

“Cheating and Assaults”: Troubling Testimonies on Threats to Public Examination Integrity in Syria – 2026 Session



STJ Recommends Independent Investigations, Accountability For Those Responsible, Protection For Victims And Witnesses Against Retaliation, A Ban On Discrimination And Armed Intervention At Examination Centers, And Transparent, Uniform Standards To Safeguard Educational Integrity





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1. Introduction and Background

The integrity of public examinations depends not only on keeping examination questions confidential and preventing cheating, but also on applying rules equally and protecting students and educational personnel. These matters are especially significant in the Syrian transitional context, where rebuilding state institutions intersects with the challenges of controlling arms, upholding equality, and restoring confidence in public institutions.

In this brief report, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documents three incidents that occurred in June 2026 at and around centers administering the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations in Jableh (Latakia), Tartous, and Homs. The incidents ranged from verbal and physical assaults on educational personnel to armed, forcible entry into examination centers.

A comparison of the testimonies reveals points of convergence across the three incidents. All three began after a case of cheating was detected or an attempt to prevent one was made. In the Jableh and Homs incidents, two examinees claimed affiliation with the Ministries of Defense and Interior, respectively. Armed individuals then intervened in each incident, either by forcibly entering the examination center or by pursuing and assaulting a member of the educational staff outside the center. These incidents were accompanied by sectarian rhetoric and threats, more explicitly in Jableh and Homs, targeting proctors from the Alawite community.

The report does not statistically measure the prevalence of such practices; instead, it analyzes serious qualitative incidents. Its documentary value stems from the convergence of testimonies collected through separate interviews at different locations across three governorates, describing a broadly similar sequence of events that began with an intervention to prevent cheating, proceeded to claims of security or military influence or the involvement of armed individuals, and culminated in threats or violence and a weak administrative response. This convergence, in and of itself, does not establish the existence of a general policy or determine the phenomenon’s nationwide scale. However, it moves these incidents beyond isolated altercations and frames them as an institutional risk that warrants investigation. Using security status or weapons to obstruct rule enforcement harms not only the immediate victims but also the safety of educational personnel, equal opportunity, and confidence in the integrity of public examinations.

The Ministry of Education [set](#) Saturday, 6 June 2026, as the date for the commencement of the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations in both branches, with the examinations scheduled to conclude on 25 June for the literary branch and on 28 June for the scientific branch. The three centers where the incidents occurred are supervised by the Ministry through the Directorates of Education in

Latakia, Tartous, and Homs, which are responsible for appointing center heads and proctors and for receiving reports of cheating and complaints regarding the conduct of the examinations.

These incidents should be viewed in the broader context of violations targeting Alawite civilians and marked by indications of sectarian motives. STJ has documented such [violations](#) in Tartous and the Safita countryside, as well as [patterns of exclusion and discrimination](#) within state institutions, including those in the education sector.

In parallel, the [Basic Education Certificate examinations](#) began on 4 June 2026. In addition to the three incidents concerning the General Secondary Education Certificate, the report presents an additional testimony regarding cheating, preferential treatment, and sectarian discrimination at a basic education examination center in Homs. This may indicate that such complaints were not confined to a single educational stage.

Beyond the documented assaults, the 2026 examination session also saw disparities in examination conditions due to the temporary continuation of multiple curricula and examination papers across governorates. Students in Idlib and in some areas that had previously followed different curricula were permitted to sit the examinations according to the curricula they had studied. This was particularly evident in the [different version of the mathematics examination](#) paper used in Idlib compared with the version administered in the other governorates. The report addresses this disparity in a separate section, distinguishing it from the incidents of assault, discrimination, and armed intervention.

For this report, STJ conducted six interviews in June 2026: three with members of educational staff who experienced the incidents firsthand inside the examination centers and were direct targets of the assaults; two with eyewitnesses who observed the Tartous incident from near the center; and one with the father of a student taking the Basic Education Certificate examination. In the latter case, the account of what occurred inside the examination room was based on what the student conveyed to his father, and the father was directly involved in attempts to file a complaint. The research team obtained informed consent from all participants after explaining the voluntary nature of their participation and the purposes for which the information would be collected and used, including publication. The report uses pseudonyms and withholds the names of schools, the ages of witnesses, and other details that could identify them, particularly in light of the documented threats of retaliation in the testimonies and the report.

