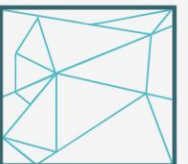


STJ Submits Report on Cases of Home Seizures and Arbitrary Evictions of Homeowners in al-Dimas in Damascus Countryside



- The transitional authorities in Damascus must take effective action to counter hate speech and sectarian rhetoric, and prevent any acts of retaliation or eviction based on political, regional, or sectarian affiliation





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*The Transitional Authorities In Damascus Must Take Effective Action To Counter Hate Speech And
Sectarian Rhetoric, And Prevent Any Acts Of Retaliation Or Eviction Based On Political, Regional,
Or Sectarian Affiliation*





1. Summary:

On 24 April 2025, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) submitted an official report to the Damascus Countryside Governorate regarding a series of grave violations of real estate and property rights committed in the [Masaken al-Dimas](#) (al-Dimas residencies) in Damascus countryside. This report comes in response to the complaint submission mechanism established by the Governorate for cases of unlawful property seizure, which was [announced](#) on 12 February 2025.

To file complaints, those affected can contact the Damascus Countryside Governorate via the dedicated hotlines for reporting cases of witnessed home encroachment, or by attending in person at the Complaint Management Office located in the Governorate building.

STJ considers this mechanism an important and necessary step toward addressing the growing property rights violations, which have been and continue to be among the most widespread practices.

Accordingly, the organization submitted an official letter to the concerned officials in the Damascus Countryside Governorate, drawing their attention to several violations, including the forced eviction of families, the seizure of their homes without legal basis, the looting of household belongings, as well as arbitrary arrests and the forced displacement of residents in the area.

These violations were committed by armed groups in a residential complex in al-Dimas, Damascus Countryside, known as al-Dimas Suburb, which was designated for army and police officers under the former regime.

Since 10 December 2024, armed groups affiliated with the Military Operations Department, led by a person named Abu Ali Bassima, have carried out raids in Masaken al-Dimas, resulting in the arrest of residents and the seizure of their homes.

STJ managed to document 12 cases in which families were evicted and their homes were seized in the aforementioned area. It also identified the homeowners by speaking with local sources and eyewitnesses.

The documented cases occurred on various dates after 8 December 2024, and were all arbitrary. The military parties involved forcibly and arbitrarily evicted the families without prior notice and without presenting any court orders from a competent authority following due legal procedures. These evictions were accompanied by cases of arbitrary arrest, threats to the lives of family members, and sectarian insults.

Additionally, 12 homeowners were arrested and taken to unknown locations without legal warrants stating the reasons for their arrest, and they were forcibly disappeared.

2. Recommendations:

Based on the information and testimonies documented by STJ, the organization urges the Damascus Countryside Governorate and other relevant authorities to take the following actions:





1. Investigate the allegations of documented violations and hold those responsible accountable in accordance with fair judicial procedures.
2. Work towards returning all victims to their homes and provide compensation for the damages they suffered as a result of forced evictions and the looting of their belongings.
3. Review and verify the housing contracts and ensure they are not being used as a pretext for the unlawful seizure of homes.
4. Disclose the fate of the persons who were arbitrarily, and allow them to contact their families and obtain appropriate legal representation.
5. Establish an effective monitoring mechanism to prevent the recurrence of such violations and to guarantee residents' right to safe housing in accordance with local laws and international conventions.
6. Take effective measures to counter hate speech and sectarian rhetoric and prevent any retaliatory actions.

3. Documented cases:

- **On 10 December 2024**, armed men raided the home of the officer (W.H.), arresting him and taking him to an unknown location. Members of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) were later placed in his confiscated home. This is according to an eyewitness who spoke to STJ online on 18 February 2025, and requested to remain anonymous for security reasons.
- **On 12 December 2024**, armed men raided the homes of officers (F.H.), (S.A.), (Y.A.) and (Kh.N.), arresting them and taking them to an unknown location, where the arrests were accompanied by beatings and insults. Following that, fighters were placed in the confiscated houses. This is according to an eyewitness who spoke to STJ online on 22 February 2025, and requested to remain anonymous for security reasons.
- **On 14 December 2024**, armed men raided the homes of officers (A.A.), (M.B.), (S.M.), and (A.J.), arresting them and taking them to an unknown location. Before leaving, one of the armed men threatened the officers' wives, saying: "Criminal dogs, I swear I'll slaughter every Alawite Shabih (thug) in the area," then fired a shot into the air from his rifle. He ordered the women to get back into the houses and gave them a 24-hour ultimatum to evacuate and leave the whole area, along with every family of those arrested. Subsequently, fighters were placed in the confiscated homes. This is according to an eyewitness who spoke to STJ online on 18 February 2025, and requested to remain anonymous for security reasons.
- **On 3 February 2025**, armed men raided the homes of three officers, arresting them and taking them to an unknown location. The arrests were accompanied by severe beatings. Following that, fighters were placed in the confiscated homes. This is according to an





