

Syria\Türkiye: “Go Back to Your Country; We Do Not Want You Here”: Torture and mistreatment in deportation centers in Türkiye



- ◆ The Turkish Authorities Must Conduct A Thorough And Independent Investigation Into All Allegations Of Torture And Ill-Treatment, Hold Those Involved Accountable, And Compensate The Victims

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Methodology	4
3. Background	5
4. Deaths in Turkish Detention Centers	13
4.1. A young man died after being severely beaten by the Turkish gendarmerie	13
4.2. Child dies due to deprivation of basic necessities during deportation.....	15
4.3. Death of a person with special needs due to ill-treatment.....	15
4.4. Death of a detainee due to denial of health care	17
4.5. Malnutrition in detention centers	17
5. Beating, Torture in Turkish Detention Centers	18
5.1. Torture in Rooms not Monitored by Cameras; A Doctor Involved	19
5.2. Abused by Seven People Together for 30 Minutes	20
5.3. They Assaulted my Son in Front of Me	22
5.4. Threats of Detention in the Meat Cold Room	23
5.5. Firing shots to disperse detainees.....	24
5.6. Filming under threat and coercion	25
5.7. Escape attempt resulted in torture by ten people.....	26
6. Insult and Abuse	27
6.1. Psychological distress	28
7. Information about Some Detention Centers	29
7.1. Oğuzeli: the worst Turkish detention center, spanning ten floors	29
7.2. Şanlıurfa Detention Center; four shifts every 24 hours	31
7.3. Tuzla Detention Center; halls that can accommodate hundreds of detainees	31

**Syria\Türkiye: "Go Back to Your Country; We Do Not Want You Here":
Torture and mistreatment in deportation centers in Türkiye**

*The Turkish Authorities Must Conduct A Thorough And Independent Investigation Into All
Allegations Of Torture And Ill-Treatment, Hold Those Involved Accountable, And
Compensate The Victims*

1. Executive Summary

This comprehensive investigation examines various practices that amount to torture and ill-treatment, including physical beatings. These actions are carried out by Turkish police (Polis), private security personnel (Özel Güvenlik), and the Turkish gendarmerie/border guards (Jandarma) against detainees in a range of facilities. These facilities include detention and deportation centers, police stations, Turkish immigration offices (Göç İdaresi), and camps that were previously used to house Syrian refugees. Many of these camps have since been repurposed by Turkish authorities into detention centers where Syrian refugees, including those categorized as under "temporary protection" in Türkiye, are held before being deported back to Syria.

Investigations by Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) have revealed the deaths of five Syrian refugees. Among them were two elderly individuals who died due to malnutrition, lack of adequate healthcare, and severe psychological distress. Additionally, a Syrian child, no older than 17, passed away after being denied his medication for kidney failure and being prevented from eating, drinking, or using the bathroom for over a day. Furthermore, two young men lost their lives in detention centers: one as a result of torture and beatings, and the other due to malnutrition.

All 19 individuals interviewed by STJ for this report experienced severe psychological pressure, including threats and physical violence such as beatings and mistreatment. Additionally, they witnessed extreme violence that instilled fear in them, which led them to submit to signing "voluntary return" forms for deportation to Syria, which seemed to be voluntary."

2. Methodology

For this investigation, STJ interviewed 19 former detainees from Turkish detention centers. 17 of these individuals were deported to northwestern Syria, one was released after four months from a detention center in the city of [Sanliurfa](#), and a young woman was freed from a prison in Izmir.

The interviews with witnesses took place between July 2024 and early October 2024 using secure internet communication applications, and all participants provided their informed consent. They were made aware of how their information would be used, including its publication in this investigation, and were informed of the potential risks they faced. As a result, all interviewees chose to conceal their identities and any information that could reveal them to avoid potential reprisals from Türkiye or from Syrian military groups collaborating with it in northern Syria, such as the Syrian National Army (SNA) of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SNRC).

In addition to the testimonies, STJ examined numerous open-source media reports, human rights investigations, and social media posts that documented the conditions of detention, including instances of beatings and mistreatment in Turkish deportation centers. They also verified documents shared privately by sources for further confirmation.

Note: This investigation was completed on the eve of the fall of the Syrian regime; therefore, STJ decided to wait and publish it in 2025.

3. Background

In 2018, the Turkish authorities intensified forced deportations to northern Syria, and this trend has continued to increase in subsequent years. According to the latest statistics from the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, the number of Syrian refugees under temporary protection has decreased from 3,642,786 to 3,085,056¹.

The Turkish authorities are deporting individuals to Syria through four border crossings: Bab al-Salama, Tell Abyad, Bab al-Hawa, and Jarabulus. STJ have gathered data on the number of deportees from the beginning of 2024 until the end of December 2024 from private sources connected to the border crossings with Türkiye. This number has reached 85,202 individuals.

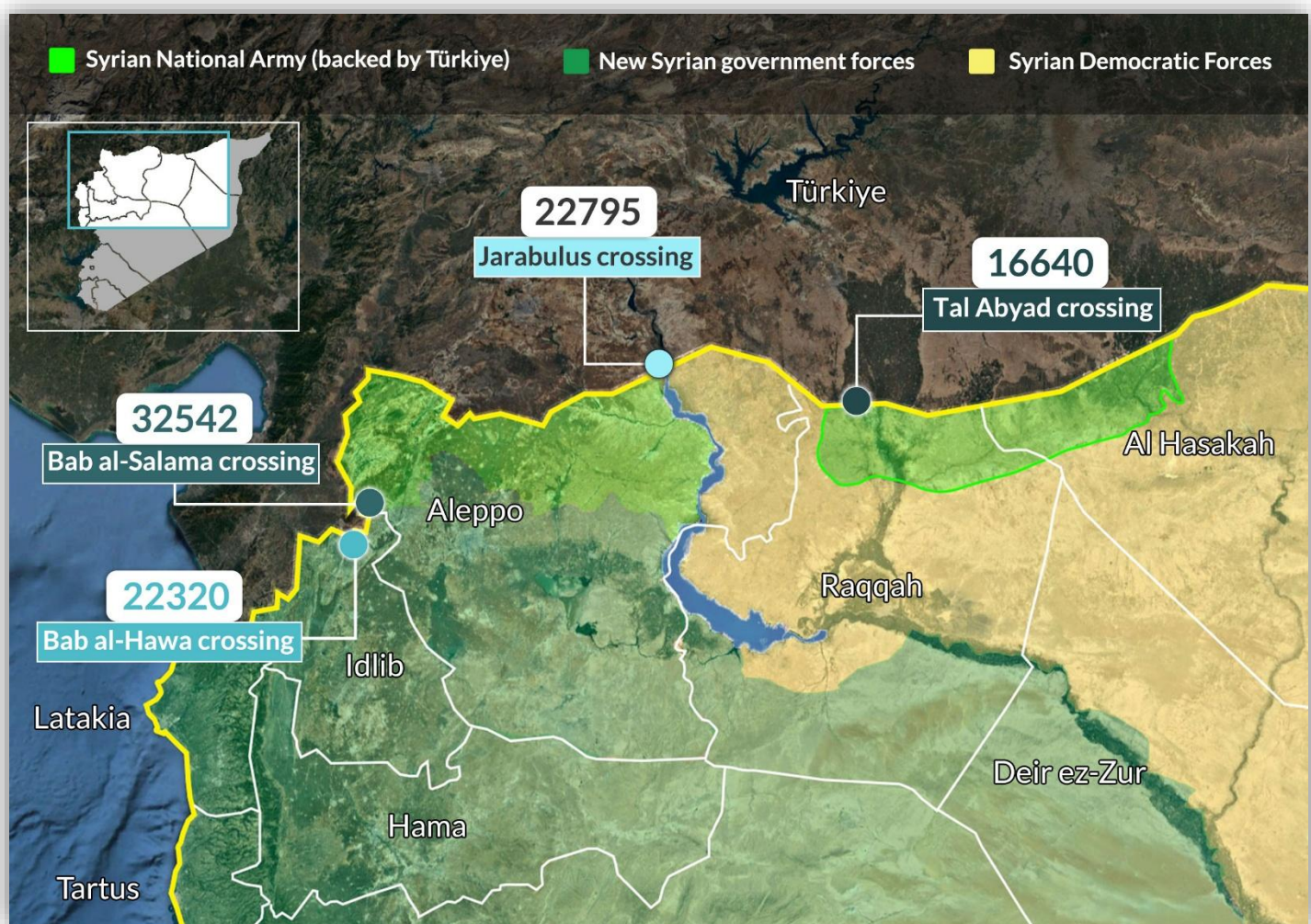


Image 1 - A map showing the border crossings used for the deportation of Syrian refugees, along with the number of deportees during 2024.