2. From Detecting Cheating to Armed Violence: Testimonies from Examination Centers

2.1. Homs: Retaliatory Assault on an Examination Room Head After Detecting an Attempt to Cheat

STJ based its documentation of this incident on the testimony of the person who was assaulted, Nabil, a teacher assigned to head an examination room in the city of Homs. According to his account, he was assigned to the position after the Homs Directorate of Education rejected his request for an exemption from the task.

During the examination, Nabil confiscated a mobile phone he found in the possession of one of the examinees. The examinee responded:

“I am a security officer, and I should not have to give up my phone or turn it off, because Alawite pigs like you might attempt another coup like the one that took place in glorious March, and therefore I must be prepared”.

The examinee used the phrase “glorious March” to refer to the events that took place in the Syrian coastal region in March 2025. When Nabil assigned one of the female proctors to check whether the examinee had resumed cheating, the examinee threatened her, saying:

“This is the last time you come here without covering your head with a headscarf. Do you understand what I am saying”?

Later, a slip of paper was found in the examinee’s possession, and he was removed from the examination room. He then made a hand gesture toward Nabil that mimicked a throat-slitting motion. The assault continued outside the center. According to Nabil’s testimony, he left the center around 11:00 a.m., after which a black car with its license plate obscured by paint followed him and then blocked his path at a nearby intersection. The examinee himself got out of the vehicle, accompanied by two masked individuals who the witness said were wearing General Security uniforms. The three men then beat him, calling him a “remnant”.

Nabil said that a passerby attempted to free him from the assailants, but the assailants brandished a weapon at the passerby and told him:



“This is an Alawite pig, and we are disciplining him”.

According to his account, the passerby backed away after saying he had thought Nabil was Sunni. The assailants responded that they “do not kill Sunnis”.

Nabil reported that he was taken to the National Hospital in Homs, where he received treatment for bruises and superficial wounds. When he went to the Homs Directorate of Education to report what had happened, he said employees at the directorate responded mockingly and told him he deserved what had happened because he had failed to cooperate with those they described as the “Guardians of the Homeland.” He was subsequently informed that he had been relieved of his examination proctoring duties.

The witness concluded:

“The incident left a lasting impact and a wound within me that will never heal. I have never been an advocate of violence; I am a teacher with a mission to raise generations to uphold justice, love of country, and brotherhood. I never imagined that I would be subjected to such an assault or accused of being one of the ‘remnants’ of the former regime, while my family has been known for its opposition to the Assad regime since the time of Hafez al-Assad, and some of its members spent years in prison because of that”.

2.2. Jableh: Armed Raid to Destroy a Cheating Report and Obtain the Answers by Force

STJ conducted two separate interviews with members of the educational staff at an examination center in the city of Jableh: Salim, the center head, and Fadi, a teacher and head of the examination room where the incidents occurred. Their testimonies are consistent in both the overall sequence of events and the substance of key statements. Fadi said:

“There were frequent verbal altercations between examinees and male and female proctors. In the cases I witnessed, the altercations began with a verbal assault by a Sunni student against an Alawite male or female proctor, either through sectarian remarks or sexual innuendo when the proctor was a woman. Some of these altercations escalated into threats and intimidation involving arrest or killing, using phrases such as: ‘Watch out, so you do not slip on a banana



peel.’ This phrase is commonly used among supporters of the current authorities in Syria and implies the possibility that the person may be killed by unidentified individuals”.

He added:

“On the first day of the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations, some examinees affiliated with the Ministries of Defense and Interior objected to a female proctor supervising their examination room. They harassed her and filed a complaint with the center head, demanding that she be barred from proctoring them because, in their words, she was ‘unveiled’ (not wearing a headscarf), and that she be replaced by a veiled female proctor or a male proctor”.

The incident began when Fadi caught an examinee using a slip of paper to cheat. When he asked the examinee to hand it over, the examinee refused and hurled insults at him. Salim was informed of the incident, so he went to the examination room and asked the examinee whether the slip was related to the examination subject. According to both witnesses, the examinee replied:

“I am an officer with the Ministry of Defense, and this paper is related to the subject. I will pass the examination and obtain the certificate regardless of every Nusayri pig’s wishes.”