eyewitness who spoke to STJ online on 18 February 2025, and requested to remain anonymous for security reasons.

4. Legal implications and recommendations:

- **International law** recognizes the right of individuals and entities to own, use, and dispose of both tangible and intangible property in accordance with applicable laws, as a fundamental human right and an essential aspect in both the economic and social systems. It also guarantees the right to adequate housing, according to various international conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)¹, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)², the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000)³, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979)⁴. Encroachment on property and its contents are considered a clear violation of the rights to property and adequate housing as per these treaties.
- In addition, the cases documented in the testimonies of humiliation and physical assault by HTS members violate Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention Against Torture (1984), and the four Geneva Conventions (1949) along with their Additional Protocols (1977).
- Forcing the families to flee constitutes the crime of forced displacement, which is prohibited under Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), and Article 17 of the Second Additional Protocol (1977). Furthermore, the Rome Statute classifies forced displacement as a war crime or a crime against humanity (Articles 7 and 8).
- In this context, individuals' affiliation with any military or civilian entity loyal to the former regime does not justify these violations, as a significant number of the victims are women and children. Furthermore, military personnel who have laid down their arms without resistance are placed under protection in accordance with Common Article 3 of the Four Geneva Conventions (1949), which mandates that persons hors de combat shall be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction. Additionally, Article 46 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the arbitrary confiscation of their properties and belongings.
- On the other hand, according to Syrian law - which remains in effect unless repealed or amended by new legislation - Civil Code No. 84 (1949) stipulates that the property owner has the sole right to use, benefit from, and dispose of their property, including the right to any revenues it generates. Property may not be expropriated except in

¹ Articles 17-25

² Articles 11-17

³ Article 17

⁴ Article 14





accordance with the law and in exchange for equitable compensation⁵. Additionally, a lease agreement grants the tenant the right to use the property in exchange for a specified rent⁶.

- According to [Decree No. 12 of 1975 establishing the Military Housing Establishment](#), the housing units it develops - including those in al-Dimas - could be owned or rented by non-military individuals. The occupant of a given property may be a civilian who purchased it from a beneficiary, as beneficiaries are permitted to sell to others, regardless of their status, three years after paying the full value of the property⁷.
- The seizure of the victims' properties by HTS members constitutes the crime of property usurpation under Article 723 of the Syrian Penal Code, issued by Legislative Decree No. 148 of 1949. The crime is punishable by imprisonment for up to six months, and may extend to one year if the crime is accompanied by threats or coercion. However, if the crime is committed by armed individuals, the imprisonment penalty may reach up to three years. Additionally, the seizure of household belongings and movables without legal justification qualifies as violent robbery or aggravated robbery, in accordance with Articles 624-625 of the same code.

