"Lelun" Report On Human Rights Violations In The Afrin Region During August 2023

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The Afrin region witnessed continued violations by armed factions affiliated with the Syrian National Army against indigenous residents and those returning to their villages and cities from displacement places, as they demanded from some returnees to pay financial ransoms ranging from 200 to 5000 US dollars per person, according to the charge against him/her, under the pretext of regulating their status and allowing them to remain in their villages and regions. Local councils in the region also contributed to putting pressure on citizens by collecting sums of money from returning citizens for the benefit of the armed factions.

Through monitoring and documentation carried out by "Lelun" field researchers of a number of violations that occurred in various places in the Afrin region against the indigenous people, through communication with some of the victims and those close to them residing within the region as well as with those forcibly displaced outside the region. We also communicated with some activists working in the field of monitoring violations, and by following open source news sites.

Documentation revealed that factions of the Syrian National Army and the Military Police were the ones who committed violations against the indigenous population, both residents and those returning to their homes.

Cases of arrest reached (18) cases, while cases of paying ransoms reached (12) cases, while agricultural crops were seized in four villages.

"Lelun" was able to document the following violations:

On 10th August 2023, the military police in the Jenderes district arrested five citizens and demanded them to pay a financial ransom in exchange for their release. They are:

- Citizen Jomaa Muhammad Kalkho, 25, from "Jalama" village without knowing the reason. "Jomaa" was deported from Turkey to northern Syria, and has not been released yet until his family pays a financial ransom.
- The citizen, Mustafa Muhammad Joulaq, 24, was deported from Turkey several days before his arrest.
- Citizen Farhad Faiq Hamoush, 34, from Jalama village in the Jenderes district, who was deported from Turkey with a group of young men.
- Citizen Abdul Hamid Mustafa Khalil, 36, from Jalama, was deported earlier from Turkey.
- Citizen Muhammad Muhammad Tobal, 34, from Al-Basouta village, was deported earlier from Turkey, which demanded that he pay 5,000$ in exchange for his release.

On 30th July 2023, the Military Police Branch in the Jenderes district arrested three citizens from the "Al-Basouta" village and demanded that they pay a ransom in exchange for their release. They are:

- Citizen Muhammad Nour Muhammad, 34, was deported earlier from Turkey.
- Citizen "Youssef Shamouni," 43, and demanded that he has to pay a ransom of 5,000$ in exchange for his release.
- Citizen "Hassan Hamza," 37, and demanded that he has to pay a ransom of 5,000$ in exchange for his release.

The "Sultan Suleiman Shah" (Al-Amshat) faction arrested the citizen "Abdo Rashid Hamo", 43, from the town of Al-Maabatli/Mobato. The faction demanded that the kidnapped person pay an amount of 5,000$ in exchange for his release, as the citizen "Abdo" had paid 2,000$ in exchange for reclaiming his house from Al-Amshat gunmen.

The "Sultan Murad" faction arrested three members of the "Zangal" family before they arrived at their hometown, the village of "Qurna" in the Bulbul district. They were detained for hours at the military police checkpoint in Azaz after their arrival from Aleppo city. The three citizens are:

- Darwish Abdel Manan Habib, 55.
- Diwar Darwish Habib, 14.
- Rashid Nazmi Golin Habib, 15.

On 28th August 2023, the "Al-Hamza Division" faction arrested three citizens from Al-Basouta village on charges of dealing with the Autonomous Administration and its compulsory service. They are:

- Citizen "Jamil Khalil Khalil", whose fate remains unknown until now.
- Citizen "Zaki Muhammad Tobal."
- Citizen "Muhammad Muhammad Hamo", who was released on 29th August 2023, in exchange for his family paying a ransom of 1,500$.

On 28th August 2023, the military police in Rajo arrested Bakr Rashid Meqdad from his home in Qara Baba village on charges of dealing with the former Autonomous Administration, and his fate remains unknown until now.

On 30th August 2023, the "Hamza Division" faction (Al-Hamzat) arrested the citizen "Muhammad Jamil Taha Bash," 28, from "Al-Basouta" village on charges of dealing with the Autonomous Administration.

On 14th August 2023, the "Samarqand Brigade" faction seized the walnut season for most of the residents of the villages of "Misto Ashour, Haj Qasem, and Al-

Dalia" in the Maabatli district and "Ramadan" village in the Jenderes district, due to their owners not obtaining the approval of the aforementioned faction before harvesting the crop.

Sultan Suleiman Shah's faction (Al-Amshat) arrested the young citizen, "Hassan Qazeqli Bakr," who returned from the "Shahba" region to his town of Maabatli, under the pretext of his compulsory service with the Syrian army. He paid 500$ and has not yet been released. It is noteworthy that he paid $500 to reach his hometown, and his fate remains unknown.

The Sultan Suleiman Shah (Al-Amshat) faction, in cooperation with the local council of the town, imposed a financial ransom of 400$ on two girls who returned to their hometown in the town of "Maabatli" on 25th August 2023, to pay 200$ for each of them in exchange for their remaining in the village under the pretext of regularizing their situation.

They are: Avin Welat Rasho, a dentist, and Barfin Welat Rasho, a graduate of a commercial institute.

On 26th August 2023, a member of the local council called "Hussein Sheikh Brim" asked the Kurdish citizen, "Muhammad Haji," nicknamed "Hami," to pay 500$, accusing him of causing damage to the car of a member of the Al-Amshat faction following a traffic accident at the Maabatli Junction.

According to local sources of "Lelun" said that while "Muhammad Haji" was driving his agricultural tractor towards the village, the car of a member of the "Al-Amshat" faction, who was driving against the direction of traffic, collided with him. Note that the friend of the officer in the car denied the tractor owner's responsibility for the accident, but the owner of the agricultural tractor, under pressure from a local council member, was forced to pay the amount after he borrowed it from his relatives fearing to be subjected to a more severe punishment.

About LELUN:

We are 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.

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.

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