Following this, his answer sheet was confiscated, and a cheating report was prepared against him and signed by the center head, the examination room head, and the male and female proctors. He was then removed from the examination room while threatening the staff members with arrest and killing.

According to the two witnesses’ estimates, about fifteen minutes later the examinee returned, accompanied by about ten armed men in mottled military uniforms who stormed the center. One of them slapped the center head and knocked him to the ground, while another grabbed him by the neck and threatened to strangle him without fear of accountability. The armed men then dragged him to the examination room. There, according to the two consistent accounts, the armed men tore up the cheating report and stuffed it into the center head’s mouth, saying:

The armed men then returned the answer sheet to the examinee and made telephone calls to obtain answers to the examination questions. They subsequently brought in a foreign-language teacher from inside the center and forced him to write the answers on the blackboard. The examinees in the room copied them until the allotted time expired, amid sectarian insults directed at the male and female proctors. Before leaving, the armed men threatened to kill or arrest members of the educational staff if they objected to the examinee again. Salim added that the threats also extended to anyone who filed a complaint or disclosed the examinee's identity.

Immediately after the armed men left, Salim contacted the Latakia Directorate of Education to inquire how the cheating report and answer sheet should be handled. According to his testimony, he was told to “forget about the matter” and to process the documents in accordance with the usual procedures. At the same time, he was told that an investigation would be opened into the incident, but he was not subsequently informed of its outcome. When he requested to be relieved of his duties as center head, the directorate rejected his request.

2.3. Tartous: Summoning Armed Men and Sealing Off the Area Around an Examination Center After a Cheating Report Was Filed

STJ documented events around an examination center in Tartous through two separate interviews with eyewitnesses: Mazen, the owner of a workplace adjacent to the center, and Rana, a resident who observed the scene from her building. Their testimonies align on the security deployment, the road closure, and the measures taken in the vicinity of the center.

Mazen said that an examinee left the center angrily after being caught using his phone to relay answers, and that a cheating report was filed against him. He said he heard the examinee make a call and ask the person on the other end to bring “the guys” immediately, saying:

“Bring the guys and come to me immediately; I am in trouble. These Nusayris [vulgar insult omitted] have filed a cheating report against me and removed me from the examination after the proctor caught me relaying answers from my phone. Come immediately; I want to turn the whole place upside down.”

Two independent witnesses reported the phrase in two nearly identical forms (“You can dip the report in water¹ and drink water” / “Dip it in water and drink the water”). This verbal variation is consistent with each witness independently recalling the incident. The expression derides or dismisses a document or procedure and, in this context, means the cheating report has no value and will have no consequences.

Within minutes, two pickup trucks carrying armed men arrived and stormed the center. Subsequently, vehicles that the two witnesses said belonged to multiple security and military bodies began arriving at the scene, including General Security, the Military Police, the Civil Police, and the Traffic Police.

According to the two witnesses, the street was closed in both directions and cleared of traffic. Mazen said that two individuals on a motorcycle ordered him to leave his workplace, adding:

“The cars were stopped across the street, blocking both the inbound and outbound lanes and preventing cars and buses from passing. The personnel also moved the relatives of students sitting for the examination away from the vicinity of the school and asked the owners of some commercial shops to close them and return to their homes”.

The two witnesses estimated that more than 100 personnel were deployed in the area, with approximately 30 vehicles. Rana, who went up to the roof of the building to observe what was happening, estimated that between 100 and 150 people were gathered in the center’s courtyard.

From his location next to the center, Mazen heard sounds of a scuffle inside the center, as well as a statement to the effect that if the examinee had been “Nusayri,” he would have been allowed to cheat, and that he had been prevented from doing so because he was “Sunni.” He also saw the Director of Education in Tartous arrive at the scene and enter the center, and said that the voices during the discussion became louder after his arrival. People in the area circulated accounts that one of the proctors had been stabbed with a knife and taken for medical assistance. However, STJ was unable to independently verify the incident.

