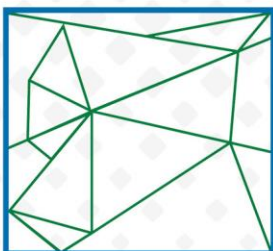


Afrin: 311 Arbitrary Arrests in the First Half of 2022



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For Truth
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Two of the detainees died of torture, some were released for ransoms, while the fate of 28 remains still unknown

Executive Summary

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documented the arrest of at least 311 people, including 12 women and a child, from the Kurdish-majority city of Afrin. The arrests were made by armed groups of the Syrian National Army (SNA) in the first six months of 2022.

STJ documented the release of 282 of those arrested and the death of at least two of them as a result of brutal torture. According to reports, a [detainee](#), who was held by Tajammu Ahrar al-Sharqiya/Gathering of Free Men of the East, was transferred to Afrin Military Hospital and then to a Turkish hospital, where he died from a brain hemorrhage caused by repeated strikes to the head. It was also confirmed that the Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham tortured a [detainee](#) to death. Nevertheless, 28 of the detainees are still unaccounted for.

Testimonies obtained by STJ asserted that the 311 people were arrested either for ransom or for racist purposes. The arbitrary arrests in Afrin continue to [intimidate](#) the local population with the aim of prompting them to leave their homes.

The documented arrest cases cited in this report are of detainees who were transferred from the detention centers of the SNA armed groups to prisons of the security forces, such as the Military Police. Thereby, we believe that the actual number of detainees is much larger than 311, since we have no access to the SNA groups' secret detention centers.

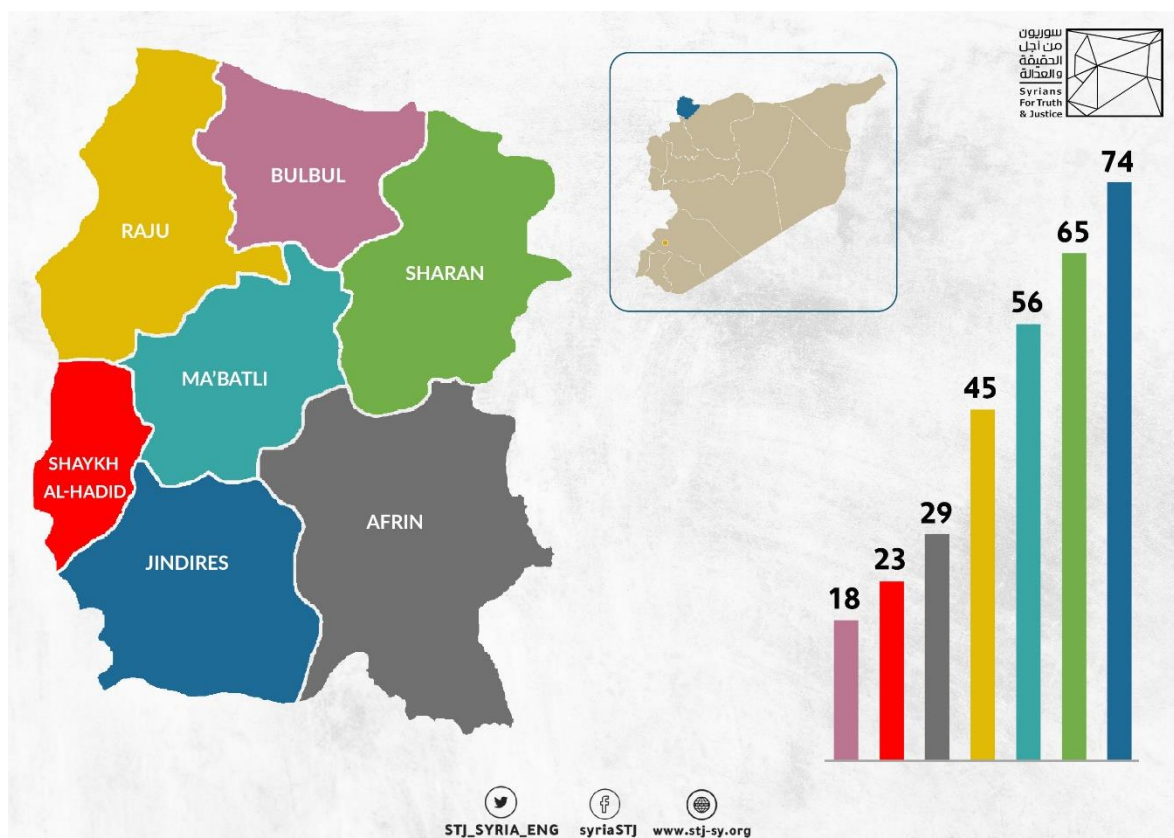
Throughout 2021, STJ [documented](#) the arrest of more than 584 people by SNA armed groups. In this context, we published several reports on the armed groups' use of arbitrary arrest and other violations to extort money from locals to [fund](#) their activities and increase their officers' personal wealth.

