المتشكل في محافظة درعا، ودعم وضع إيقاف العمليات العسكرية و ادخال المؤسسات إلى المنطقة المحاصرة

Image 1 - Copy of the Russia-proposed road map

رقم	الأعمال للمخطط تنفيذها	أب							أيلول			تاريخ التنفيذ
		12 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 31	1 - 5	6 - 12	13 - 19	20 - 26	27 - 30			
إجراءات العمل مع أجهزة الأمانة المحلية												
1	تنظيم إعادة تأهيل المباني الاجتماعية كالمدارس والجامع ومحطات المياه والكهرباء	[]										
2	تأمين فرص عمل للمسلحين السابقين بالدرجة الأولى ولأسرهم	[9.30 - 8.15]										
3	تنظيم أعمال وإجراءات تعويضات الحد الأدنى في غضون شهر	[9.15 - 8.15]										
	مراقبة ودعم وضع إيقاف الأعمال العسكرية ، وتنظيم الوفقات الداعمة لوجود القوات المسلحة الروسية كضمان للاتفاق الدولي	[]										
4	مراقبة وتقديم المساعدة لعمل لجنة تسوية الأوضاع	[]										
5	تقديم الدعم لعمل المؤسسات البلدية والطبية والتعليمية	[]										
إجراءات العمل مع قيادة الجيش العربي السوري												
6	إنشاء نقاط تفتيش محيط درعا وتنظيم عبور المدنيين	[حتى 8.15]										

لقد تجميع القوات الروسية في الجمهورية العربية السورية	المصدر
ي. شيفوروف	
رئيس أركان قيادة تجميع القوات الروسية في الجمهورية العربية السورية	المصدر
د. إيريشيفوف	

Image 2 - Copy of the Russia-proposed road map

رقم	الأعمال المخطط تنفيذها	12 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 31	1 - 5	6 - 12	13 - 19	20 - 26	27 - 30	تاريخ التنفيذ
11	القيام بالبحث عن المطلوبين الذين لم يقوموا بتسوية أوضاعهم وكذلك البحث عن مستودعات الأسلحة والذخائر									
12	تنظيم وتنفيذ دوريات مشتركة روسية سورية في الأحياء الداخلية لدرعا البلد وباتجاهين، وذلك عن طريق الشرطة العسكرية الروسية والمخابرات									
13	إعادة المدنيين إلى قراهم وبلداتهم									
14	القيام بمفاوضات مع أعضاء اللجنة المركزية بحضور ممثلين عن السلطة القانونية في درعا وذلك للنظر في عدة أمور اجتماعية كالتأمين الطبي والكهرباء والماء وتأمين مواد الإطعام وتنفيذ الأعمال الأولية اللازمة لحلها									
الإجراءات الخاصة بالعمل مع السكان المحليين										
1	حملة إغاثة									
2	المشاركة في العمل لتسوية أوضاع المواطنين									
3	تأمين عمل نقاط استقبال المواطنين									
4	العمل على إقناع المواطنين بعدم العودة إلى الأعمال العسكرية ضد الجيش السوري									
إجراءات العمل مع الأجهزة الحكومية										
1	تأمين الظروف لإعلان عفو عن المسلحين السابقين									

Image 3 - Copy of the Russia-proposed road map

العمل	الأعمال المخطط تنفيذها	رقم						
27-30	20-26	13-19	6-12	1-5	23-31	16-22	12-18	1
مرحلة 2								2
المرحلة الثانية: اعادة عمل الاجهزة المنفذة للسلطة في درعا البلد								3
تشكيل لجان لتنفيذ مهام سحب السلاح و الذخيرة								4
تنظيم اجتماع اللجنة الخاصة لمكافحة الارهاب و الذي تشكل بنهاية اعمالها مركز مشترك لمراقبة الوضع في درعا البلد و تنفيذ خارطة الطريق مع اشراك ممثلين عن وزارة الدفاع الروسية و وزارة الدفاع السورية و القوى الامنية "المخابرات"								5
اعادة عمل اقسام الشرطة في درعا البلد								6
تنظيم و تنفيذ دوريات مشتركة سورية - روسية بالمحيط الخارجي لدرعا البلد وذلك عن طريق اشراك الشرطة العسكرية الروسية و المخابرات								7
فتح مركز لتسوية اوضاع المسلحين الذين ليس لديهم رغبة بالخروج باستثناء تنظيم داعش و جبهة النصرة								8
تسوية اوضاع الفارين من خدمة العلم و ارسالهم الى قطعاتهم العسكرية مع تقديم الضمانات بعدم الملاحقة								9
في اليوم الخامس عشر ومن خلال الاماكن الخاصة بالاستدعاء الى خدمة العلم ، تسوية اوضاع المتخلفين عن الخدمة الالزامية واعطائهم مهلة في حال الضرورة								10
تأمين عودة السلطة القانونية و مؤسسات الادارة المحلية في القرى و البلدات التي حصلت فيها مشاكل								

