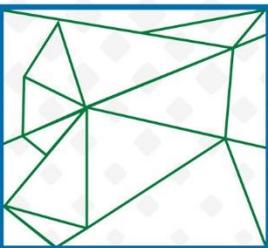


Southern Syria's Daraa: Suhaib al-Qauarit Died in the Custody of Security Services



سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



February 08, 2022

Southern Syria's Daraa: Suhaib al-Qauarit Died in the Custody of Security Services

The detainee's family were not informed of their son's death, denied his body, information about where he was buried, and death certificate

On 8 January 2022, the relatives of Suhaib Muhammad al-Qauarit (46) referred to the Daraa City Civil Registry to inquire into the whereabouts of their son, who has been detained by the Syrian government (SG's) State Security (The General Directorate of Intelligence) since 8 November 2018. The family made the painful visit two days after a local figure, who mediates communications between the people of Daraa and the SG security services, informed them of the necessity to show up at the registry.

At the registry, an employee told the family that their son died. Unwilling to believe the bitter news, the family asked the employee for any document proving the death of their beloved son. However, the employee refused to provide them with any such documents; he even claimed he had no idea where Suhaib had been buried.

The family sought help from a local mediator, who advised them to refer to the Military Police center in the al-Qaboun Neighborhood, in Damascus city. They did, but their visit was to no avail. The family failed to obtain any information about their son's fate.

Al-Qauarit, nicknamed Abu Walid, was born in [al-Harah city](#), in Daraa's southern countryside. He was a former fighter with armed opposition groups in Southern Syria, serving within the ranks of the Mujahidi Houran/The Mujahedeen of Houran. He legalized his status with the SG through an individual "settlement" agreement. Numerous similar agreements were signed under the general agreement Daraa's armed factions concluded with the SG forces after the forces entered and retook control of southern Syria and established their power over border crossings with Jordan.

The SG forces and the opposition factions signed the general agreement on 6 July 2018. None of the parties in the Daraa settlement officially published the terms agreed upon, nor the signed text of the agreement itself. Instead, the committees that negotiated on behalf of Daraa's population— consisting mostly of military figures— revealed only a few of the settlement's terms in the form of statements to the media, but they did not present media outlets with an official copy of the agreement.

According to the statements made by members of the negotiating committees, the "settlement" agreement provided for surrendering border crossings and the heavy and medium, re-operating SG departments, allowing SG employees to resume their work, legalizing the status of the area's wanted civilians and fighters, providing male locals at the age of compulsory military service a period of six months to join the military, putting an end to arrests and security raids, and releasing detainees.

Detainees Disappear After the Agreement

After the settlement agreement went into force, the SG forces turned raids into the houses of former fighters within the various local armed opposition groups into common practice. The SG forces stormed houses, ignoring the fact that the people who they targeted had SG-issued “settlement cards”, which were supposed to protect them from arrest and harassment by the security services. Like many others, Suhaib Muhammad Al-Qauarit was arrested and detained even though he possessed the card.

To learn more about al-Qauarit’s arrest, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) reached out to one of the victim’s relatives. He confirmed that the Security Services perpetrated the arrest and added:

“Nearly three months after the 2018 settlement agreement was signed with SG forces, a security patrol raided the house of Suhaib’s family. When the family asked the patrol’s members about why he was arrested, the head of the patrol told them that they are taking Suhaib only to ask him ‘a few questions’ at the branch and that he will then be released and returned home. Even though the family was reassured at the time . . . all their following efforts to identify his whereabouts were to no use. Abu Walid served with the armed opposition groups in Daraa, but he signed a settlement agreement, by which the SG pledged they will not take any retaliatory measures against those who partook in anti-Syrian army activities in previous years . . .”

Families Blackmailed

Fraud and extortion remain rife among many members of the SG’s security services, as well as their affiliated local mediators. These practices are also widely common among lawyers. Several lawyers have turned into “brokers”, blackmailing the families and relatives of detainees in return for leaking them information about where their loved ones are detained. Most of this information is false.