- Statistics

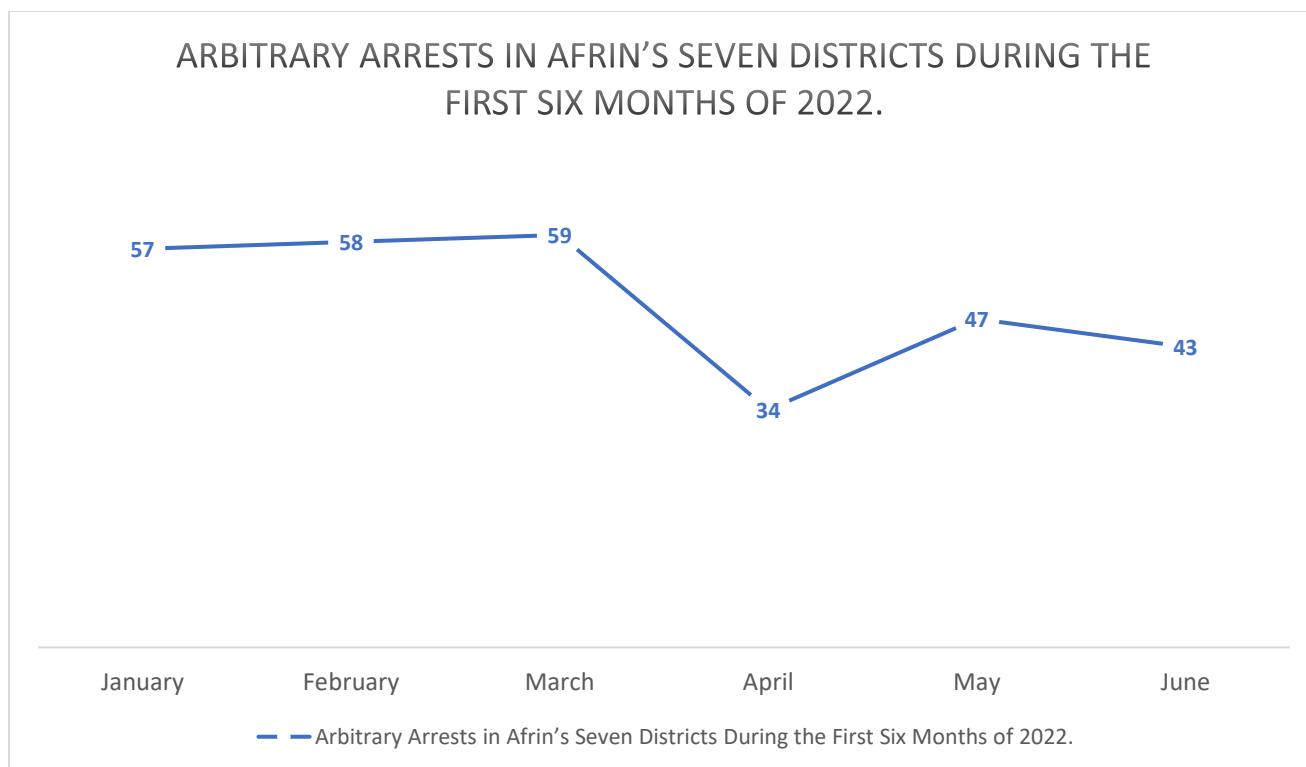
The 311 arrests, the subject of the present report, were made throughout the seven districts of Afrin as follows: 74 in Jindires, 65 in Sharran, 56 in Maabatli/Mabeta, 45 in Rajo, 29 in Afrin, 23 in Shaykh Al-Hadid, and 18 in Bulbul.