¹ “Temporary Protection” (in Turkish), Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, 7 November 2024, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/gecici-koruma5638> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

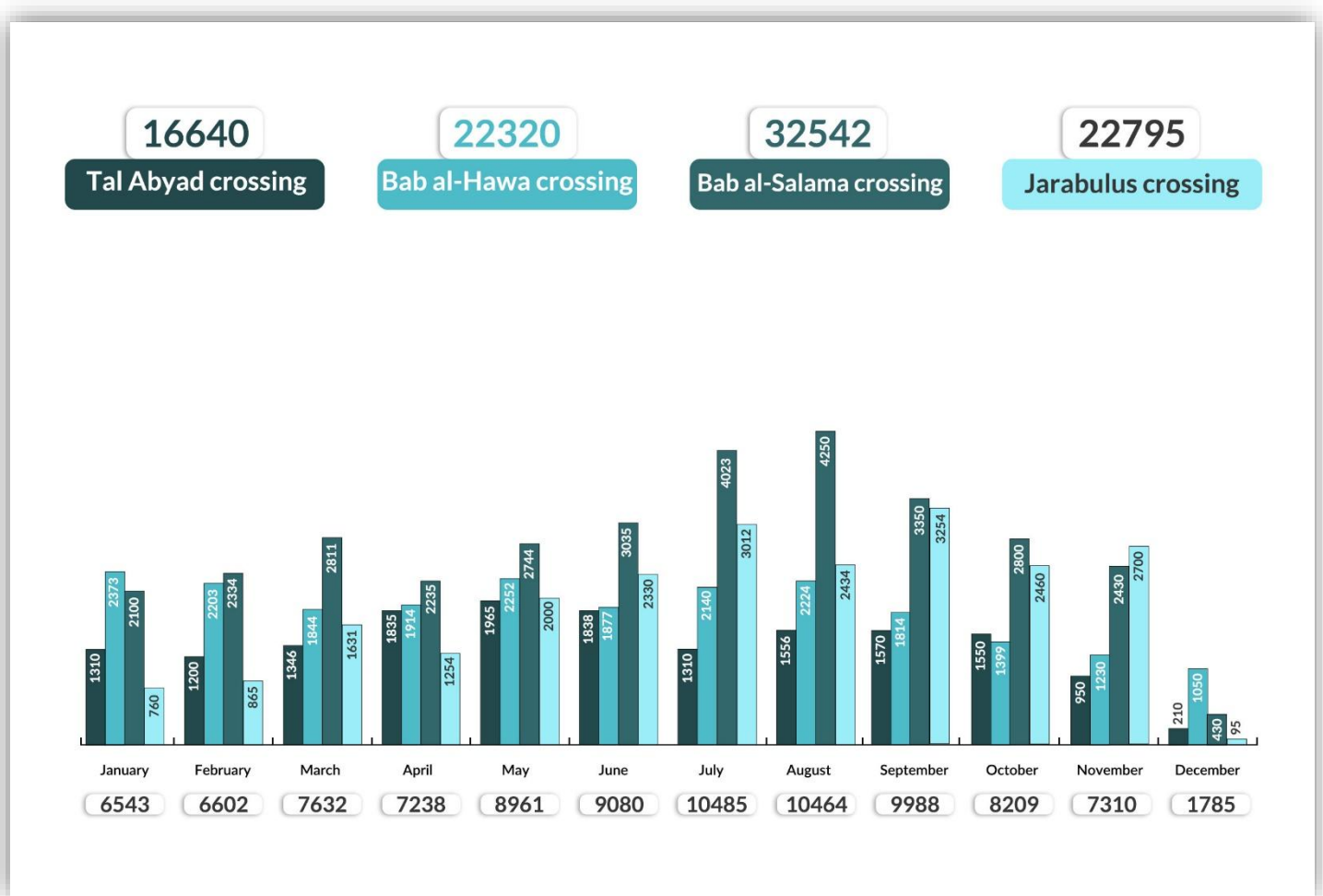


Image 2 - A chart showing the number of Syrian refugees forcibly deported from Türkiye in 2024.

The Bab al-Hawa crossing connects to the Idlib Governorate, which is controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Additionally, both the Bab al-Hawa and Jarabulus crossings lead to various areas in the northern Aleppo countryside, which are controlled by Turkish military forces and allied SNA factions. The Tell Abyad crossing provides access to the Tell Abyad region, which is also governed by Türkiye and the SNA.

Forced deportation is a serious violation of the rights of Syrian refugees, but it is not the only one. During the deportation process, Syrian detainees face practices that amount to torture, including beatings, mistreatment, and psychological distress in detention centers. This report specifically focuses on these abusive practices.

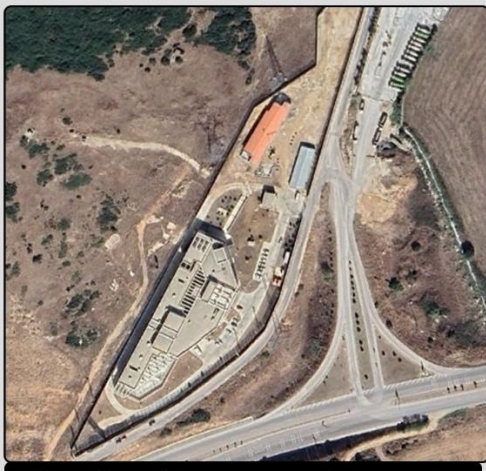
In 2024, testimonies indicated that thousands of Syrian refugees and other asylum seekers were detained in three main centers. These were the Şanlıurfa [Detention Center](#) in Şanlıurfa, the [Tuzla Detention Center](#) in Istanbul, and the [Oğuzeli Detention Center](#) in Gaziantep.

There were approximately 2,500 detainees at the Oğuzeli Center, about 2,000 at the Şanlıurfa Center, and around 600 at the Tuzla Center. Additionally, witnesses among the detainees reported on the internal layout of the buildings, describing overcrowding and poor conditions of detention. They highlighted issues such as the prevalence of skin diseases, an abundance of insects and rats, and a lack of proper healthcare and cleaning in the rooms.

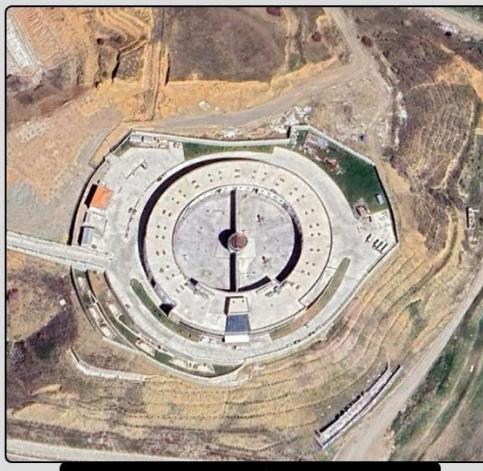
During the investigative interviews, several witnesses confirmed seeing numerous items bearing the European Union (EU) logo, including sleeping mats, blankets, and other materials. Information obtained from 19 Syrians, who were denied the right to meet with their legal representatives or contact their families, indicates that their mobile phones were confiscated immediately upon their arrest. According to testimonies, they were only allowed to use the detention center's phone for ten minutes daily at the Oğuzeli detention center in Gaziantep. This evidence contradicts the repeated statements made by the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management.²

Images 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - The following maps show the locations of Turkish removal centers, where STJ observed instances of torture and ill-treatment.

² "Press Release on Untrue Claims Regarding Istanbul Çatalca Repatriation Center" (in Turkish), Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, 2 November 2024, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/istanbul-catalca-geri-gonderme-merkezi-ile-ilgili-gercek-disi-iddialar-hakkinda-basin-aciklamasi> (last accessed: 15 November 2024).



Balıkesir II Göç İdaresi Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Ankara Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Aşkale Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Aydın II Göç İdaresi Geri Gönderim Central

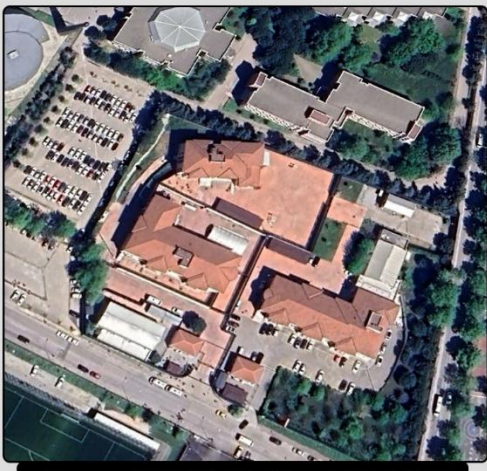


Antalya il göç idaresi geri gönderme merkezi



Adana Geri Gönderme Merkezi (GGM)

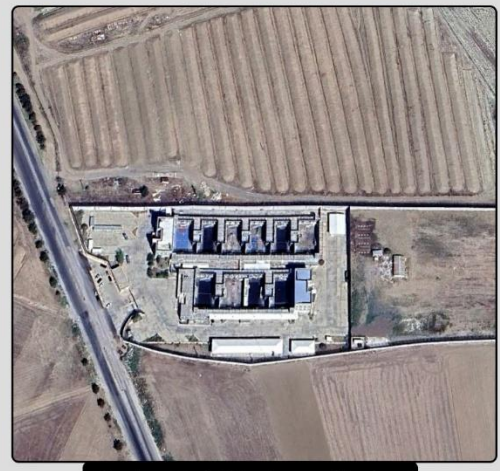




T.C. Bursa Valiliği İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü



İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü Çatalca Geri Gönderme Merkezi (kadın)



Çankırı Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Ayvıcık Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Geri Gonderme Merkezi Oğuzeli



Iğdır Göçmen Kampı





Delivery center back Selimpaşa foreigners



Kocaeli İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü, Gündoğdu Geri Dönüş Merkezi



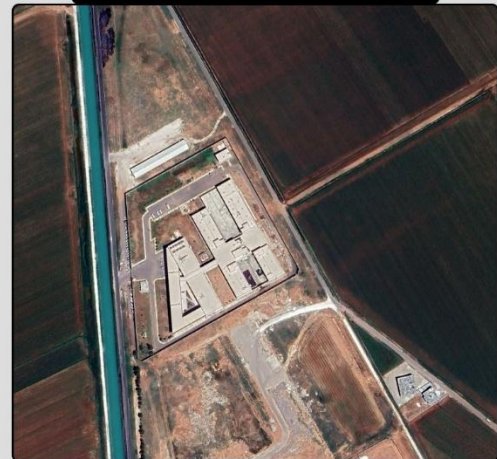
Van Göç İdaresi Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Göç İdaresi Harmandalı Geri Gönderme merkezi



Kayseri Göçmen Geri Gönderme Merkezi



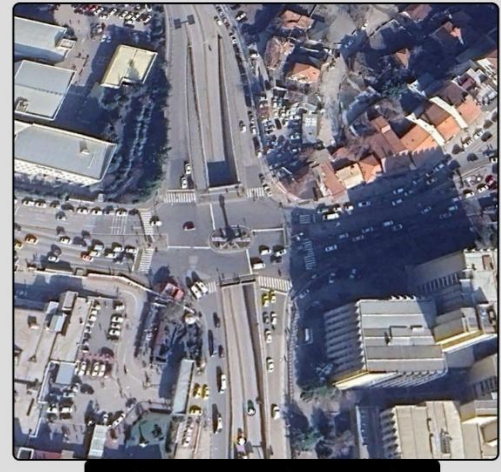
Şanlıurfa Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Edirne İl Göç İdaresi, Geri Gönderme Merkezi



