

Press Release: Activists Launch Lêlûn Association for Victims in Afrin



March 2023



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We are a group of activists from the Afrin region. We decided to establish the Lêlûn Association for Victims to bring all victims from Afrin together and support them. We also seek to coordinate redress and justice efforts with other victim associations across Syria.

Our objectives are justice and restoring rights to their owners. Therefore, we intend to turn Lêlûn into an active platform that channels the voices of those oppressed in the Afrin region and a conduit that conveys their painful experiences to local, international, and UN entities. We aim to end their suffering and ensure that Syrians, in Afrin or any other area, will never be exposed to violations again.

Triggered by our duty towards the families forcibly displaced from Afrin and their dream to return home and towards those who chose to remain in their homes and, therefore, had to endure numerous violations, we pledge to advocate the causes of these families and to defend them during international events to achieve redress and ensure they have access to their lawful right of a safe and dignified return to their original places of residence in Afrin—home of peace and olives.

Over the course of the Syrian conflict, the Afrin region struggled in the throes of several existential threats and countless human rights violations, which became systemic and coordinated after Operation Olive Branch in 2018, which Türkiye initiated backed by several Syrian armed opposition groups. Many independent and neutral international organizations describe Türkiye's post-operation presence in the region as an "occupation".

The Turkish incursion forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere in Syria or abroad. While those who escaped hostilities continue to dream of a safe and dignified return home, those who stayed or risked their lives and returned—making out only 30% of the area's original local population, battle with fear, rampant insecurity, and weapon chaos.

Rights organizations have documented various patterns of grave human rights violations in the Afrin region, including arbitrary arrests, torture, forced disappearance, property seizures, illegal logging of forests, Turkification, demographic change, and the construction of illegal housing settlements. The perpetrators committed all these breaches in an atmosphere of impunity.

With the obligations above, we address our dignified people in the region and outside. Lêlûn Association for Victims will be a space that embraces your hopes and a platform that will turn your current pain into a force that empowers you to rise above the crushing circumstances, seek to defend your cause, and reclaim the rights stolen from you. We hope to get your utmost support because only with your assistance can we fulfill our duties.

As to international organizations and bodies, the establishment of the Lêlûn Association for Victims is long due because we waited for the international community to step forward and fulfill its humanitarian and ethical obligation toward the people of Afrin and their cause. With the minimum attention allocated to the Afrin affair, the pace of violations accelerated in the region, which to curb, founding Lêlûn became a necessity. Seeking to combat those violations, the association emerges primarily as a humanitarian project; it is independent and has no partisan or other political affiliations. Therefore, we hope that all rights organizations and international legal entities support our work and promote the cause of Afrin to internationalize it, help it garner attention from relevant entities and organizations which already advocate for other rightful Syrian issues, and aid us in actively exposing violations that remain rife in the region and bring their perpetrators to account and, consequently, facilitate the dignified return of displaced families to their homes.

Lêlûn Association for Victims

18 March 2023

About LELUN:

A group of daughters and sons of Afrin, who love its soil, are devoted to its olives, and we believe in the history of the fathers and grandfathers, and in fulfillment of their efforts and struggle in preserving the human being, the land and the trees, and in order for the trees to return to their splendor, and for the families and loved ones to return to their mountains, plains and homes, it was necessary to launch The ground is being prepared for the return of rights to their owners and the pursuit of justice.

Throughout the long years of conflict in Syria, the Afrin region has lived under existential threats and countless violations, which took a systematic and coordinated nature after the Turkish "Olive Branch" operation in 2018, and its control along with the rest of the armed groups.

The goal of justice for the victims was the main stimulus that generated us; Young men and women of Afrin who are jealous of its people, people and land, regardless of their nationality, sect, background or political affiliation, to establish an association for the victims of violations in this Afrin under the name "Lilon", to extend a helping hand to the affected women on an equal footing. by defending them.

"Lilon" will work to contribute to the prosecution efforts by providing evidence related to the violations committed against the residents and people of the Afrin region by all parties to the conflict, and to contribute to compensating the affected victims.