Image 4 - Copy of the Russia-proposed road map

3. Military Escalation Grips the Area Again

After the NC revoked the Russian Road Map, government forces resumed shelling on Daraa al-Balad. On 17 August, government forces hit Ghassan Abu Zaid mosque with tank shells.

In the aftermath of these hostilities, the NC and the SC engaged in new rounds of negotiations that lasted from 19 to 23 August. Nevertheless, the negotiations did not spare the area the incessant shelling, clashes, and renewed military reinforcements.

On 24 August, the NC and the SC reached a preliminary agreement that provided for the "relocation, [displacement] of a number of residents". Subsequently, eight persons from the SC's 180-names-list were transported outside the besieged area. Notably, the relocated eight persons arrived in the city of al-Bab and were yet held—forced to stay—in the al-Baraa Bin Malik Mosque when this report was being compiled on 20 September 2021.

After the eight residents were relocated through the al-Saraya checkpoint, government forces at the military post opened fire on the locals gathered near the post—who had wished to escape the besieged area— and closed the checkpoint again. The shooting wounded several residents. Therefore, the SC did not implement their part of the August 24 agreement, because they had to keep al-Saraya checkpoint open and allow the entry of Russian Military Police and 8th Brigade into the surrounding of Daraa al-Balad once the listed persons were relocated. The SC did not abide by their part of the agreement on the pretext that Muhammad

al-Masalmeh, known as Abu Abdo al-Hafou, and Mouayad al-Harfoush, known as Abu Ta'jeh,³ refused to exit the area towards northern Syria after they consented to earlier.

On 25 August, government forces summoned new military reinforcements and machinery, as well as buses in preparation to relocate a new batch of residents out of the area. On the same day, the NC and the Russian delegation held talks to discuss why the commanders al-Harfoush and al-Masalmeh were refusing to leave the area. The next day, on 26 August, 70 persons, among them fighters, 25 civilian children and women, were relocated to northern Syria. The women and children were transported to an IDPs camp in Sarmada town in Idlib province. The fighters, however, were detained at the al-Baraa Bin Malik Mosque and remained detained up to the date this report was compiled, on 20 September. Per our latest information, the fighters are currently being held at the mosque, pending the results of the "background checks" carried out by Turkey-backed armed opposition groups.

On 27 August, the day following the relocations, government forces recommenced strikes on the besieged neighborhoods using rocket launchers. The shelling was a means to pressure a particular batch of people, 34 persons, to relocate to northern Syria. Notably, the Syrian government refused to settle the status of these 34 persons and ordered them to exit the area.

Additionally, government forces intensified hostilities against the Tariq al-Sad neighborhood and launched a ground attack on the area from three directions, which was accompanied by extensive shelling. The bombing caused deaths and injuries among civilians and fighters from both sides. Like other shelling incidents, parallel negotiation rounds were being held, which also collapsed because the DCC refused to continue meetings with the SC. The DCC was protesting the violent military escalation and the government forces' continued breaches of the ceasefire.

On 31 August, two separate series of meetings were held. The first brought together the SC and the Syrian minister of defense with a Russian delegation. The second was held between the SC and Daraa dignitaries, as well as central committees from across the area. Eventually, the meeting sides agreed on three terms: allowing the Russian Military Police to enter Daraa al-Balad to consolidate the ceasefire, establishing three joint military stations, operated by the 8th Brigade and the Military Security, starting measures to settle the status of wanted persons and surrendering weapons.

Indeed, the Russian police entered the area, and government forces began settling the status of dozens of people from the Arbain neighborhood. However, the NC on 3 September announced the collapse of the agreement once again because the government forces demanded terms that were not included in the agreement. The NC said that the forces requested residents surrender all their weapons, not only heavy and medium arms, increased their stations within Daraa al-Balad, and carried out house inspections.

³ To pressure al-Harfoush into leaving the area, government forces detained his wife, children, brother, and his brother's wife. The detainees were not released until the negotiators reached the final agreement on 5 September 2021.

