

Jenderes crime: A new chapter in the series of preventing indigenous people from practicing their culture and rituals

On the background of setting up the Newroz fire in March 2023, members of the "Jaish Al-Sharqiya" faction affiliated with the Syrian National Army/opposition killed four Kurdish men in Afrin

The Jenderes incident which claimed the lives of four Kurdish men on the eve of Newroz, came as another episode in a series of violations repeatedly and systematically against the indigenous Kurdish population committed by the Syrian armed factions supported by Turkey since it occupies Afrin on 18th March 2018. The "Jaish Al-Sharqiya" faction dominated the scene of events after the Jenderes incident, as it has a record full of violations against the indigenous population, especially the Kurds. Before the Jenderes crime, one of the faction's leaders assaulted a woman in the middle of the street, and prevented Kurdish citizens from celebrating Newroz in several villages. They also threatened a family in Jenderes who had lit a fire to celebrate Newroz night.

The "Jaish Al-Sharqiya" faction tried to impose its hegemony on the indigenous people without any respect for their beliefs and sanctities. On the eve of Newroz night, they headed towards the "Othman" family known as "Peshmarg" when they found a flame of fire on their roofs. Three members of the al-Sharqiya faction tried to inquire about who lit the fire from Mr. Nazmi Othman (51 years old), who was sitting in front of his house. Where the young man, "Muhammad Farah al-Din Othman" (19 years old), had set a fire on the roof of the house, but Nazmi denied to the militants that he doesn't know who did that, for fear of arresting his nephew.

Regarding the details of the incident, the witness, "Yasmin Mustafa Jaqal," stated in a private conversation with "Lelûn," who is the mother of the victim, "Muhammad Farah al-Din Othman" and the wife of the victim, "Farah al-Din Othman" (44 years old), saying:

"The members of the faction insulted and assaulted Nazmi and his son with hands and stones, and to avoid the problem, his wife entered her son into the house."

The witness continues:

"Meantime, my son Hama (Muhammad) defended his uncle until they were able to expel them, but within minutes the militants returned again, armed with military weapons and automatic rifles, as their headquarters is located on the same street as ours, and it is basically a house of one of the residents that was seized".

When the younger brother, Muhammad Othman, heard the sounds of the quarrel, he went out to find out the reason and tried to calm the situation, but the militants shot him

directly and killed him and ran towards Nazmi, shot him then towards "Muhammad Farah al-Din" who tried to hide behind tractor but he was unable to protect himself as he was hit by several bullets. When Farah al-Din heard the sounds of gunfire, he went out to bring his son home, but as he arrived, he was also killed by the militants with automatic weapons.

Witness Yasmin added:

"The group did not warn anyone, but they directly targeted everyone who arrived at the scene of the accident, then the armed group took the bodies of the victims and placed them in front of the house and sprayed them with a barrage of fire. They searched the pockets of the victims and stole their money stripped them of their wallets and personal savings".

After the perpetrators made sure that everyone was killed, they rode their motorcycles, chanting insults against the Kurds, describing them as atheists and infidels heading to their homes.

When the victims were transferred to the "Military Hospital" in Jenderes, everyone had lost their lives, except of "Nazmi", who was transferred to the "Military Hospital" in Afrin then to the "Afrin" hospital, and placed in intensive care passed out his life the next morning. Another person with special needs, named "Firas Abdul Rahman Rasho" was wounded in his foot.

The headquarters of the Turkish forces is about 800 meters away from the scene of the accident. According to the source, "Salah" (incognito), who is a resident of the neighborhood and a close relative of the victims' family, he said:

"The Turkish forces never interfered in the matter, knowing that we had gone to them after taking the bodies to the hospital, but instead of helping us, they threatened us, so no one dared to resort to them after that."

Victims' families resorted to the "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham":

The families of the victims afraid that things would develop further, especially since the perpetrators did not flee or hide, but other members of the Al-Sharqiya faction tried to intervene and kill more Kurdish people, so there was no way left for the families of the victims, except to seek help from the "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham", so they carried the bodies of the victims after the administrators of the hospital throw them outside.

The people headed to the nearby town of "Atma" in the Idlib governorate, and there the military police tried to prevent the people accompanying the bodies from heading to Atma. But the arrival of members of the "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham", made them complete their walk towards the town, and the leader of the group, ["Muhammad al-Julani," met them](#) and they stayed that night there.

