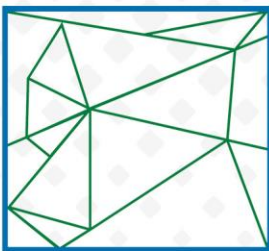


# Syria's Afrin: Updates About the Fate of 'Miracle baby' Born under Turkey-Syria Quake Rubble

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**Syria's Afrin: Updates About the Fate of 'Miracle baby' Born under  
Turkey-Syria Quake Rubble**

*The baby was the target of kidnap attempts for ransom money after rumors  
of thousands of offers to adopt her*

On 6 February 2023, hours after the devastating earthquake rocked Syria and Turkey, [footage](#) of a man running from the rubble of a building holding a baby covered in dust, went viral on social media. Rescue workers found the baby while still attached to her dead mother through her umbilical cord underneath the wreckage of the five-story apartment building in the northern Syrian town of [Jindires](#), Afrin. The baby was rushed to [Jihan Hospital](#) further west in Afrin, where the officials gave her the name Aya, Arabic for "miracle" or "a sign from God".

In an [interview](#), the director of the hospital, [Khalid Attiah](#), detailed the health status of the baby when she arrived at the hospital, saying that she had scrapes and bruises, was cold, and was hardly breathing, and he commended the efforts of the medical staff in saving her life. Attiah's wife also took care of Aya and breastfed her with her four-month baby.

Reportedly, thousands of people, including celebrities, from all over the world offered to adopt the baby after her story was widely reported by local and international media. With this, attempts were made to [kidnap](#) the baby by the Sultan Murad Division affiliated with the Syrian National Army (SNA), according to sources.

Allegedly, on 13 February 2023, a male nurse was spotted taking pictures of the newborn Aya. The hospital's director suspected the nurse was planning to kidnap Aya, so he kicked him out of the hospital. Hours later the nurse returned, flanked by two men who beat up the director. However, the director appeared in a [video](#) with clear marks of beatings on his face, saying that the men who attacked him were civilians and had no links to the Sultan Murad Division or any other armed group of the SNA.

In the same context, the head of the Health Directorate, Dr. Ahmad Hajj Hassan, [denied](#) claims on social media that it was an attempt to kidnap Aya. "The kidnap allegations were a misunderstanding. This was a wholly internal hospital-related issue and had no connection whatsoever with the baby," he told the BBC.

Following this incident, a health authority [moved](#) Aya to a "safe location", as a precautionary measure to protect her from possible kidnapping and adoption fraud.

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) reached out to two informed sources; a medical staff member at the Jihan Hospital and an officer in the Police Service of Afrin.

The source in the Jihan Hospital accused a commander in the Sultan Murad Division of attempting to kidnap baby Aya:

“When those three men stormed the hospital, they asked the director Khalid Attiah to hand over Aya to them. The director refused and thus they beat him severely leaving cuts and bruises apparent on his body and face.”

The [video](#) posted by Attiah regarding the incident, in which he appeared with visible signs of beat, raises the likelihood that the source's recount is what really happened.

The source added that the armed group's commander is called Abu Walid al-Azzah/al-Azzi, and is known for perpetrating many violations and crimes, especially in the Kurdish-majority city of Afrin.

The second source; the officer in the Police Service of Afrin, testified to STJ that the rumors circulated about the offers by celebrities and public figures to adopt Aya, were the reason behind storming the hospital:

"Although the celebrities' offers to adopt Aya have not been verified, some military bodies raced to kidnap the girl for ransom money.", the officer explained.

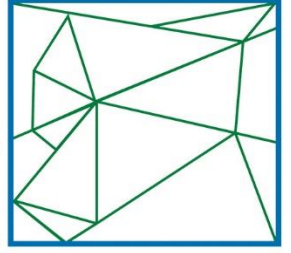
The officer concluded that the gunmen who stormed the hospital claimed that one of the armed group's members is a relative of Aya. However, they failed to present any evidence or proof for their allegations to the local authorities.

Aya was identified as the child of Abdullah Mleihan and Afraa Abu Hadiya, who died in the earthquake along with their other children in the rebel-held town of Jindires in Syria's Aleppo province. Later, on 18 February 2023, the baby was reunited with her paternal aunt Hala and uncle by marriage Khalil al-Sawadi, whose genetic relation to the baby was verified through legal procedures as well as a DNA test. The aunt and husband finally picked up their niece from the hospital after the doctors confirmed that she was doing well.

Al-Sawadi, who is now living with his family in a relatives' home in Jinderis after his home was destroyed in the quake, [told Reuters](#) that he and his wife decided to name the baby "Afraa", after her deceased mother.

"This girl means so much to us because there's no one left of her family besides this baby. She'll be a memory for me, for her aunt, and for all of our relatives in the village of her mother and father," Sawadi told Reuters.

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## 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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