İstanbul Göçmen İdaresi Tuzla Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Malatya Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Kütahya İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü
Geri Gönderme Merkezi

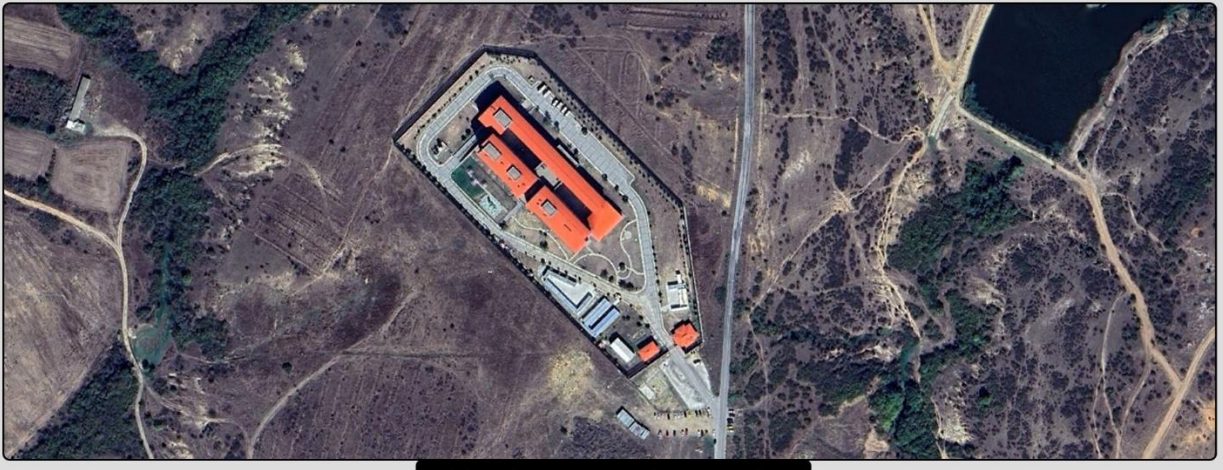


Ula İl Göç İdaresi Geri Gönderme Merkezi



T. C. Niğde Valiliği İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü
Geri Gönderme Merkezi





Pehlivan köy Geri Gönderme Merkezi



Arnavut köy Geri Gönderme Merkezi (Göç İdaresi)



The Lighthouse Reports coalition conducted a thorough investigation over more than six months,³ examining the relationship between the EU and the funding of Turkish detention centers where migrants and refugees face abuse and humiliation and are coerced into signing "voluntary return" forms. The investigation revealed that the EU began allocating funds to these centers in 2007. At the Turkish government's request in 2015, what were initially termed "refugee reception centers" were reclassified as "deportation centers" under an agreement with the European Commission. As part of this initiative, the EU contributed at least 1.4 million euros to increase the height of the centers' external walls and installed 4.5-meter-high security fences topped with barbed wire.

This investigation found that this project is one of 15 EU initiatives aimed at supporting deportation centers in Türkiye. According to internal and public EU documents, these initiatives are collectively valued at 60 million euros. The total EU funding allocated to projects related to deportation centers amounts to 213 million euros. In contrast, the Commission asserts that the total EU funding is less than 200 million euros but has not provided a detailed breakdown of the individual projects that account for this expenditure.

4. Deaths in Turkish Detention Centers

STJ documented five deaths in detention and deportation centers due to poor conditions and ill-treatment. Detainees suffered beatings and torture from authorities, were deprived of adequate food, or were forced to eat spoiled food.

4.1. A young man died after being severely beaten by the Turkish gendarmerie

On 23 July 2024, social media reported the death of a young Syrian man named Ibrahim Ezz El-Din while he was being held at a detention center in [Kırklareli](#)⁴.

In response to these reports, the governor of the city issued a statement denying that the young man had died at the detention center. He explained that Ibrahim Ezz El-Din actually passed away from a massive pulmonary embolism, as indicated by his initial diagnosis on 16 July 2024. Despite receiving initial medical assistance at the health unit within the deportation center in Pehlivan village, he unfortunately succumbed to his condition after being transferred to Kırklareli Training and Research Hospital⁵.

The governor stated that the autopsy revealed no signs of assault on the young man. This statement contradicts the testimony of a source identified as Mohammed, who was detained at the same location as Ibrahim.⁶ Mohammed claimed that members of the Turkish border

³ Investigation entitled "Inside the European-Funded Turkish Deportation Machine" (in Arabic), 12 October 2024, <https://aljumhuriya.net/ar/2024/10/12/%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84-%D8%A2%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%85%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9/> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

⁴ Syrian Press Agency post on the death of Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (in Arabic), 23 July 2024, <https://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Press.Agency.SPA/posts/pfbid02RuDcgWywALD99zksSmzhCV54oosayYY3Qd2EKwoVLV9PGT6ziy8ZrmFvQxxz4TKYl?rddid=YyaPedxp6yV6DvFO> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

⁵ "Media Statement" (in Turkish), Governor of Kırklareli, 23 July 2024, (last accessed: 15 November, 2024), <http://www.kirklareli.gov.tr/basin-aciklamasi-2024-3-20240723-3>

⁶ Online interview on 26 July 2024.

guards (gendarmerie) brought Ibrahim to the detention center in Kırklareli with his body covered in bruises, suggesting he had been severely beaten. Mohammed also mentioned that Ibrahim himself reported being brutally beaten by the gendarmerie while attempting to seek asylum in Europe for the third time.

Mohammed disclosed the circumstances surrounding Ibrahim's death, as his health gradually worsened without intervention from the Turkish gendarmerie, despite their requests to transfer him to the hospital,

"The food we received consisted of a loaf of bread, a small biscuit, and a small can of beans for each person. Ibrahim, however, could not eat anything due to the physical pain he was experiencing from the beatings he had endured. We repeatedly asked the gendarmerie to take him to the hospital, but each time, they responded by shouting at us and hitting us. A few days later, Ibrahim stopped breathing; his face turned blue, and he became completely unresponsive. Despite this, he was not attended to until an hour later, when security personnel arrived and took him away. We had no way of knowing his whereabouts, but I am certain that by then he had already passed away."

T.C. Sağlık Bakanlığı		ÖLÜM BELGESİ		Form No:2407171150 - Referans No:84309		Ek-2	
Ölümün Meydana Geldiği Yer		İlçe MERKEZ		Köy/Mah. MERKEZ / YAYLA			
Ölümü Tespit Eden Kurum Adı		KIRKLARELİ ADLİ TIP ŞUBE MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ					
A ÖLEN KİŞİ BİLGİLERİ							
T.C. Kimlik No	:99299426516	Pasaport No	:				
Cinsiyet	:Erkek	Uyruk	:	SURIYE ARAP CUMHURİYETİ			
Adı	:İBRAHİM	Soyadı	:	İZZİDDİN			
Baba Adı	:GHAZI	Ana Adı	:	NAJMAH			
Doğum Yeri	:HOMS	Doğum Tarihi	:	01.01.1987			
Nüfusa Kayıtlı Olduğu İl/İlçe	:-						
Nüfusa Kayıtlı Olduğu Mh/Köy	:-						
Cilt No	:	Aile Sıra No	:				
Birey Sıra No	:	Medeni Hali	:	Evli			
Geri Alınan Nüfus Cüzdanı Bilgileri							
Seri No	:	Kayıt No	:				
Verildiği Yer	:	Veriliş Tarihi	:				
Açıklama	Nüfus cüzdanı belge düzenlenirken teslim alınmamıştır.						
B Ölüm Tarihi :16.07.2024 Ölüm Saati :16:00							
Ölüm Yeri :Hastane							
C Ölümün Şekli							
Bulaşıcı olmayan hastalık (Doğal Ölüm)							
D Ölüm yaralanma sonucunu gerçekleştirdi :Hayır							
İş yerinde yaralanma :-							
Yaralanma Tarihi :-							
Yaralanma Yeri :-							
E							
Otopsi yapıldı mı? :Evet							
Ölüm nedeni, otopsi bulgularından mı elde edildi? :Evet							
Sonra daha fazla bilgi elde edilebilir mi? :Hayır							

Image 7 - The circulated death certificate of Ibrahim Ghazi Ezzedine, who passed away in the Kırklareli removal center. ([Source](#)).

On 3 January 2024, the Turkish newspaper [Evrensel](#) published a report about the death of a 28-year-old man named Hassan M. He died after being detained for eight days in the [Akyurt](#) Detention Center located in Türkiye's Ankara. According to the report, which cited information from Hassan's family, they received a call from the detention center urging them to come collect their son's body, but no explanation was provided regarding the cause of death. Upon viewing Hassan's body, his family noticed bruises on his face and were troubled by his sudden passing, especially considering he had no prior health issues before his detention. Consequently, they reached out to the Refugee Rights organization to initiate legal proceedings⁷.

4.2. Child dies due to deprivation of basic necessities during deportation

Transporting detainees between Turkish detention centers and to border areas for deportation to Syria is a lengthy process that can take hours or even days. During this time, detainees are often deprived of food and access to restrooms. This was the case for a child who was on the same deportation bus as a young man named Ahmed, who shared the following account,⁸

"I was deported to Syria on 5 October 2023. During our transfer from the detention center in [Edirne](#), Istanbul, to the detention center in [Oğuzeli](#), Gaziantep, there were two children under the age of 18 with us from the town of al-Assasa in the southern countryside of Aleppo. One of the children was 17 years old and suffered from kidney failure. He requested to use the bathroom several times, but they did not allow him."