19 armed groups and security bodies were behind these arrests. Among them, the Military Police arrested 123 people, the Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham arrested 57 people, and the Turkish intelligence arrested 42 people.

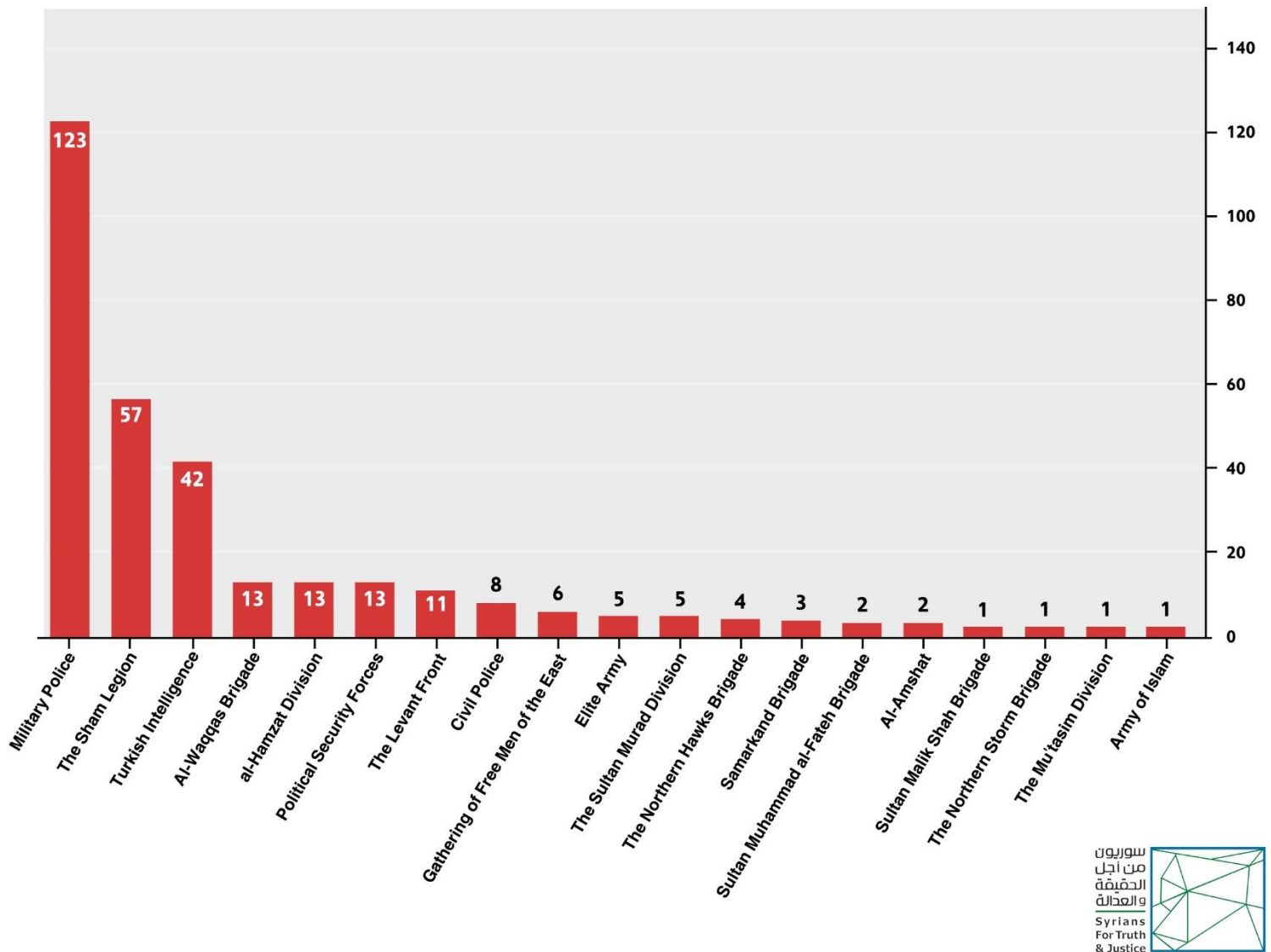
The following graphs show the places and times of the arrests and releases, and the entities conducting them.