Public accounts of what occurred inside the center varied. [Local media outlets](#) reported that the Director of Education in Tartous and the center head were beaten, while a [media source](#) quoted an official from the Directorate of Education denying any physical assault, saying the incident was limited to a verbal altercation that followed the detection of examination violations and that reports had been drawn up against those who committed the violations. The latter account is consistent with the testimonies of Mazen and Rana regarding the arrival of the examinee’s companions and the temporary closure of the center and the street, although STJ could not independently verify either conflicting account regarding whether a physical assault occurred.

3. Similar Violations Across the Documented Incidents

A comparison of testimonies about the three incidents during the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations reveals similarities in how the incidents began, how they escalated, and the nature of the threats directed against educational personnel:

Prior administrative instructions to be lenient: The testimonies of Salim, Fadi, and Nabil converge on educational personnel receiving verbal instructions, before and during the examinations, to deal “gently” with examinees affiliated with the Ministries of Defense and Interior. In Jableh, Salim recounts receiving a recommendation to this effect from the Latakia Directorate of Education approximately one week before the examinations began. Fadi, meanwhile, says that the center head would begin each examination day by instructing staff to avoid issuing cheating reports against these examinees wherever possible. In Homs, Nabil recounts that the center head stressed the need to exercise restraint with them and avoid being drawn into their provocations, explaining that most of them were members of the two ministries. These accounts come from two administrative contexts in different governorates, and one of the instructions was attributed directly to a Directorate of Education, indicating that the matter was not limited to the individual discretion of a single center head.

Similar Escalation Pattern: The three incidents began with the detection of a cheating attempt or an intervention to prevent it, followed by an objection from the examinee, according to the testimonies, based on his stated security or military status, accompanied by sectarian rhetoric or a threat directed at the educational personnel. In Jableh and Tartous, the two examinees contacted armed individuals who arrived within minutes and stormed the center. In Homs, however, the retaliation occurred later and outside the center, when the examinee intercepted the examination room head several hours later, accompanied by two armed individuals.

Sectarian Rhetoric Coupled with Violence and Threats: Sectarian rhetoric appeared in all three incidents in similar forms, targeting Alawite male and female proctors or presuming their affiliation with the Alawite community. In Jableh and Homs, this rhetoric was accompanied by direct threats of killing or arrest and by physical assaults. In Tartous, Mazen heard a statement from inside the center indicating that the examinee had been prevented from cheating because he was Sunni. Nabil’s testimony also invoked the events in the coastal region in March 2025, with the assailant referring to them as an occasion to celebrate, while Mazen expressed his fear that the circulating incitement could pave the way for a recurrence of the violence the area witnessed at that time.

Attempts to Impose Sectarian Segregation and Restrictions on Female Proctors’ Appearance: Testimonies from Jableh and Homs document attempts to interfere with the selection and assignment of educational personnel based on sectarian affiliation or

religious appearance. On the first day of the examinations, examinees in Jableh objected to the presence of an unveiled female proctor and demanded that she be replaced by a veiled female proctor or a male proctor. According to Salim and Fadi, she was moved to another examination room to defuse the situation. Salim adds that some examinees also objected to the presence of proctors from the Alawite community and that he rejected their request, stressing that it was not possible to segregate proctors based on sectarian affiliation. In Homs, one examinee directly threatened a female proctor, making her return to the examination room in the future conditional on her wearing a headscarf. These incidents reveal discriminatory demands aimed at imposing restrictions on the participation of educational personnel based on their sect, gender, or appearance, one of which was partially accommodated by transferring the female proctor from her examination room.

4. Disruption of Complaint Channels and Its Consequences

The educational personnel interviewed by STJ could not access a complaint mechanism that would protect them or lead to publicly disclosed accountability. In Jableh, the center head informed the Latakia Directorate of Education of the incident immediately after it occurred. The Directorate’s verbal promise to open an investigation was accompanied by a request for him to “forget about the matter,” and he was not subsequently informed of the outcome of any investigation. The armed men also explicitly threatened the educational personnel, warning of retaliation against anyone who filed a complaint or disclosed the examinee’s identity. In Homs, Nabil went to the Directorate of Education to report what had happened to him, but was mocked and held responsible for the assault against him before he was relieved of his examination proctoring duties. In Tartous, the Director of Education was present at the center during the incident, but STJ found no evidence that anyone investigated the incident or held those responsible to account.