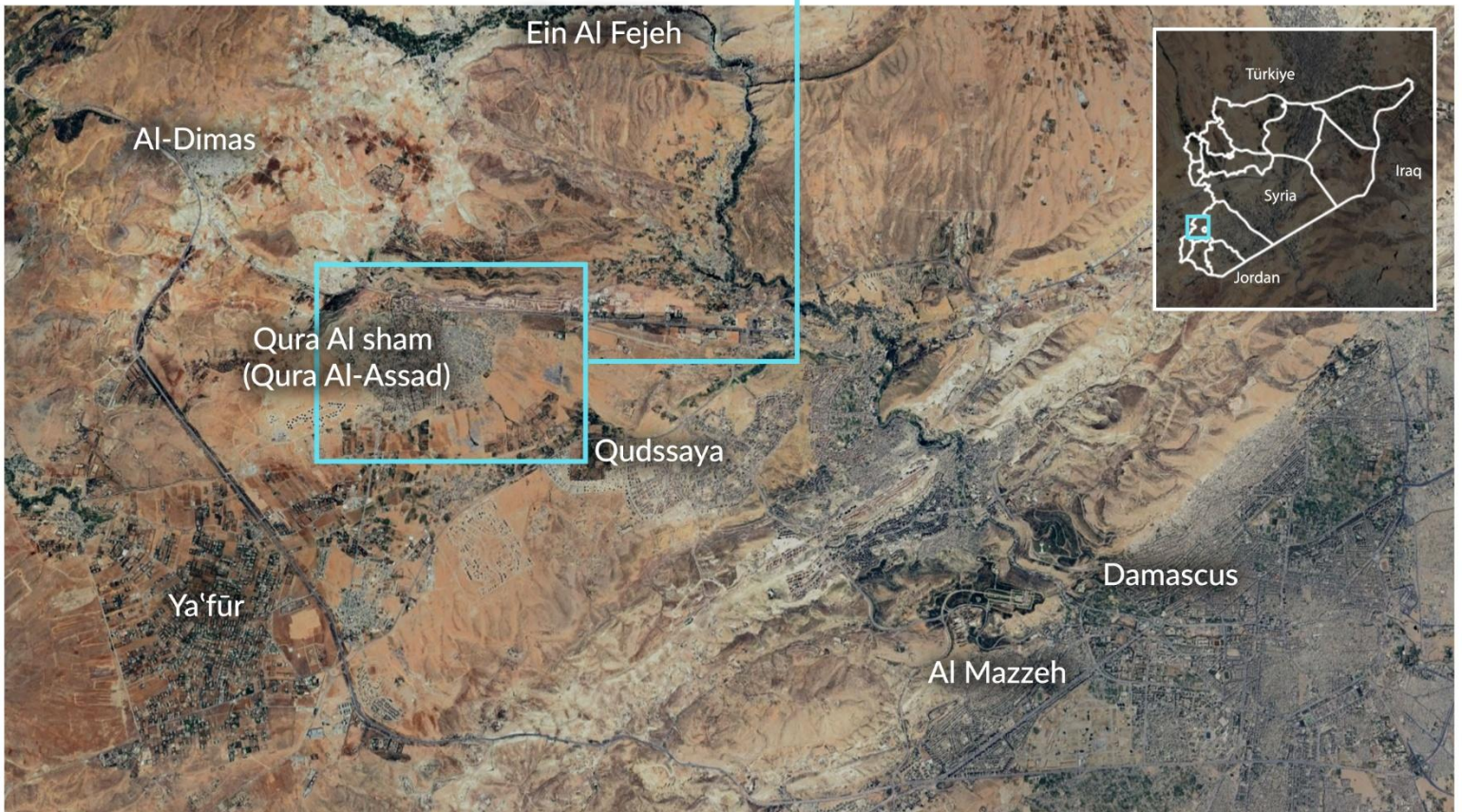
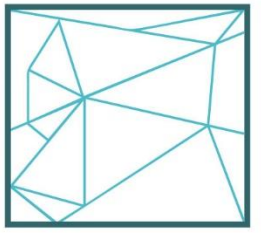
STJ calls on the local authorities to take immediate action to stop these violations, protect the rights of those affected by forced seizures, and ensure that the perpetrators are not granted impunity.

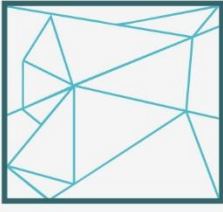
⁵ Articles 768-770-771 of the Civil Code

⁶ Article 526 of the Civil Code

⁷ Articles 2-22 of the Decree







ABOUT STJ

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) started as an idea in a co-founder's mind while attending the U.S. Middle-East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF) in 2015. The idea became a reality and flourished into an independent, non-profit, impartial, non-governmental human rights organization.

STJ's beginnings were more than humble; initially, it only reported stories of Syrians who experienced arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or torture. Planted in fertile soil, the seed of this project grew into an established human rights organization licensed in the Middle East and the European Union. STJ today undertakes to detect and uncover violations of all types committed in all Syrian parts by the various parties to the conflict.

Convinced that Syria's diversity is a wealth, our researchers and volunteers serve with unfailing dedication to monitor, expose, and document human rights violations that continue unabated in Syria since 2011, regardless of the affiliation of the victims or perpetrators.

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