He added,

"Throughout the transfer, we received no food or drink, and we were not permitted to use the bathroom. The duration of the transfer felt very long for everyone, especially for the sick child, as his fatigue was clearly visible. The soldiers refused to let him use the bathroom or provide him with water to take the medications he had brought. I am certain that the conditions he endured were responsible for his death the day after our arrival at the Oğuzeli deportation center. The soldiers handed his body over to his cousin, who was also underage, and was instructed to deliver it to their family residing in Konya. Unfortunately, I was unable to learn the names of the children involved".

4.3. Death of a person with special needs due to ill-treatment

The Turkish authorities detain entire Syrian families if any issue arises with one of their members without verifying their connection to the incident.⁹ This occurred again with Tariq M. and his family, who were detained following an incident involving his 17-year-old son. Tariq M. lived with his daughter, wife, and young son in the Topkapi area of Istanbul. Abdullah, one of

⁷ "Refugee Mohammed's Family Suspects Torture: His Body Found in a Repatriation Center," Evrensel, 5 October 2024, <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/507183/multeci-muhammedin-ailesi-iskenceden-supheleniyor-ggmden-olusu-cikti?a=cc981> (last accessed 15 November 2024).

⁸ Online interview on 25 July 2024

⁹ "Türkiye/Syria, "Place Your Fingerprint Here and Stay Silent, Or I Will Detain You and Your Family for a Month", STJ, 10 September 2024, <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkiye-syria-place-your-fingerprint-here-and-stay-silent-or-i-will-detain-you-and-your-family-for-a-month/> (last accessed: 15 November 2024).

their relatives, provided details about the incident and the circumstances that ultimately led to the death of Tariq,¹⁰

"On 5 July 2024, a child went to a mosque near their home, and the other children with him, all under the age of 17, claimed that he had taken off his clothes at the entrance to the mosque. It is important to note that this incident occurred after the Kayseri incidents."

Abdullah stated that the children's allegations prompted the arrival of the Turkish police, which led to neighbors gathering in the area and many people congregating in front of the family's home. He added,

"We could not confirm the truth of the incident, but we learned that there were [surveillance] cameras; however, the footage did not provide any evidence. Despite this, the police detained the family at the station and subsequently transferred them to a detention center at the Turkish Immigration Department in Arnavutköy, Istanbul. The child was taken from the police station to a mental hospital after a report was filed, while the parents and the child's sister were sent to the Kilis camp, justified by the authorities as a measure to protect them from the children's families and the people in the neighborhood."

The older brother of the child, who is married and lives in a separate house in Istanbul, was unable to intervene during the incident due to concerns about being detained along with his family. Hours after the incident, he attempted to hire a lawyer to secure their release, but Turkish authorities denied his request. According to Abdullah, the circumstances surrounding the transfer ultimately led to the death of Tariq M. He explained,

"The treatment was poor, and they were not given water until six hours after their confinement. Tariq had been confined to a wheelchair for five years and suffered from several illnesses, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. The journey lasted over 12 hours, which significantly worsened his health after two days. He visited the hospital multiple times, but on the eighth day of their transfer to the Kilis camp, he had to be hospitalized again and fell into a coma, which ultimately led to his death. The medical report stated that his death was due to the deterioration of his health."

It is relevant to note that the Turkish city of Kayseri, which Abdullah mentioned, experienced protests on 30 June 2024, that escalated into widespread attacks on the property of Syrians. This violence was ignited by a rumor alleging that a Syrian refugee had harassed a Turkish girl. The governor of Kayseri issued a statement that evening denying the rumor. Despite this denial, the wave of violence grew, leading to the burning of Syrian homes, the vandalism of their cars,¹¹ and attacks on their shops, resulting in the destruction of their contents by hundreds of Turkish citizens.

¹⁰ Online interview on 20 August 2024.

¹¹ "Turkey: Syrian businesses set ablaze after reports child was sexually abused", Middle East Eye, 1 July 2024, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-syrian-businesses-set-ablaze-reports-sexual-abuse> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

4.4. Death of a detainee due to denial of health care

The Turkish authorities are detaining Syrian refugees and individuals from other countries in centers known for their poor conditions. These facilities lack necessities, including food, water, and medical care, resulting in detainees contracting various diseases.¹² Similar conditions led to the death of an elderly man who was detained alongside a witness named Alaa, who testified,

"I was detained on 4 July 2024, along with my wife, at the Oğuzeli Deportation Center in Gaziantep. We were deported to Syria on 7 August 2024. The day before our deportation, an elderly man who was also detained with his wife in the center passed away."

The source believes that the leading causes of the elderly's death were inadequate healthcare, irregular intake of necessary medications, and a lack of healthy food. The elderly man suffered from multiple diseases, including high blood pressure and diabetes. The source stated,¹³

"General hygiene was non-existent, and no treatment was provided for anyone, including elderly individuals and sick children. This also affected my child, who has a heart condition. When I requested treatment and medication, one of the guards shouted at me and insulted me."

Alaa mentioned that after the old man passed away, two vehicles arrived: one was an ambulance and the other was a hearse. They transported his body to the hearse and took his wife in the ambulance before leaving the center.

4.5. Malnutrition in detention centers

At immigration offices, police stations, camps for Syrians, or official Turkish detention centers, detainees often receive inadequate meals. In this context, a young Syrian former detainee named Safi believes that malnutrition contributed to the death of one of his fellow detainees at the Eskişehir police station in Kayseri. Safi explained,¹⁴

"On 21 June 2024, we were startled awake in the morning by the screams of young men coming from one of the detention rooms on the same floor where I was being held. The cries were unmistakable, shouting, 'He died, he died.' Shortly thereafter, police officers entered the room and found a young man among the detainees who was convulsing and twitching violently. They called for nurses from the police station to bring a stretcher to carry the young man outside. We remained unaware of what had happened to him until several hours later."

Safi noted that the food offered at the police station included boiled potatoes, labneh, and a loaf of bread per person throughout the day. He continued,

"When we saw the young man, we initially thought his blood pressure had dropped or something similar. However, the agitation in his body and the convulsion he exhibited

¹² "Bad detention conditions inside Turkish deportation camps", Enab Baladi, 18 October 2023, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2023/10/bad-detention-conditions-inside-turkish-deportation-camps/> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

¹³ Online interview on 10 September 2024.

¹⁴ Online interview on 10 September 2024.

clearly resulted from malnutrition, compounded by the humid, unclean environment and unpleasant odors within the police station, which ultimately led to his death".

Refugees detained in Türkiye not only faced insufficient food but also confronted serious health risks due to the quality of the meals provided. Ferial, who was held with her family for ten days at a police station in Izmir, shared their experiences after being arrested by Turkish border guards while attempting to cross into Europe in September 2023. They were subsequently transferred to a prison designated for individuals trying to cross into Europe, where they spent an additional four days. Ferial recounted,¹⁵

"At the police station, there were 300 people, including women, men, children, and the elderly. The facility was very humid due to its proximity to the sea, and a pervasive smell of mold filled the air. The food served was terrible, tasting as if it were spoiled and unfit for consumption. I could not feed my child the meals provided. It was permitted to ask the guards to buy us biscuits for money. My husband and I chose to do this to avoid giving our young son harmful food, despite the high prices. A product that normally costs 10 Turkish liras (TL) was being sold for 50 TL."

After Ferial and her family were released, Turkish police arrested her husband while he was working at a clothing ironing workshop in Istanbul. He was subsequently deported to northwestern Syria. There, he moved to areas controlled by the Syrian government before relocating to Lebanon. From Lebanon, he attempted to immigrate by sea to European countries, but this effort was unsuccessful. He continues to live in Lebanon to this day.

5. Beating, Torture in Turkish Detention Centers

The Turkish authorities have denied allegations of forcibly deporting Syrian refugees back to Syria, as well as claims of beating and torturing detainees in detention centers.¹⁶ In a statement issued by the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, the authorities refuted accusations of mistreatment in deportation centers, asserting, "It is unacceptable that our presidency, which works diligently day and night, is being confronted with serious and unfounded accusations." However, 19 testimonies gathered by STJ indicate that the Turkish authorities do engage in violence against detainees.

Article 6.1 of the [Temporary Protection Regulation](#), under which more than 3.1 million Syrian refugees reside according to official Turkish statistics, prohibits subjecting any individual to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or deporting them to any location where their life or freedom might be at risk due to their race, religion, nationality, or political beliefs. The specific text of the paragraph reads as follows: "Non-refoulement" ARTICLE 6 - (1) No one within the scope of this Regulation shall be returned to a place where he or she may be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment or where his/her life or freedom would be threatened on account of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." For the original article in Turkish, please refer to the relevant resource.¹⁷

¹⁵ Online interview on 12 September 2024.

¹⁶ "Press Release on Untrue News Regarding Foreigners Sent to Repatriation Centers" (in Turkish), Turkish Presidency of Migration Management, 17 February 2024, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/geri-gonderme-merkezlerine-gonderilen-yabancilara-iliskin-gercek-disi-haberler-hakkinda-basin-aciklamasi> (last accessed: 17 February 2024).

¹⁷ Article 6.1 of the Temporary Protection Regulation: "Non-refoulement", 22 October 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/decrees/natlegbod/2014/en/108062> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

5.1. Torture in Rooms not Monitored by Cameras; A Doctor Involved

Halim, a former detainee, recounted his experience during his four-month detention at the Şanlıurfa deportation center from 27 April to 23 August 2024. He testified that he witnessed acts of torture in rooms that were not monitored by cameras. Halim recounted a specific incident involving a young man named Anas Balthajji, who was sharing a room with him,¹⁸

"In the [Şanlıurfa](#) Detention Center, each detainee is allowed six cigarettes per day. One day, officers discovered an extra cigarette hidden under Anas's mattress. That evening, the officers took Anas to an unmonitored room. Two officers restrained him and forced him to kneel. Meanwhile, another individual stood behind Anas, stepped on his toes, and violently knelt down on his back."