The lack of protection and accountability directly affected the conduct of educational personnel and the integrity of the examination process. Salim says that after the incident, he avoided entering the examination room where it occurred and instructed its proctors to be lenient to prevent further harm, adding:

“I realized then that these were the ones who would outperform students who had studied hard and taken the examination without cheating”.

Fadi said he had begun seriously considering resigning from the teaching profession after the examination session ended. The repercussions extend beyond the direct victims; they also affect educational personnel who refrain from enforcing instructions

or filing complaints for fear of retaliation, undermining equal opportunity and the integrity of examinations.

These incidents are consistent with what STJ previously [documented](#) in a different context in the Tartous Governorate, including the police’s refusal to register victims’ complaints and the public tearing up of an incident report in front of one of the victims. The recurrence of obstruction of complaints or deterrence of complainants from pursuing them points to an environment that helps entrench impunity.

5. Indicators That the Violations Extended to Basic Education Certificate Examinations

Complaints about discriminatory cheating and intervention by individuals affiliated with military and security bodies were not limited to the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations. STJ interviewed Samer, the father of a ninth-grade student who witnessed a related incident while taking the Basic Education Certificate examinations at a center in Homs. The account of what occurred inside the examination room is based on what the student told his father immediately after leaving the room, while the father personally witnessed subsequent attempts to file complaints about similar incidents with the Examinations Department and the Directorate of Education.

On 4 June 2026, the [first day of the Basic Education Certificate examinations](#), Louay (a pseudonym) entered his examination room to sit for the General Science examination. According to what he told his father, an older examinee seated behind him began poking him and demanding that he open his answer sheet so the older examinee could copy his answers. The older examinee then threatened him, saying: “Open your paper, or I will take you with us after we leave.” The child understood this as a threat to have him arrested or abducted if he refused to let the older examinee copy his answers.

The father says that his son tried to avoid the examinee and continue answering questions before one of the female proctors warned him that she would take away his paper. When he tried to explain what was happening, she took his answer sheet and removed him from the examination room. As he was leaving, the examinee directed a sectarian insult at him, saying, according to the child’s account: “Yes, you Alawite pig, the time of your deposed president, who used to give you examination marks, is over,” amid the laughter of several people present in the room.

After Louay told his mother what had happened, she took him to the center head. However, the center head adopted the female proctor’s account that the child had been using slips of paper to cheat, refused to listen to him, and refused to confront the proctor with his account. He then threatened to summon the police against them. Samer says he later went to the Examinations Department and the Homs Directorate of Education to request that the proctors be heard and that his son be transferred to

another center, but his requests were rejected. He added that the Director of Education told him:

“What harm is there in allowing your son to let someone willing to give his life to defend the homeland copy from him? [...] Do you still think you own the state? We do not work to serve you”.

Samer says that the incident led the family not to send Louay to the next examination, and that the child subsequently experienced a deterioration in his psychological well-being, prompting the family to seek help from a mental health specialist and to plan to transfer the child to a school outside Syria.

This testimony aligns with complaints published by the [Daraa 24 Network](#) about the Basic Education Certificate examinations in the cities of Daraa and Izra, particularly allegations of cheating and leniency toward examinees affiliated with military and security bodies. The network reported that students complained that free-candidate examinees,² including members of military and security bodies, used mobile phones in examination rooms and that some proctors were lenient with them. It also quoted a proctor who confirmed that similar cases had occurred. The incident indicates that complaints of cheating and preferential treatment during the 2026 examination session were not limited to the General Secondary Education Certificate examinations or to a single governorate.

6. Legal Characterization of the Documented Violations

This characterization does not constitute a final determination of liability. Rather, it identifies the legal rights and rules implicated by the documented facts, while accounting for the varying strength of the evidence and the lack of verification of the official status of all actors.