On the 21st of March, they returned, accompanied by militants of the "Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham", to the city of Jenderes. During that time, the ceremonies turned into a massive uprising, in which the people of the villages of the region participated.

After the burial ceremonies of the victims, the [demands](#) of the victims' families appeared in six items that were read by an official in the Kurdish National Council (ENKS), "[Ahmed Hassan](#)" in front of the crowd and the cameras in the mourning tent. It summarized; the exit of the factions from the Afrin region, the provision of international protection, the accountability of the perpetrators, handing over the administration of the region to its original inhabitants, release the Kurdish detainees and return the seized properties.

Attacking a woman in the middle of the street:

One of the sources, "Salah," spoke to the Lelûn Association about the violations committed by the "Jaish Al-Sharqiya" faction, which intersected with the testimony of the source "F.B.", a resident of Al-Sinaa neighborhood, who heard about witnesses of the incident, saying:

"Abu Habib, who is a leader of the faction beat the wife of "Rashid Kahrabaji" from the village of Hamam in the middle of the street in Jenderes, because the woman, after her apartment was destroyed due to the earthquake, came to her house but they prevented and beat her in the middle of the street and fired shots in the air, and no one moved".

Preventing Kurdish villages from celebrating Newroz:

The source, "Salah," confirms that: *"The people were repeatedly harassed by the Jaish al-Sharqiya faction, and it was provoking, threatening and intimidating the people to money from them. This faction also prevented "[Miska](#)" and Aghjala villages, which belong to Jenderes district, from celebrating this Newroz and setting fires, as well as in "Ashkan Gharbi" under the threat of arrest".*

Other violations:

At the beginning of Newroz eve, militants of the faction toured the neighborhoods under its control in the city of Jenderes, in an attempt to prevent the people from setting fires to celebrate the holiday. In this regard, the source F.B, who later heard the news from his neighbors, says:

"They tried to quarrel with one of our neighbors, the family of Hanan Jamil Horo, but that family avoided going into the problem and entered their homes without any confrontation with them".

When the war subsided and Afrin was occupied by Turkey and the Syrian opposition factions, "Farah al-Din" returned with his brothers and his family to Jenderes, and the

"Jaish Al Sharqiya" faction had seized his house. But when he demanded it, they detained him for hours, subjected to very severe torture. According to Farah al-Din's wife, Yasmin, *"After that incident, he became mentally ill and began to fear a lot when hearing the sounds of bullets during those five years."*

Who is the "Peshmarg"'s family?

It is noteworthy that the Othman family, known as (Peshmarg) from "Quda" village in the district of Raju, but Muhammad Othman (the father of the victims) moved when he was fifteen years old to "Hikecha" village to his maternal grandfather's house, and he remained there until he grew up. He moved to Jenderes and lived there after he got married. Muhammad acquired the nickname "Peshmarg" for his devotion to work and his physical strength, as he was working in hard professions.

The head of the family, "Muhammad Othman," died leaving behind him four sons and three daughters, who tasted the bitterness of poverty, so none of them were able to complete their studies because they were working and none of them emigrated abroad. They had no disagreements and problems with their neighbors, but they were respected and appreciated by all, and they did not get involved in politics and parties.

Jenderes City:

It is worth noting that the city of Jenderes¹ is located 20 km west of Afrin, on a flat geographical area. Its population before the occupation was approximately 45,000 people, and it includes several different villages. Whose residents work in agriculture, especially the cultivation of grains, legumes, vegetables, olive trees and pomegranates. There is a special commercial market in the city, in which there are a number of traders of oil, olives and grains. There is also an irrigation network that waters the agricultural lands from the Midanki Dam (April 17) and there are more than 15 olive presses. It is also characterized by a large number of monuments, including the ancient Jenderes Hill, which is located south of the town center.

The town of Jenderes fell to the Turkish army hand and the Syrian opposition factions at the beginning of [March](#) 2018, after fierce battles with the People's Protection Units (YPG). Since that time, the people of Jenderes district, like other people of Afrin, have suffered from repeated violations by those factions.

¹ <http://www.aleppo.gov.sy/ar/city/townships/52-bld-jndyrs>