Other people manipulate the families of detainees and trick them into paying large sums of money in exchange for promises that they will relocate the detainees from the Terrorism Court to the Adra Central Prison in Damascus, because detainees who are transferred to the Central Prison have a better chance of being released. Al-Qauarit’s family were similarly blackmailed while searching for their son. One of their relatives told STJ:

“We failed to find where Suhaib was being detained. Several intermediaries blackmailed the family, who ultimately paid large sums of money just to get information about his detention place and to attempt to release him. But all this was to no use.”

The witness added:

“A friend advised Abu Walid’s family to be cautious, as to not fall victims to blackmail by security services. The friend also told them to refer to the Civil Registry to obtain a civil extract for Suhaib. Through this procedure, the family would know whether he was still alive or dead . . . when Suhaib’s wife went to the registry to obtain *Ikhraj Qayid* [individual civil status record], the registry employee told her that Suhaib had been dead since 2020, more than a year after he was detained. The news was shocking to all of us, especially because the lawyer the family had hired told them that he is being held in the Palestine Branch first, and then relocated to the Sednaya Military Prison. Seeking

information from various sources, another person assured us that Suhaib was detained in the al-Khatib Branch in Damascus. Despite the contradictory information about where he was being detained, all the sources confirmed that his health was fine, his case was not complicated, and that his release was only a matter of time. Instead of his release, the family received news of his death.”

STJ inquired into the charges the security services leveled against Suhaib, reaching out to one of his neighbors in al-Harah city. The neighbor recounted:

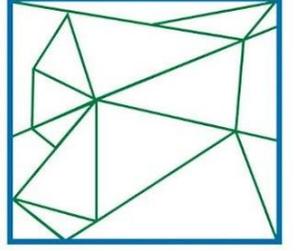
“I know Suhaib’s family very well ...Almost a year after his arrest, a security officer within the State Security succumbed to the family’s repeated inquires and answered their questions after he financially blackmailed them. He told them that Suhaib was the subject of a private prosecution case. A woman claimed that Suhaib attempted to assassinate her husband during his time with the factions of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Notably, sources from within the State Security confirmed that the assassination claims were all alleged and false. In the end, the family failed to access any information about Suhaib’s whereabouts or whether he was alive or dead. The family is now trying to obtain Suhaib’s body, or at least find out where their son was buried. So, the family went to the Military Police Center in al-Qaboun in Damascus to get the body, but the police just expelled them.”

Notably, Suhaib remains one of hundreds of people detained, and ultimately killed, while in the custody of security services across Syria and in Daraa province. On 1 June 2020, STJ published a [report](#) documenting dozens of arrest and detention cases the security services perpetrated in Daraa, in violation of the settlement agreement and the settlement cards the targeted individuals possessed.

In addition to arbitrary arrests, STJ documented another SG common practice. The SG are denying families access to death statements and certificates of detainees who are dying inside their detention facilities.

Based on the documented cases, STJ published a [report](#) on 20 May 2020, urging concerned bodies to communicate with the SG and pressure them to provide death statements for the individuals who died inside or outside their prisons, and particularly for the victims whose names were reported to the civil registries as dead. STJ also demanded that the SG be transparent in the death statements and that they do not attempt to obliterate the truth about the circumstances of the detainees’ death, nor cover grave crimes and human rights violations committed within SG prisons.

STJ reiterates these demands and further calls for pressing the SG to open official and unofficial prisons and detention facilities to investigators, notably to employees of the UN and international rights organizations, to reveal the names of detainees in these facilities, and stop the torture, executions, and forcible disappearances that have become common in Syria.



About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.



WWW.STJ-SY.ORG



[STJ_SYRIA_ENG](https://twitter.com/STJ_SYRIA_ENG)



EDITOR@STJ-SY.ORG