Halim went on to explain what he had heard from the young man about his punishment, saying,

"The officers inflicted severe torture on him. When he was brought into the room, he was unconscious and breathing but unresponsive. Seeing his condition, we attempted to create a disturbance so we could take him to the doctor's room at the center. However, when we arrived, they prevented us from entering with him. We could hear voices and screams coming from inside as the doctor used a large amount of disinfectant in his nose to try to revive him, as he had suffered a nervous breakdown due to the beatings. At that moment, we realized that the doctor was complicit in torturing the detainees."

Before being transferred to the Şanlıurfa Center, Halim was held at the Turkish Immigration Department's detention center in [Arnavutköy](#). He witnessed officers beating detainees to force them to sign "voluntary return" papers. He said,

"If a person objects to deportation, they will definitely be beaten – either with hands, feet, batons, or any other objects within reach of the investigator or officer – this is to compel them to give their fingerprints or if they provide an answer that the officers do not like. The beatings are targeted at specific areas of the body; they tend to avoid the face except when using the palms of their hands. I later realized that this is done because marks on the face are more visible, while beatings on the body can be harsher without being seen. Any swelling can be concealed by clothing and remains hidden."

In addition to the violence inflicted on detainees, Halim described the almost non-existent healthcare in detention centers, recounting his experience of being poisoned during his four-month stay at the Şanlıurfa center,

"The medical situation is dire. If someone falls ill, we struggle to get them treatment. When I was poisoned, I worked with my friends to mislead the officers. My friends helped carry me to make it appear to the officers that I could not walk, which led them to allow me to see a doctor. However, when I met with the nurse that day, she gave me eight pills at once and wrote a note indicating that I needed to see the doctor the next day. I was shocked when the officer at the doctor's door refused to let me enter, took the note from my hand, and tossed it in the trash, saying it was not necessary."

¹⁸ Online interview on 16 September 2024.

Fortunately, my health did not deteriorate after that, and I realized that the doctor was part of the torture process for detainees."

He stated that he and other detainees were at risk of contracting scabies because those infected were not isolated to curb the spread of the infection. Furthermore, those infected had to wait a long time to see a doctor, with the waiting period extending to a month or more in some instances.

Faryal's observations from the prison where she was held with her family align with Halim's testimony regarding the spread of infectious skin diseases. She noted,

"They placed us in a small, crowded space with people of different nationalities, primarily Syrians. The total number of detainees exceeded thousands, and they filmed us for hours, each person alone. We spent one night in the prison, which was filled with elderly individuals, men, women, and infants. The facility was extremely humid, and many suffered from skin diseases such as scabies and lice. The conditions inside the prison were genuinely tragic."

5.2. Abused by Seven People Together for 30 Minutes

Majed is a young man from Aleppo who has held a temporary protection card for Gaziantep since 2015. Recently, the police visited his home to verify the information of him and his family. Then, Majed requested to see the officers' IDs, which upset them. As a result, they filed a report accusing him of assaulting police officers, leading to his detention in the [Haran](#) camp in Şanlıurfa.

While in detention in Haran, Majed witnessed an incident where security guards at the camp beat a young Syrian man named Nidal A. Nidal had been arrested at a plastic factory in Gaziantep, even though he possessed all his legal documents. The Turkish police took him to the camp, leaving his sick mother and family without a breadwinner. Majed described Nidal's condition,¹⁹

"He was in a tragic state and on the verge of collapse. After he was brought to the camp one day, he began screaming at the camp security. More than seven individuals then beat him with batons for over half an hour, showing no signs of stopping. He was beaten so badly that he could no longer move. At one point, we feared he had died. However, hours later, they brought him back to the dormitory in a miserable state from the violence he had endured."

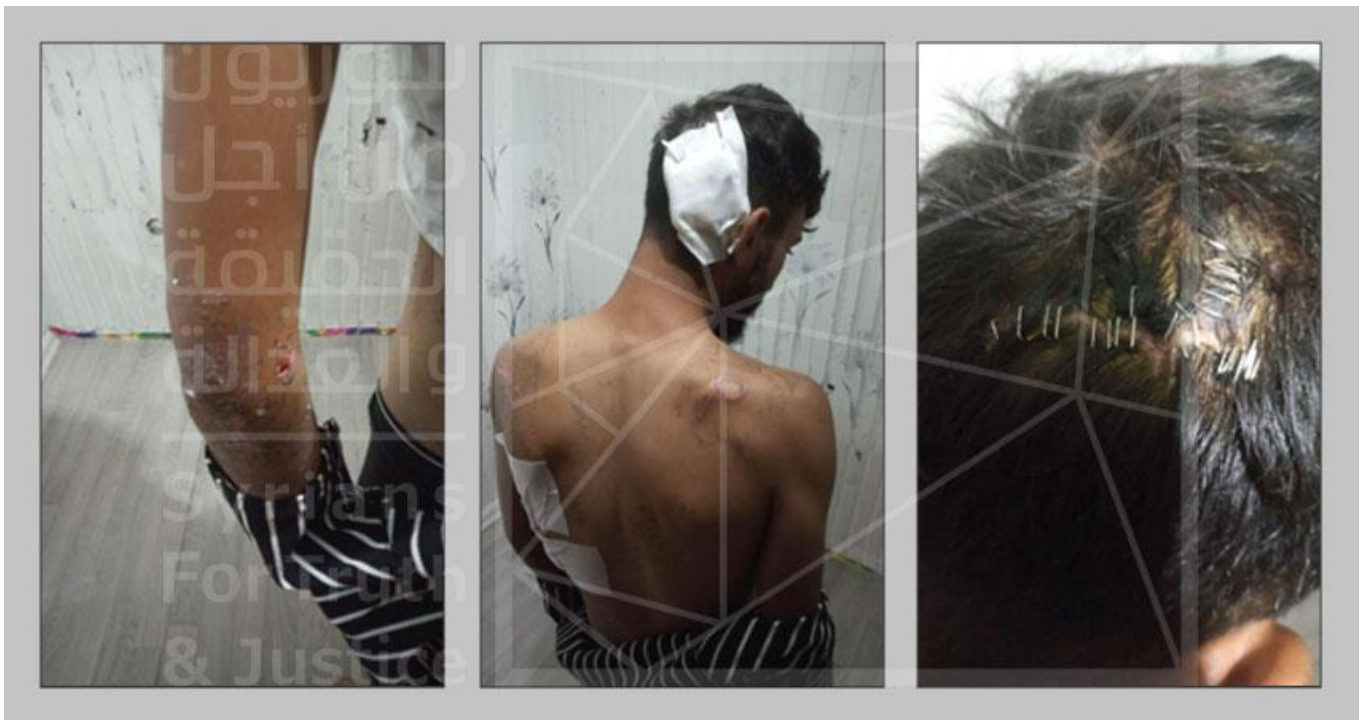
The Haran camp in Şanlıurfa was previously a Syrian refugee camp in Türkiye. It consists of caravans made from zinc sheets, which get extremely hot in the summer and very cold in the winter.

Majed highlighted the deteriorating conditions in the detention centers, of which he himself was a victim. He recounted,

¹⁹ Online interview on 9 July 2024.

"I was detained in the Kilis camp for a week because I refused to sign the 'voluntary return' papers immediately after my arrest. However, the miserable detention conditions were one of the reasons I ultimately agreed to sign. The water we used for basic needs, including bathing, was highly polluted and emitted a foul odor. I began to develop pimples and skin infections, and many of the other young men suffered from similar issues. We repeatedly requested medical care and transfers to a hospital, but our pleas were denied, with officials stating, 'You can obtain health care in Syria.' This left us with no choice but to sign. After my deportation, I visited a doctor in the city of Afrin, who diagnosed my condition as skin and blood poisoning".

Majed's illness was primarily caused by malnutrition and a lack of water. According to his testimony, he was allowed only two glasses of water per day, each measuring 200 ml, along with two small cans of beans and half a loaf of bread.



Images 9 - 10 - 11 Signs of violence on the body of the young man, Nidal A., after he was beaten by the Turkish authorities. Credit: STJ.

5.3. They Assaulted my Son in Front of Me

What happened to Nidal was repeated with others; Zahra', a fifty-year-old woman, witnessed her son being beaten. Zahra' explained,²⁰

"After the Kayseri incidents, specifically on 2 July 2013, my son and I were caught off guard by a large checkpoint manned by Turkish police and employees from the Turkish Immigration Department on Kamal Khan Street in the city of Antakya. Alongside them were several men, women, and children, all tied up – except for the children – and were being lined up against the walls. When we approached, they demanded our documents in a humiliating manner. After we showed them, one of the officers sneered, 'Syrians, Syrians.' I replied, 'Yes, we are Syrians, and we have been living here for years. Why this excitement'?"

Due to Zahra's reaction, the officer turned aggressive towards her son, restraining him by putting his hands behind his back and handcuffing him with large plastic belts. Zahra' screamed in protest, pointing out that their papers were in order. The officers disregarded her pleas, prompting her to stand next to the wall with her son. Shortly after, a large bus arrived to transport them to the [Vilayet](#) police station in the city of Antakya. Zahra' said,

"I immediately objected and began to assure them that we were not at fault, so a police officer became angry and started insulting me in a harsh and humiliating tone. This behavior angered my son, so he attacked him and hit him on the head because he was handcuffed. The officer fell, and then five police officers present at the police station attacked my son and began to beat him with batons in front of me until blood flowed from his head as a result of the harsh beating. They also hit him with the butt of a rifle, which caused a bruise on his foot. Here I was begging them to stop but to no avail".

During Zahra's and her son's detention, she attempted to communicate with him through a small opening in the door. She spoke in a hushed voice, trying to keep their conversation discreet since he was held in a solitary room right across from hers. She encouraged him not to give in to the pressure from the police officers and the translator, who was saying, "Anyone who wants to leave here can do so now, but only if they film a video stating, 'I want to go to Syria; thank you Türkiye.' After that, we will take them to the border crossing with Syria. Those who refuse will remain here for many months."

Zahra' confirmed,

"These tactics were repeatedly used to exert pressure on us".