In response, Syrian government forces brought in 23 buses, accompanied by Syrian Red Crescent vehicles, to remove a new batch of residents. The intended removals were at odds with the agreement that the NC and the SC reached during a round of negotiations they held on the same day, in which dignitaries from the western and eastern suburbs of Daraa participated. Throughout these talks, government forces continued to bombard the besieged neighborhoods. The hostilities overwhelmed locals until a new and final agreement was signed on 5 September, which helped prevent the displacement of an additional segment of the area's residents.

4. Government Forces Control Daraa City

On the evening of 5 September 2021, the NC and the SC sealed a final agreement about Daraa al-Balad. The agreement was signed in the presence of a Russian delegation and had the same terms of the July 27 agreement. The deal followed a 75-day-siege.

The signatories to the final agreement were the NC on the one hand, and the Russian Deputy Defense Minister, Alexander Fomin, the Russian Chief of Staff, Valery Gerasimov, and the commander of the Russian forces in Syria, Admiral Vyacheslav Sitkin, on the other. The two parties agreed on:

1. Surrendering all medium and light weapons. Whoever hides a rifle or a weapon will have their settlement canceled and be subject to prosecution.
2. Deploying security and military points— nine posts— in Daraa al-Balad to establish security and safety.
3. Settling the status of wanted persons in Daraa al-Balad, Daraa camp, and Tariq al-Sad neighborhoods.
4. Issuing a pardon for the persons who left Daraa al-Balad with their weapons.
5. Disarming all fighting groups, including groups working with security and other para-military forces.
6. Addressing the affairs of draft evaders and settling their status within 15 days through the concerned draft centers and granting them postponements.
7. Settling the status of military deserters. Those who rejoin their divisions will not be legally prosecuted.
8. Securing the exit and transport of those wishing to relocate to northern Syria.
9. Banning spreading abusive, irresponsible, and inflammatory statements on social media. Anyone involved in doing so will be subject to legal prosecution.
10. Removing checkpoints when the terms of the settlement are completed, arms are handed over, and normal life is reinstated in Daraa al-Balad.
11. Hoisting the Syrian flag on all government buildings in the neighborhoods of Daraa al-Balad, as well as at the al-Omari Mosque.
12. Banning protests and organized civil activities in the area's neighborhoods, in addition to slogans and graffiti or any actions labeled as anti- Syrian government.

13. Spreading government forces within Daraa al-Balad only in these locations: The building of the Ba'ath Party's Shabibat al-Thawra/Revolutionary Youth Union, al-Karak roundabout, al-Kaziyah roundabout, the entrance to the al-Minshiyah neighborhood, the Daraa al-Balad post office building, al-Bahar Cemetery, and the Daraa Dam, as well as in the al-Dulab roundabout, and the schools of Quneitra, and al-Riba'i in the Tariq al-Sad neighborhood.

The agreement entered into force on 6 September, with a Russian delegation and representatives of the SC entering Daraa al-Balad overseeing its execution. A settlement center was established in the Arbain neighborhood and 850 people underwent settlements on 7 and 8 September. In addition to the recurrent terms, the Russian delegation supplemented the agreement with "privileges" that none of the previous deals provided for, including a definite expiry date and entitlements. Accordingly, the settlement expires by April 2022, and individuals who signed settlements are allowed to leave the area, obtain a passport, and travel if they wish.

In addition to establishing the settlement center, the SC extended the 15-day period they initially granted to draft evaders and deserters, as well as army defectors to settle their status. The SC granted concerned recruits three months to surrender themselves and join the Syrian army's ranks.

On 8 September, forces from the Syrian army, particularly from the 8th Brigade— led by Ahmed al-Awda and affiliated with the 5th Legion—, the 16th Infantry Regiment, and members of several security services entered the neighborhoods of Daraa al-Balad. In the presence of members of the Russian Military Police, four Syrian army posts were deployed within the area and 5 other points in its surrounding. These points are assigned a single task, checking residents' IDs.

On 9 September, the military reinforcements that the Syrian army had previously engaged withdrew from the fronts at Gharz and Nakhla farms, south and east of the city. Government forces retained only the checkpoints near the dam, grain silos, and the Quneitra school on the outskirts of the Tariq al-Sad neighborhood. Furthermore, government forces partially retreated from the al-Shayah farms and opened their checkpoints for returning residents.