6.1. In Light of National Legislation

The [Constitutional Declaration](#) issued in March 2025 preserves the laws in force unless amended or repealed, pursuant to Article 51. Under Article 12, it also makes the rights and freedoms set forth in human rights treaties to which Syria is a party an integral part of the Declaration. The documented incidents are also relevant to Article 7(2), which obligates the state to prevent the incitement of sectarian tensions and violence; Article 10, which concerns equality before the law without discrimination on the grounds of

² “Free-candidate examinees” refers to individuals who sit for public certificate examinations outside the framework of regular enrollment at a school, after registering with the examination departments and fulfilling the specified requirements, as opposed to regular students enrolled in the relevant grade.

race, religion, sex, or lineage; Article 17, which safeguards the right to litigate and pursue avenues of appeal; Article 18, which protects human dignity and the inviolability of the human body; Article 21, which guarantees women’s right to education and work and protects them from violence; and Article 22, which guarantees children protection from exploitation and ill-treatment and their right to education.

- **Facilitating Cheating and Disrupting the Mechanism for Documenting Violations:** The definition of public examinations in [Law No. 42 of 2023](#) includes the Basic Education and General Secondary Education Certificate examinations. Article 2 applies the penalties set forth in the law to persons other than students who intervene in or contribute to examination violations, while Article 6 penalizes anyone who facilitates a student’s cheating by any means in violation of the instructions. Accordingly, bringing answers into the Jableh center and forcing a teacher to write them on the blackboard to enable examinees to copy them could fall within the acts covered by Articles 2 and 6 for those who intentionally contributed to such acts. This liability would not extend to the teacher if he in fact acted under duress. The examinees themselves would be subject to the penalties and procedures prescribed under the examination instructions and other applicable provisions. Article 9 of the same law provides for the formation of a committee in each governorate, chaired by the Director of Education and comprising representatives of the examinations department, legal affairs, and internal oversight. The committee reviews reports of violations and refers them to the competent judiciary. Tearing up the cheating report in Jableh, or failing to prepare a report on the incident and to investigate it after the Directorate was notified, would disrupt this mechanism. This warrants an investigation into the assailants’ conduct and into how the educational officials handled the report, without conclusively establishing individual liability before the facts, authorities, and applicable instructions have been verified.
- **Insulting and Threatening Officials While Performing Their Duties:** Article 373 of the Syrian Penal Code criminalizes insulting an official by words or gestures, or threatening an official while they are performing their duties or because of those duties. Sectarian insults, expressions of contempt, and threats of killing and arrest directed at center heads, examination room heads, and male and female proctors while they were enforcing examination instructions could fall under this provision.
- **Threats with a Weapon and Intentional Infliction of Injury:** The incident involving the brandishing of a weapon at the passerby who attempted to help Nabil raises the possibility of the offense of threatening with a weapon under

Article 559 of the Syrian Penal Code. Depending on the medical findings and the duration of the resulting incapacity, the acts of slapping, attempting to strangle, beating, and wounding also fall within the provisions on intentional infliction of injury set forth in Articles 540 to 542 of the same Code.

- **Administrative and Disciplinary Responsibility of Educational Authorities:** If it is established that instructions were issued to show leniency toward a specific group of examinees, that reports were refused or not handled in accordance with applicable procedures, or that a proctor was transferred in response to discriminatory demands, these actions may constitute violations of official duties and examination instructions and warrant administrative and disciplinary accountability. In addition, where the material and mental elements of the offense of abuse of authority are established with respect to any official proven to have participated in or committed such acts, they may be held liable pursuant to Article 361 of the General Penal Code, as they used their influence to obstruct and impede the application of the laws and regulations in force, particularly the provisions of Law No. 42 of 2023 concerning public examinations.

6.2. In Light of International Human Rights Law

Syria acceded to the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR) in 1969 and is also a State Party to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC). Article 12(2) of the Constitutional Declaration provides that the rights and freedoms set forth in the international treaties, charters, and conventions on human rights to which Syria has acceded constitute an integral part of the Declaration. Accordingly, the documented facts engage the state's obligations to ensure equality, protect the rights to education and physical integrity, and provide effective avenues for investigation and redress. Acts are attributable directly to the state when it is established that they were committed in an official capacity; otherwise, the authorities remain obligated to exercise due diligence to prevent and investigate attacks by private individuals.