The immense psychological pressure Zahra' faced ultimately drove her to make a heartbreaking decision. On 28 July 2024, she chose to return to Syria after experiencing the trauma of being detained with 17 women and six children in a single room. She acquiesced to what they coerced her into and filmed the return video with only a whiteboard and the Turkish flag prominently displayed behind her. According to her testimony, they were later filmed again in a large square near the Bab al-Hawa border crossing into Syria.

²⁰ Online interview on 15 September 2024.

According to Article 4 of the [Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458](#), titled "Non-refoulement," and Article 55, titled "Exemption from removal decision," no foreigner may be deported to a country where they would face torture, a death sentence, or inhumane or degrading treatment²¹.

5.4. Threats of Detention in the Meat Cold Room

Rajab's story is similar to many others, but he was the only witness to his mistreatment at the hands of three police officers after his arrest. Rajab explained,²²

"The reason for my arrest was a video that my wife shared on her TikTok account. The video showed children singing the Turkish national anthem, accompanied by the Arabic text: 'The hardest feeling is to stay in a country where you are not welcomed.' Since my wife cannot read or write Arabic, she inadvertently shared the video without understanding its implications."

Rajab reported that he was denied communication with the lawyer assigned to him by his manager while his detention at the police station was extended. He added,

"After I detailed my situation to the officers and the police station manager in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul on 14 September 2023, they brought my wife in, and the officers took me to another room. They asked me to sign some papers in Turkish. When I refused, as I did not understand what was written, one officer tried to force me to sign with a pen. I resisted and put it on the papers, refusing to comply with his demands. At that point, he began beating me until I fell to the ground. Three other officers joined in, verbally insulting me and cursing Syrians, telling me, 'Go back to your country; we do not want you here.' When I cursed Bashar al-Assad, they became even more enraged and closed the door."

The Turkish police transferred Rajab from the police station to the Tuzla detention center in Istanbul, where he stayed for a few days. He was then moved to the Haran camp in Şanlıurfa, with plans to transfer him to the detention center there. At the Haran camp, Rajab reported experiencing a series of threats, stating,

"We were told, 'Do not cause trouble, so we do not kill or beat anyone. Stay calm and do not even think about escaping.' This statement was terrifying in every sense. After we were transferred to the detention center in Şanlıurfa, I overheard officers threatening to confine anyone causing trouble in a meat cold room for up to three hours. I was extremely shocked; it was as if we were not considered human beings."

²¹ Articles (4) and (55) of the the Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458, Turkish Government 11 April 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2016/en/114283> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

²² Online interview on 11 September 2024.

Rajab learned about the punishment of being placed in the meat cold room after a young man, who was detained with him in the same caravan, attempted suicide. He explained the incident to STJ based on what occurred, saying,

"There was a young man with me whose name I do not know. He had been detained for seven months at the Şanlıurfa detention center. Before he attempted suicide, he was screaming, 'Get me out of here! I do not want to sign the voluntary return form'" He attempted suicide by tying a sheet to a net in the room and hanging himself from it. Fortunately, we noticed and saved him; his face had turned blue, and he was on his last breath. After some time, security forces arrived and took him. When he returned, he recounted that they threatened to lock him in the meat cold room if he caused any further disturbances or riots. I was shocked to learn that the security forces use this room as a means of intimidation and punishment for detainees and that some individuals have died while being punished there."

According to the source, Rajab, the EU logo was printed on the cabinets, mattresses, and sleeping covers in the detention center in Şanlıurfa, along with a statement that reads, "This project is funded by the EU."

5.5. Firing shots to disperse detainees

In addition to the use of physical violence by Turkish authorities against detainees, STJ has documented cases where detainees were shot during riots that broke out in response to ill-treatment. One such incident involved Abdul Rahman, who was arrested by Turkish police at his workplace following a racist attack by Turks on shops owned by Syrian refugees on Iran Bazaar Street in Gaziantep on 18 June 2024.

Abdul Rahman confirmed that the arrest campaign that followed the attack targeted all individuals with Syrian citizenship, despite the fact that they were the ones being attacked, not the aggressors. He was detained even though he had no involvement in the incident. Abdul Rahman recounted his experience,²³

"They took me to the [Şahinbey](#) police station, where I remained for a day. Then, I was transferred, along with 90 other young men, to the Oğuzeli detention center in Gaziantep. After enduring poor conditions for several days, we asked the guards near the administration's caravans to speak with someone in charge about obtaining clean water. One of the guards started to curse and insult us, saying, 'You are not human beings, and we do not want you in our country. We must get rid of you.' When one of the young men from Deir ez-Zor responded by cursing back and insulting Türkiye and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the guards became furious".

After the young man from Deir ez-Zor insulted Türkiye and the Turkish president, the situation escalated, resulting in gunfire to disperse the crowd of young men. This information was shared by Abdul Rahman, who stated that the military personnel violently beat the young man with batons and rifle butts. One of them even kicked him in the mouth, causing several of his teeth to break. Subsequently, the military police took him to an unknown location outside the camp. Abdul Rahman added,

²³ Online interview on 9 September 2024.

"An hour later, an officer ordered everyone to gather in the center's square. A translator accompanied by armed personnel arrived and proceeded to insult and threaten us. Their message was that anyone who incites a riot or rebellion or fails to comply with the regulations and laws will face severe punishment."

5.6. Filming under threat and coercion

In his testimony, the source Alaa described being beaten twice during his deportation, stating,

"On 2 July 2024, the police detained me, my wife, and all the Syrians and Egyptians living in our building after my Syrian neighbor shot a racist who had broken into his house in Istanbul. Then, Turkish police cars and riot police arrived after a few hours, detained the man, and beat him in front of us. When they asked for our documents, I showed them mine, and they began insulting and beating me in front of my wife. They forced us onto buses despite our not intervening in the incident. We were prevented from retrieving my child's medicine and our personal belongings, and they threatened to beat us with batons".

He added,

"They transferred us to a camp near the Turkish Immigration Department in [Sultanbeyli](#), along with my wife and our child, who is sick with a heart condition. It was shocking when they forced us to provide electronic fingerprints and write in Arabic at the end of a specific form the phrase 'I want to go to Syria' along with our thumbprints. A translator then arrived with several police officers to our hall, which held 50 Syrian families, and filmed us as we were coerced into answering 'yes' to the question, 'Do you want to go to Syria'?"

Alaa stated that the camp housed approximately 700 elderly individuals, women, children, and young adults. During an investigation, he informed the authorities that they had no connection to the incident and shared concerns about his child's health condition,

"After we were transferred to Oğuzeli in the city of Gaziantep, we were placed in a hall that could accommodate about ten families. The camp included around 700 elderly people, women, children, and young adults. A few days later, when we were called for questioning, we answered all the inquiries and explained our innocence, along with our child's health condition. However, the authorities dismissed everything we said with cold indifference. One of the officers insisted that we sign the 'voluntary return' papers. When we refused, a member of the security forces severely beat me with a club and an iron wristband, forcing my wife and me to sign with our fingerprints against our will".

Alaa faced further violence when he objected to the decision to deport him through the Tell Abyad crossing,

"When I learned about the decision, I confronted the security personnel, expressing my unwillingness to go to Syria through the Tell Abyad crossing. Several security guards then rushed at me and beat me severely, resulting in bleeding from my nose and mouth. Two other young Syrian men tried to support me by confronting the guards, but the guards retaliated by shooting at their feet, injuring one of the detained young men."

Türkiye's forced return of Syrian refugees, presented as a "voluntary return," violates the principle of "non-refoulement." This principle is customarily applicable to Türkiye, despite its geographical reservation when signing [the 1951 Refugee Convention](#). It is also firmly established in international treaties that Türkiye has signed, including [the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CAT\)](#), [the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), and [the European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#).

Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention states, "No Contracting State shall expel or return (refouler) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion."

Alaa left on 7 August 2024 through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, worried about the uncertain fate of his sick son in northern Syria.

5.7. Escape attempt resulted in torture by ten people

It is very common in Türkiye to see Turkish police officers in civilian clothes stopping anyone they suspect of being of Syrian nationality. This is what scares Syrian refugees in Türkiye, especially in Istanbul,²⁴ due to the ongoing security campaigns to arrest "illegal" immigrants, according to [official statements](#). This is what happened with Shadi, who was stopped by officers in civilian clothes in July 2023 because he forgot his identification papers, the "Kimlik" (temporary protection card), at home. The officers took his cell phone from his hand and transferred him to the [Arnavutköy](#) police station in Istanbul to complete his deportation procedures. Shadi narrated,²⁵

"I was held for three days in a detention center in Arnavutköy, located next to the police station. Afterward, I was transferred to another facility in Istanbul called Tuzla. There, I was placed on a basketball court with an iron roof, enclosed by barbed wire, measuring 50 by 20 meters. At that time, over 350 people were in the court. Among them were ten young Syrians who had been detained for four months and had hired lawyers, but their efforts were in vain. An employee repeatedly told them, 'If you want to escape, fingerprint here and go to Syria,' implying they would be deported with me. Before we were deported, I witnessed a young Syrian man attempt to flee and get brutally beaten."

Shadi elaborated on the young man's failed escape attempt,

"The soldiers apprehended the young man as soon as he ran. More than ten people joined in the assault, beating him with batons, punching him in the face, kicking him, and stomping on him with their military boots until he fainted. After that, they began to torture him by lifting him by his long hair until he fell to the ground, motionless. They repeated this several times before closing the caravan door on us, leaving us to try to wake him up. However, we were unsuccessful for two hours until they returned and took him away in handcuffs the next day, without us being able to see him again."

²⁴ "Bad detention conditions inside Turkish deportation camps", Enab Baladi, 18 October 2023, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2023/10/bad-detention-conditions-inside-turkish-deportation-camps/> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

²⁵ Online interview on 11 September 2024.

On 31 October 2024, a [video](#) went viral showing women detained at the [Çatalca](#) detention center protesting by banging on the window bars. They were demonstrating against the violence they had endured and the poor conditions within the center. Additionally, lawyers trying to meet with their clients were being denied entry into the facility²⁶.

