



Searching for Bread, Returning Dead: The Story of Mohammad Saer Ghelyouni



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In the agricultural village of al-Mukhtareyah, Mohammad Saer Ghelyouni was experiencing the most wonderful year of his life. Having recently graduated from the Institute of Engineering, he chose the path many young men in his village take: returning home to work the land with his father, pruning their lemon groves.

His journey was marked by hardship; he endured the challenges of his studies and labored under the physical demands of the farm. He remained engaged for two years, saving what he could to build a home of his own. Although he shared a warm family house, he held onto the dream of eventually creating a space for his own life.

In March 2024, he finally got married, and his new life started. By the time March 2025 arrived, exactly one year had passed since his wedding. In the same month he first moved into his new home... he left this world.

On 7 March 2025, the village of al-Mukhtareyah was besieged. Several armed groups stormed the family house, searching every corner and taking their money and belongings, all while the family was fasting for Ramadan. The next day, a sense of calm seemed to return as public security forces arrived in the area. There appeared to be no more immediate danger, and for a brief moment, the family thought that the threat had finally passed.

Mohammad decided to go with his uncle, his father's brother, Mohammad Rajab Ghelyouni, to a nearby village to buy some bread and food. It was a simple moment, with nothing to hint at the tragedy that lay ahead. Before leaving, he turned to his mother, Hiyam, and said, "Mother, I am hungry... I want to eat." "There is no bread," she replied. He then looked at his wife and said, "Give me some money so I can go and bring us some bread."

He Left with his Uncle... and Never Came Back

Only an hour later, the news arrived. They had been shot on the road, suffering fatal injuries. It was Saturday, 8 March 2025, at 2:00 p.m. Mohammad Saer Ghelyouni was 27 years old; his uncle, Mohammad Rajab Ghelyouni, was 55. The family could not lay them to rest until 6:00 that evening.

When Mohammad passed away, his wife was pregnant. Three months later, she gave birth to a baby boy. The family named him Ali, just as his father wished. Ali was born to carry the legacy of a father he would never meet.

His mother, Hiyam, describes him as a man of extraordinary kindness, saying that every beautiful quality his father possessed had flourished within him. Although she has a daughter and an older son, Mohammad held a special place in her heart. He was always calling her, always asking,

"Mother, do you need anything? Shall I bring you something on my way back?"

Whenever he had a little extra money and a free moment, he would say to her,

“Hop on the back of the motorcycle... let me take you for a ride.”

She recalls a day when she was completely exhausted, and they went to the hospital together. When she found herself unable to walk down the stairs, he gathered her in his arms and carried her. He was the one who took her to doctors and fetched her medicine; he never let her face her illness alone.

His mother said, “His passing scorched my heart and left a wound within me that will never heal. With his burial... I buried everything beautiful in this life along with him.”

[This story is based on the testimony of Mrs. Hiyam Younes, mother of Mohammad Saer Ghalyouni.]

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.