- **Equality and the Right to Education:** Articles 2(1) and 26 of the ICCPR prohibit discrimination, while Article 13 of the ICESCR guarantees the right to education on an equal basis. Instructions to educational authorities to show leniency toward a particular group of examinees, targeting educational personnel and students based on their presumed sectarian identity, and restrictions imposed on female proctors for not wearing the headscarf indicate discriminatory treatment and the selective application of examination rules. The incident involving Louay also engages additional obligations under the CRC regarding his

best interests, protection from psychological violence, and the safeguarding of his right to education.

- **Prohibition of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment:** The documented assaults may meet the threshold for prohibited treatment under Article 7 of the ICCPR, particularly the assault on the head of the Jableh center and the act of forcing him to place the torn cheating report in his mouth; the group assault on the head of the examination room in Homs; and the accompanying threats of killing and arrest, along with sectarian insults.
- **Investigation and Remedy:** Article 2(3) of the ICCPR requires states to provide an effective remedy, including prompt and impartial investigation, accountability for those responsible, and measures to prevent recurrence, in accordance with [General Comment No. 31](#). Based on the available information, STJ found no evidence of an independent and effective investigation or of a publicly announced outcome regarding the documented incidents, despite the relevant educational authorities having been notified of them. Threatening victims to prevent them from filing complaints, or turning them away when they approach the competent authorities, further undermines the effectiveness of any remedy that may theoretically be available.

7. Recommendations

7.1. To the Syrian Transitional Government

- Open prompt, independent, and impartial investigations into the documented incidents in Jableh, Tartous, and Homs, including identifying the armed men and assailants, their actual identities and affiliations, verifying the use of vehicles, weapons, or official uniforms, and determining the responsibility of anyone who ordered, facilitated, or covered up the assaults. The key findings and measures taken should be made public while protecting the identities of witnesses and victims, particularly the child.
- Take immediate measures to prevent retaliation against victims, witnesses, and personnel who documented cheating violations or filed complaints, and provide a confidential and secure reporting channel independent of the administrative officials or security agencies who may be the subject of the complaint. It should also be possible to request protection, transfer, or exemption from assigned duties without professional or financial repercussions.
- Hold any official accountable through fair disciplinary proceedings for any proven instance of issuing instructions to show leniency toward a particular

group of examinees, refusing to register or refer a complaint, mocking a victim, or threatening or penalizing a complainant for filing a complaint, and refer the facts to the Public Prosecution whenever there are grounds to suspect the commission of an offense.

- Provide redress to those affected, including restoring professional and financial rights they may have lost as a result of the incidents or because they filed complaints. The circumstances surrounding the removal of the child Louay from his examination should also be independently reviewed in a manner that takes his best interests into account. He should be enabled to obtain appropriate educational redress if it is established that he was subjected to injustice, without requiring him to directly confront the proctor or the other examinee.
- Issue a written and binding ministerial circular prohibiting preferential treatment based on affiliation with a military or security institution, as well as discrimination against examinees or educational personnel on the basis of sect, religion, gender, or appearance. The circular should affirm that female proctors may not be transferred or replaced in response to objections to their clothing or to their failure to wear the headscarf, and that all instructions on handling violations must be issued in writing and made available to educational personnel.
- Activate the committees established under Article 9 of Law No. 42 of 2023 in all governorates, publish their composition, working procedures, and contact channels, and set a specific time limit for reviewing violation reports and for referring matters within the judiciary's jurisdiction. Periodic reports should also be published on the number of reports, complaints, and referrals, as well as their outcomes, without disclosing information that identifies examinees or witnesses.

7.2. To United Nations Mechanisms and International Actors Supporting the Transitional Process

- Call on UNESCO, UNICEF, and actors supporting the education sector to assist the Ministry of Education in developing secure systems to document violations, establishing independent, child-sensitive complaint mechanisms, implementing psychosocial support programs, and providing training for educational personnel on preventing discrimination and protecting the integrity of examinations.
- Make any support provided to security institutions or for the protection of examination centers subject to measurable standards that ensure respect for human rights, prevent armed interference in the educational process, verify the identities of deployed personnel, and hold them accountable. Apply human



rights due diligence and suspend support to any unit proven to be involved in violations, pending an effective investigation and the adoption of corrective measures, without disrupting educational services provided to students.





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 unflinching 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.