Following the spread of a video on social media and the support expressed by many Turkish activists regarding the incident,²⁷ the Turkish authorities have been urged to clarify the situation. In response, the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management issued a statement asserting that the allegations of mistreatment of foreigners detained in deportation centers are inaccurate.²⁸ They emphasized that all procedures involving each foreigner in administrative detention adhere to the [Law on Foreigners and International Protection](#) No. 6458/2013.

The statement clarified that every foreigner in return or deportation centers is allowed to contact their relatives and legal representative, in accordance with Article 59 of the cited law which states, "Services Provided in Removal Centers: Every foreigner administratively detained in return or deportation centers shall be allowed access to and given the opportunity to meet with their relatives, a notary public, their legal representative, and a lawyer, as well as access to telephone services."

Concerning the allegations of mistreatment, the Presidency stated that the deportation centers are regularly inspected and monitored by cameras around the clock, seven days a week.

6. Insult and Abuse

The Turkish authorities deliberately insult and demean detainees in their custody to coerce compliance with police orders. This often occurs without justification, sometimes in response to a detainee's refusal to follow officers' directives, and at other times based on the officers' mood. Jassim recounted to STJ that he was beaten after refusing to sign a document and shared the following story,²⁹

"I was detained in front of my house in Istanbul because I had forgotten my Kimlik (identity card) at home. When I requested permission to go get it, they refused. Insults and beatings began as they tried to force me onto the bus designated for what they considered 'violators.' We were then taken to the Turkish Immigration Department in Arnavutkoy, Istanbul. The police officers treated the beatings and insults as if they were a form of entertainment. During this time, I was beaten twice in various ways, including being kicked with their military boots, which they were wearing unnecessarily. The treatment I received was extremely harsh, showing no regard for anyone's dignity. The insults varied from one officer to another, all expressing their disdain for Syrians residing in Türkiye."

²⁶ Video from outside the Çatalca detention center showing female detainees protesting, Göçmenlerle Kardeşiz (in Turkish), 31 October 2024, <https://x.com/gocmenlerle/status/1852018586929230023> (last accessed: 17 November 2024).

²⁷ Solidarity post from the Göçmenlerle Kardeşiz Association, 1 November 2024, <https://x.com/gocmenlerle/status/1852358367416664272> (last accessed: 17 November 2024).

²⁸ Statement of the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management (in Turkish), 2 November 2024, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/istanbul-catalca-geri-gonderme-merkezi-ile-ilgili-gercek-disi-iddialar-hakkinda-basin-aciklamasi> (last visited 17 November 2024).

²⁹ Online interview on 18 August 2024.

Jassim was forced to sign the “voluntary return” papers and was deported on 11 June just 18 hours after being detained. He left behind his paralyzed wife. Jassim was not alone in his suffering; other detainees also experienced abuse at the hands of Turkish police officers. While he was signing the documents, he witnessed another Syrian man being beaten all over his body simply for refusing to comply. The situation for children was equally grim, as three boys under the age of 16 were beaten for attempting to answer an officer, resulting in one of them suffering swelling and bleeding from the injuries.

6.1. Psychological distress

Torture and physical abuse were not the only methods used in Turkish detention centers. Detainees also faced psychological pressure and constant threats, which constituted forms of ill-treatment inflicted by Turkish authorities. Often, these factors pressured detainees to sign “voluntary return” papers as they sought to escape quickly rather than endure prolonged periods—sometimes lasting months or even years—in the detention centers³⁰.

Fatih, a 31-year-old Syrian man, described in his testimony how psychological pressure significantly influenced his decision to sign, even though he had a stable life and legal documents in Türkiye. Fatih explained,³¹

“On 11 May 2024, while heading to pray at the [Bayezid](#) Mosque in Istanbul after finishing work, I was stopped by civilians with weapons concealed under their clothing. They asked to see my Kimlik. When I reached for it, I realized I had left it at his office, so I requested to go back and get it. Rather than permitting this, one of the officers ignored my request, threw me to the ground, and began cursing at me. They put plastic handcuffs on me and took me to another officer, stating, ‘He is Syrian and does not have personal identification’. Then I was then taken along with 20 other young men and transported in a bus with six additional young men to the [Bayezid](#) police station, where we saw over 80 people in the police station courtyard.”

Fatih added,

“A day later, officers asked everyone to gather in the police station yard and then I was transferred to the Turkish Immigration Department in [Bayezid](#). They began taking each person into a room individually, where three people were present: a translator, an employee operating the fingerprint machine, and an employee working at the computer. The translator made me fingerprint all my fingers on the machine and then forced me to sign my full name on a piece of paper that had the words “I want to go to Syria” written in large letters. He threatened me with legal consequences if I did not comply with their demands. After that, he made me look into the computer camera to film me in that position.”

Fatih felt he had no choice but to comply, especially after being publicly threatened by the translator and staff to sign the documents. The psychological pressure on him began at the

³⁰ “Turkey Continues to Forcibly Return Refugees, Ignoring International Warnings that Syria is Still Unsafe”, STJ, 14 February 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkey-continues-to-forcibly-return-refugees-ignoring-international-warnings-that-syria-is-still-unsafe/> (last accessed: 16 November 2024).

³¹ Online interview on 17 September 2024.

Tuzla detention center in Istanbul, specifically on 7 June 2024, when all detainees were warned of long-term detention if they did not meet the terms and signed the 'voluntary return.' Fatih recounted,

"A young man named Amir al-Baniasi objected to the translator and the guards' remarks and started cursing at them. In response, the translator discreetly relayed his words in Turkish to the guards, who then proceeded to beat him with batons, wooden sticks, and rifle butts right in front of us. They dragged him toward the main guard room near the center's entrance. We could hear Amir's screams throughout the night as they tortured him for hours on end. This instilled fear in many of the detainees, including myself, prompting me to decide to sign the papers and return to Syria on 8 June 2024."

7. Information about Some Detention Centers

The Turkish authorities detain individuals arrested for deportation in detention centers that frequently exceed their capacity, forcing them into small rooms. According to several testimonies gathered by STJ, Turkish authorities crammed more than 15 people into a room with only three beds, each consisting of two levels designed to accommodate just six individuals.

Many of these centers contain floors or caravans that are separated based on the charges against the detainees. For example, there is a specific floor for individuals accused of terrorism-related offenses. These centers also have translators, some of whom are detainees themselves, specifically of Syrian, Iranian, or Iraqi nationality. To qualify as a translator, one must be able to read and write in both Arabic and Turkish.

During the investigation, STJ gathered information from three sources, some of whom had been detained for over four months, regarding the most well-known deportation centers in Türkiye, their internal divisions, the distribution of detainees, and insights into their management.

7.1. Oğuzeli: the worst Turkish detention center, spanning ten floors

If you are detained and manage to become a translator at the detention center, you are considered lucky, even if just a little, because being transferred to the translators' room is somewhat better than the other rooms. With these words, a 25-year-old Syrian man named Zaki began his testimony to STJ. He stated,³²

"I was detained due to a disagreement with my friend. I have been detained several times, the most recent being in August 2023. I was taken to Oğuzeli, where I came across an acquaintance from Istanbul who worked as a translator between the detainees and the chef, along with his assistant. I requested his help in securing a position as a translator without any cost. Thanks to his support, I was moved to the translators' room and joined the translation staff at the center".

³² Online interview on 15 September 2024.

Zaki provided details about the requirements for joining the translators' team, the distribution of floors, and more information about the center,

"The Oğuzeli center consists of 10 floors, numbered 0, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, and 68. Each floor contains 14 rooms with either 4 or 6 single beds, although the number of detainees often exceeds 15 per room. Each floor also includes a bathroom and a toilet, but does not offer any bathing supplies, such as soap or shampoo; these must be purchased from the center itself. Each floor is staffed by three translators responsible for different tasks: one group handles phone inquiries and medical assistance, while another distributes tea and helps answer questions. Translators are required to be proficient in reading and writing in both Arabic and Turkish. The translators come from various nationalities, including Iraqis, Iranians, and Syrians."

Regarding the number of detainees during Zaki's detention, he stated the following:

"We conducted headcounts twice daily, at 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Each floor accommodated 250 detainees, and the center had a total capacity of 2,500 individuals. This included infants detained with their mothers on the same floor, while fathers stayed on the men's floor. Each detainee was permitted to make one 10-minute call per day from a public phone within the center. Approximately 25 people arrived each day; about half were released for various reasons, while the others remained detained for 10 to 11 months. Those who refused to sign the 'voluntary return' papers, even under physical pressure, were transferred to another center or deported if they complied. In any case, they should not be held in the same center for more than a year."

Zaki's detention period ended, and he was deported on 1 January 2024. This occurred after the center's chief gathered the Syrian translators in the basement at 2:00 a.m. and asked them to sign the "voluntary return" papers. At that moment, Zaki noticed one of his friend's faces, nearly unrecognizable due to the severity of his bruises and blood. Zaki recounted,

"When one of us refused to sign, six officers took him into a room in front of us, a place not monitored by cameras, and beat him severely. They also assaulted another person who was next to me, hitting him on the jaw, which resulted in broken teeth from being kicked in the face with military boots. This violence compelled us to agree to sign and led to our deportation from the Jarabulus crossing. I ended up paying 3,700 US dollars (USD) to return to Türkiye, and I am trying to recover my Kimlik."

According to 19 testimonies gathered by STJ, the Turkish authorities failed to explain the reasons for the deportations or the violations they allegedly committed. Most of the individuals possessed legal identification documents that allowed them to remain in Türkiye. Furthermore, the authorities did not provide any information about the duration of their detention in the centers, intentionally holding them for months without any awareness of their fate.