Following in the steps of the NC in Daraa al-Balad, the Central Committees in Yadouda and Muzayrib towns signed identical agreements with the SC on 12 and 15 September respectively. Other areas within Daraa province are gradually signing similar agreements, which indicates that it is only a matter of time before the entirety of the province is controlled by government forces.

5. The Victims of Daraa al-Balad's Hostilities

During the siege and the corresponding military escalation that started on 27 July and abated on 5 September, Daraa al-Balad was a battleground for separate clashes, artillery, and missile shelling, mostly from the side of government forces. These hostilities took a toll on the fighters of the two sides engaged in combat.

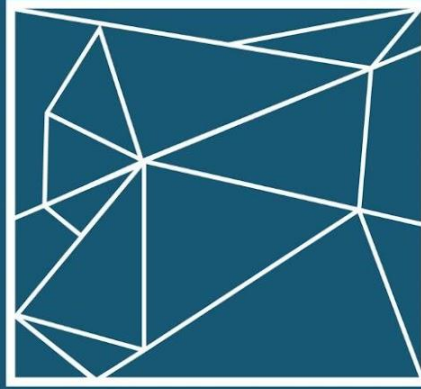
According to a source from the Daraa National Hospital, 24 government forces died, while an additional 74 fighters were wounded during the last military assault on Daraa al-Balad. Activists from Daraa al-Balad documented the death of 41 locals, among them 15 fighters, 19 civilian men, three children, and four women, whose names are listed below:

1. Mu'ath al-Zu'bi Abu al-Laith (Fighter)
2. Abdulrahman Muhammad Masalmeh (Fighter)
3. A'ahed Suleiman Abu Awn (Fighter)
4. Ahmad Farhan Qutiafan (Fighter)
5. Mahmoud Ali Saleh Qutiafan (Fighter)
6. Yazan Muhaissen al-Mahamid (Fighter)
7. Muhammad Youssef al-Mahamid (Fighter)
8. Mamoun Adnan al-Masri (Fighter)
9. Samer Mustafa al-Hamadi (Fighter)
10. Alaa Abdulhamid al-Falouji (Fighter)
11. Muhammad Hilal Zmaittah (Fighter)
12. Yazan Marwan al-Omari (Civilian)
13. Abdulkareem Jamal al-Masri (Civilian)
14. Ahmad Muhammad Khalifeh Ayash (Fighter)
15. Ahmad Ali Ammer Ghazlan (Civilian)
16. Bilal Muhammad al-Ghazlan (Civilian)
17. Muhammad Mutlak al-Mahamid al-Zeer (Fighter)
18. Abdullah Nasser Qutaifan (Fighter)
19. Muhammad Ahmad al-Zoubani (Fighter)
20. Ausama Ajaj al-Sa'edi (Civilian)
21. Sari Abdulrahman al-Zoubi (Civilian)
22. Zaidan al-Zoubi (Civilian)
23. Muhammad al-Soulah Abu Qasim (Civilian)
24. Little girl Ritaj Ahmad al-Zoubi (Civilian)
25. Little boy Muhammad Ahmad al-Zoubi (Civilian)
26. Little boy Baraa Ahmad al-Zoubi (Civilian)
27. Hamza Ibrahim al-Zoubi (Civilian)
28. Nahla Fayez al-Zoubi (Civilian)
29. Mustafa al-Rawashdeh (Civilian)
30. Tariq Ziyad al-Joufi (Civilian)
31. Malik Kamal al-Khalayfeh (Civilian)
32. Youssef al-Urabi (Civilian)

33. Meyasar Fawzat Qatef (Civilian)
34. Hussam Ahmad al-Hariri (Civilian)
35. Rami Rashad al-Hariri (Civilian)
36. Hind al-Hariri (Civilian)
37. Hiba Issa al-Kheder (Civilian)
38. Hafizah al-Rabdawi (Civilian)
39. Abdulraziq al-Halaqi (Civilian)
40. Abdulfani al-Halaqi (Civilian)
41. Abdulraauf Issam al-Masri (Civilian)

Notably, the unrest in Daraa al-Balad corresponded to several regional and international meetings that eventually resulted in a multi-side enterprise. The meeting parties agreed to transport gas from Egypt and electricity from Jordan to Lebanon through Daraa al-Balad. This enterprise demonstrates a marked political development, which at a deeper level could be interpreted as a sign of increasing regional and international openness towards normalizing relations with the Syrian government and, thus, consolidating its rule over the country.

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.

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