Arbitrary Arrests in Afrin's Seven Districts During the First Six Months of 2022. Source: the investigative team at Syrians for Truth and Justice.



Monthly Arrests in Afrin During the First Six Months of 2022. Source: the investigative team at Syrians for Truth and Justice.



The Parties Responsible for Arrests in Afrin During the First Six Months of 2022. Source: The investigative team at Syrians for Truth and Justice.

- Arresting the Same People Repeatedly for Ransoms

Local sources from villages of Afrin confirmed to STJ that most of the people arrested in 2022 had previously been arrested at least twice in recent years. The Military Police and the armed groups in control of the area arrested people more than once over the same charges for which they were previously fined and sanctioned.

According to locals and detainees' relatives, the most frequent charges against those arrested in Afrin include:

1. Performing the self-defense duty under the Autonomous Administration.
2. Fighting alongside the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK);
3. Joining the PKK.
4. Working in civil institutions of the PKK.
5. Participating in local guard committees and in transfers of money and weapons.

Sources confirmed that those who were brought before the court after being arrested by the Military Police were fined depending on the nature of their charges. For example, those accused of belonging to the PKK and fighting alongside it, are punished by a fine ranges from 700 to 800 Turkish Liras (TL) and two-months in prison. Those charged with working in PKK civil institutions, like schools and local councils, are punished by a fine ranging from 250 to 300 TL and a maximum sentence of 15 days' imprisonment. However, a detainee can pay an allowance of 10 TL for each day of imprisonment.

On the other side, detainees held by armed groups are released in exchange for payment by their relatives. Leaders of armed groups negotiate with relatives of detainees on amounts ranging from \$1,200 to \$1,500. However, STJ documented cases of release from armed groups' detention centers in exchange for \$3,000.

STJ met a detainee (we concealed his identity for safety reasons) who was arrested last April in Rajo by a local faction and later released for \$2,700. The detainee confirmed that he was arrested several times since Turkey and the SNA took control of Afrin region in March 2018.

The detainee added that he faced the same charge each time he was arrested, which is performing the self-defense duty (compulsory recruitment) in the ranks of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) during its rule over Afrin. He said that he was detained for 13 days during which he underwent brutal torture that left clear signs on his body. Those arrested him filmed him while tortured and sent the videos to his relatives to prompt them to pay the ransom.

The detainee recounted:

"I have been arrested several times since Turkey and allied SNA took over Afrin. Each time I was detained for two or three days on the same accusation which is performing self-defense duty (compulsory recruitment) in the ranks of the People's Defense Units (YPG) and the PKK. I underwent a lengthy investigation at the Military Police headquarters and provided detailed testimony on this charge; however, the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division arrested me over it in late April 2022. Members of the Division raided my house around midnight and took me to a headquarters of the Division where I was held and tortured severely with al-shabah (the phantom) and al-dulab (the tire) methods. Members of the Division filmed me while tortured. When I was released after 13 days, I learned from my family that the Division members asked \$5,000 in exchange for my release. Furthermore, the members sent my torture videos to my family to urge them to pay. Eventually, after negotiations between my family and the Division, I was released for \$2,700."



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.



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