7.2. Şanlıurfa Detention Center; four shifts every 24 hours

Halim was held at a detention center in Şanlıurfa for four months. During this time, he memorized the facility's layout, including the buildings and floors. He also learned the names of the chefs (the main officers in the detention centers). Additionally, Halim observed each chef's demeanor and bedside manner with the detainees. He detailed,

"The shifts at the Şanlıurfa detention center changed every 24 hours, with a chef and a permanent assistant overseeing operations. The first chef to work the initial shift was named Shawqi, who deported approximately 50 detainees each time. The second chef, Hassan, took over for the following shift and deported the same number of detainees. Their treatment of the detainees was somewhat acceptable. In the third shift, the chef was named Haqqi. Although he pretended to care for the Syrians, it was clear that he was genuinely unkind and harbored animosity towards us. His main objective during his shift was to deport as many detainees as possible, and instances of torture occurred during his shift."

The fourth chef's shift is particularly terrifying for the detainees. Halim confirmed,

"The chef on the fourth shift is named Issa. When his shift day arrives, everyone becomes anxious about the possibility of deportation. Every minute carries the risk of torture and forced deportation, as 90% of the Syrians held at the Şanlıurfa Center were deported during Issa's shift."

Regarding the layout of the building, Halim explained,

"The Center comprises eight buildings or blocks and a large courtyard. One block is dedicated to women and children, another to individuals accused of terrorism, and six blocks are for ordinary detainees. Each building has 14 rooms, which include two toilets and a bathroom. The smallest rooms accommodate six people, while the largest can hold up to 12. There is a gym, a mosque, and a large-screen room; however, the large-screen room is primarily used for sleeping due to the high number of detainees. About 30 people stay in the gym, 20 in the mosque, and another 20 in the large-screen room. Overall, it is estimated that there are approximately 2,000 people in the detention center, including women, children, men, and the elderly."

7.3. Tuzla Detention Center; halls that can accommodate hundreds of detainees

The [Tuzla](#) detention center in Istanbul features large halls and several single rooms. Each hall can hold up to 100 people; however, there are not enough mattresses and blankets for all the detainees. Fatih shared details about the center saying,

"I stayed in Tuzla for about a month and became familiar with the layout of the center, both inside and out. It consists of six very large halls, each capable of housing around 100 detainees. Some of the halls have iron beds and their accompanying accessories,

while others only feature mattresses, blankets, and pillows. Each hall is equipped with two toilets, and there are 14 small single rooms, each containing only a toilet."

The center includes a spacious hall designated for meals, offering detainees three meals a day. Concerning the design of the center outside the sleeping halls, Fateh explained,

"Detainees in each hall eat separately in the designated dining area. When one group finishes, the next group takes its turn. There are six bathrooms available, and each detainee is allowed to use a bathroom once a week. Additionally, detainees can spend half an hour outdoors each day to breathe fresh air in a designated large space. The center also includes a small emergency clinic and guard rooms situated throughout the facility. It is completely surrounded by walls, barbed wire, and surveillance cameras, making escape nearly impossible due to strict inspection processes."

Fateh was held in a large hall with around 70 other individuals. However, the sleeping arrangements were only sufficient for fewer people and were not appropriate for use.

Official Turkish detention centers listed on the [Turkish Presidency of Migration Management](#) website

City	Center Name	Phone Number	Address	Location on Maps
ADANA	Adana	03223463561	Dağcı Mahallesi, 5909 Cadde, 110. Sokak No: 41 Sarıçam /Adana	110. Sk. No:41 D:5909
AĞRI	Aşkale	04722153325	Aşkale Köyü, No:238 Merkez/Ağrı	İstasyon, 25500 Aşkale/Erzurum
ANKARA	Ankara	03124394040	Yeşiltepe Mahallesi Çankırı Bulvarı No:395 Akyurt/Ankara	Yeşiltepe, 06750 Akyurt/Ankara
ANTALYA	Antalya	02422379580	Altınkale Mah. Nazım Hikmet cad. No:90 Döşemealtı/Antalya	Altınkale, 4468. Sk., 07190 Döşemealtı/Antalya
AYDIN	Aydın	02562116373	Çeştepe Mahallesi, Çeştepe Ovası Sokağı No:49 Efeler/Aydın	Çeştepe, KÜME EVLERİ NO:22, 09010 Efeler/Aydın

BALIKESİR	Balıkesir	02667271818	Edincik Mahallesi, Yortan Deresi Caddesi, No:68 (Çanakkale Yolu 12. km) Bandırma/Balıkesir	Edincik, 8VF3+HQ, 10250 Bandırma/Balıkesir
BURSA	Bursa	02243610507	Veysel Karani Mahallesi Sevgi Caddesi No:2/1 Osmangazi/BURSA (Eski Sevgi Köyü)	Veysel Karani, Sevgi Caddesi No:2, 16270 Osmangazi/Bursa
ÇANAKKALE	Ayvacak	02867123400	Hamdibey mah. İnönü caddesi Malazgirt sokak No:1 Ayvacık/ÇANAKKALE	Ayvacak Geri Gönderme Merkezi
ÇANKIRI	Çankırı	03762130549	Abdülhalik renda mahallesi, Ankara caddesi No:363 Merkez/ÇANKIRI (Süleymanlı köyü mevki)	Çankırı Geri Gönderme Merkezi
EDİRNE	Edirne	02842241012	Yeni İmarat Mah.2.Beyazıt Caddesi Sarayıçı/EDİRNE	Yeni İmarat Mah 2. Beyazıt Cad, Sarayakpınar Yolu Üzeri No:73/A, 22100 Edirne Merkez/Edirne
ERZURUM 1	Erzurum 1	04424152550	İstasyon Mahallesi, Tugay Caddesi No:136/1 Aşkale/ERZURUM	İstasyon, 25500 Aşkale/Erzurum
ERZURUM 2	Erzurum 2	04422154702	İstasyon Mahallesi, Tugay Caddesi No:136/2 Aşkale/ERZURUM	İstasyon, 25500 Aşkale/Erzurum
GAZİANTEP	Oğuzeli	03425713800	Güllük Mahallesi, Direkli Yolu, Fıme Evleri No:11 Oğuzeli /Gaziantep	Oğuzeli Geri Gönderme Merkezi
İĞDIR GEÇİCİ	İğdır geçici	04762277040	Aşağı Erhacı Köyü, No:728 Merkez/İĞDIR	İğdır Geçici Geri Gönderme Merkezi

İSTANBUL	Binkılıç	02124994000	Eski Kırklareli Yolu, Menekşe Sokak, Binkılıç Çatalca/ İSTANBUL	İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü Çatalca Geri Gönderme Merkezi
İSTANBUL	Silviri/Seli mpaşa	02124994000	Selimpaşa Merkez Mahallesi 2124 Sokak No:10 Silivri/İstanbul	Selimpaşa Merkez Geri Gönderme Merkezi
İSTANBUL	Tuzla	02124994000	Akfırat Mah. Süleymaniye Bulvarı 140.Cadde No:65 Tuzla/İSTANBUL	İstanbul Göçmen İdaresi Tuzla Geri Gönderme Merkezi
İZMİR	Harmandal ı	02324024462	Cumhuriyet Mahallesi, Harmandalı Mevkii, 9685. Sokak No:2 Çiğli/İZMİR	Göç İdaresi Harmandalı Geri Gönderme merkezi
KAYSERİ	Kayseri	03522200157	Sivas Yolu 25. km, Gömeç Mevkii, Kocasinan/ KAYSERİ	Bakarcak, Kayseri Sivas Yolu No:30, 38095 Sarıoğlan/Kayseri
KIRKLARE Lİ	Pehlivankö y	02882120072	Kazımdirik Mahallesi, Edirne Caddesi No:51 Pehlivanköy/KIRKLAR ELİ	Pehlivanköy Geri Gönderme Merkezi
KOCAELİ	Gündoğdu	02623294180	Ayazma Mahallesi, 17 Ağustos Bulvarı, Gündoğdu Semti, No:126/1 İzmit/KOCAELİ	Kocaeli il göç daresi müdürlüğü gündoğdu geri gönderme merkezi
KÜTAHYA	Kütahya	02722251779	İnköy Mah., Göçeri Sok. No:6 Merkez/KÜTAHYA	İnköy, Göçeri Sk No:6, 43100 Kütahya Merkez/Kütahya
MALATYA 1	Malatay 1	04223223332	Fatih Mah, Türkmen Sokak, No:57/1 Yeşilyurt/MALATYA	Ankara asfaltı 16.km Fatih mahallesi Türkmen sokağı No 57 Yeşilyurt, Malatya
MALATYA 2	Malatay 2	04223223332	Fatih Mah., Türkmen Sokak No:57/1 Yeşilyurt/MALATYA	Ankara asfaltı 16.km Fatih mahallesi

				Türkmen sokağı No 57 Yeşilyurt, Malatya
MUĞLA	Ula	02522421313	Alpaslan Mahallesi Gökalp Gündüz Caddesi No:78 Ula/MUĞLA	Ula İl Göç idaresi Geri Gönderme Merkezi
NİĞDE	Niğde	03882131064	Sıra Söğütler Mah. Pınarbaşı Caddesi, 43.Sokak No:45 Bor/NİĞDE	T.C. Niğde Valiliği İl Göç İdaresi Müdürlüğü Geri Gönderme Merkezi
ŞANLIURFA	Şanlıurfa	04143138658	Büyükhan Mahallesi, 156 Ada, 1 parsel (Eski havaalanı arsası) Eyyübiye/ŞANLIURFA	Şanlıurfa Geri Gönderme Merkezi
VAN	Kurubaş	04322233335	Kurubaş Mah. Hakkari Yolu Üzeri 7. km Tekstil Kent Yanı Edremit/ VAN	Van Göç İdaresi Geri Gönderme Merkezi

Testimonies gathered by STJ indicate that there are additional Turkish detention camps and sites not listed on the official website of the Turkish Presidency of Migration Management. One such site is:

Arnavutköy Geri Gönderme Merkezi	Hadımköy, Enco Tesisleri İç, Elvan Sk. No:9/2, 34555 Arnavutköy/İstanb ul		Arnavutköy	İSTANBUL
---	---	--	------------	----------

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.