



Syria: Human rights violations in the Afrin region during September 2023



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(20) Cases of arrest, (5) cases of seizing olive crops, (5) cases of paying ransom money, and other cases of house robbery and attacks on civilians.





Armed factions under various names affiliated with the Syrian National Army are continuing to commit violations against most of the indigenous people of the Afrin region without any respect or consideration for the difficult living situation experienced by the people. Especially, those recently return from displacement places to their villages and farms, trying to regain their homes and lands. But most of them face arrest and demands for a financial ransom that may reach 6,000 dollars in exchange for allowing them to remain in their village, settling their situation, and reclaiming their property. Some of them face imprisonment and torture, especially those who cannot pay these huge sums.

As the olive harvest season for which the region is famous approaches, cases of harvest theft by armed factions and their members are increasing, who prevent the people from starting the harvest operations, while at night they rob the harvests and pick olives while they are heavily armed, as this process is accompanied by breaking and cutting the branches of the olive trees.

The “Lelun” team, through its field researchers, closely monitored these violations by following and monitoring news sites and open sources news that publish news of the violations, and tried to verify this information. “Lelun” also communicated directly with the victims who were subjected to violations, and most of them were reluctant to hide their identities and personal information. The field researchers also relied on the information received from the people living inside Afrin in the various villages, towns and cities, as well as through the information that was provided to us through the relatives, neighbors and acquaintances of the victims in the areas of displacement in Shahba, Aleppo and the areas east of the Euphrates and from people residing in Europe and neighboring countries.

For the purpose of the report, “Lelun” prepared a special form to document violations, and field researchers were asked to fill it out. It included detailed information about the field researcher, and clear data about the source/witness, with a reservation not to publish that information, in addition to detailed information about the victim. The form contained 14 diverse questions covering all aspects of the violation, its type, and associated violations, with the state of the violation occurring in detail according to the information available to the source. Links to news websites that published news of the violation were also attached, and personal photos, documents, or videos were attached, if any.





During September 2023, “Lelun” researchers documented the following cases and confirmed their perpetration against indigenous civilians through direct communication with sources, witnesses, and victims. Where (20) arrests were documented, including (3) women, and (17) men. (5) Cases of seizing olive crops belonging to indigenous citizens of the region, (5) cases of paying financial ransoms, (1) case of robbing a house, and (1) case of assault and attacks on civilians.

According to the information confirmed by “Lelun”, the parties that committed violations during September 2023 are as follows: (6) cases by the Civil Police, (5) cases by the Sultan Murad faction, (2) cases of the National Army, (4) Military Police, (1) Turkish Intelligence, (6) Hamza Division, (3) Sham Legion, (3) Jaysh Al-Nukhba faction, (1) Muhammad al-Fateh faction, (1) Suleiman Shah faction, (1) Ahrar al-Sharqiya faction.

The violations committed are as follows:

First - Cases of arrest and paying financial ransom:

Citizen “Luqman Ahmed Khalil” was arrested at the beginning of December 2023 by the armed factions of the Syrian National Army in the city of Jarabulus after his return from Aleppo to his village “Qazal Bash” in the Bulbul district in the Afrin region. They demanded that he pay a ransom of 6,000 dollars. It is noteworthy that the citizen Luqman Khalil suffers from a chronic illness, he was released on 30th September 2023 after paying a ransom.

On 5th September 2023 “Ismat Muhammed Muhammed,” 48, from the village of Walilklay/Maydan, in the Rajo district, was arrested by the Civil Police on charges of dealing with the former self-administration. It is worth noting that he was previously arrested last year.

Turkish intelligence arrested the citizen “Hashim Ghazal,” from the Arab component of the village of “Bablit” in the Jinderes district, on 6th September 2023, from the Amirat clan, on charges of going on guard duty during the previous self-administration in Afrin. They demanded that he pay a financial ransom, but he refused to pay it so they arrested him and he was released after he had to pay the ransom.





Citizen “Jamil Hikmat Jafar” was arrested by the “Sultan Murad” faction of the Syrian National Army on charges of dealing with the former Autonomous Administration, on 6th September 2023, from his grandfather’s house in the village of Ma’mala/Ma’mal Ushaghi in the Maabatli district, after his return from the Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo to his village. He stayed with his grandfather in the village for three days, he intended to travel to Turkey and from there to Germany, where his father is residing. He was arrested on the fourth day of his arrival. The faction demands that he pay a ransom of 3,000\$ in exchange for his release.

On 11th September 2023, the “Al-Hamza Division” faction, known as Al-Hamzat, arrested six citizens in “Kimar” village in Sherawa, following the killing of three members of Al-Hamza in a missile attack that targeted their positions. The detainees are:

- Muhammad AbdulHanan Hussein, 38 years old
- Ahmed AbdulHanan Hussein, 43 years old
- Jamil Zuhair, 45, displaced, was a shepherd for “Abu Jaber,” the security official.
- Muhammad Sami Najjar, 37 years old
- Khalil Ibrahim Kalo, 57 years old
- Ramadan Youssef Kalo, 40 years old

The Al-Hamzat faction in the village of “Kimar” stormed and searched all the houses of the village after a missile exploded in the village, because some families collected the remains of copper from that missile to sell them, as parts of them fell on the roofs of their homes, so the faction arrested everyone who found copper in his house.

It is worth noting that both “Mahmoud Abdul Hanan Hussein” and “Ahmed Abdul Hanan Hussein” had previously been arrested at the beginning of the occupation of Afrin, and each of them spent a full year in prison, and paid a sum of money until they were released.





“Muhammad Sami Najjar” and “Ramadan Youssef Kalo” were released a day after their arrest, while the rest are still in detention.

On 11th September 2023, members of the Civil Police in the Bulbul district arrested “Mustafa Habib,” a resident of the village of “Qurnah” in the Bulbul district, after he returned from Aleppo to harvest his olives, after demanding his seized house, and they took him to the district center. They later demanded him to pay a ransom of \$1,000 in exchange for his release, but after the intervention of neighbors and the mukhtar, he paid \$500 until he was released.

On 22nd September 2023, the Civil Police in Afrin arrested “Muhammad Ramzi Kilo,” whose mother is Salha, 29, married and a father of four children, from “Aranda” village in the Shieh/Sheikh Al-Hadid district, and resides in the “Sorkah” village in the Rajo district. He was arrested after returning from the Shahba area. The reason for his arrest is not known. It is noteworthy that the authorities demanded him to pay an amount of \$1,500, otherwise he would spend three years in prison.

On 22nd September 2023, the Civil Police in Rajo arrested “Muhammad Khalil Khalil,” 40, from the village of “Dimilia” in Rajo district, after his return from Aleppo with his wife and children. He was arrested under the pretext of dealing with the former Autonomous Administration, and was transferred to the Civil Police branch in Afrin, and is still under arrest. They demanded a ransom of 4,000 Turkish liras for his release.

On 24th September 2023, members of the Civil Police arrested two Kurdish women from Shekhutka village in the Maabatli district, on charges of dealing with the former Autonomous Administration, one of whom was a teacher. They are:

- Nazira Hameed Mohammed, 33 years old
- Ahad Youssef Sido, 35 years old, is a teacher





On 25th September 2023, the “Muhammad Al-Fateh” faction arrested “Janguin Muhammad” from the “Arab Ushaghi” village of Maabatli district in the Afrin region, days after his return from Aleppo city due to the deterioration of his economic situation. He is a lonely son of his parents who live in the village. It is noteworthy that his father, before returning to the village, told the faction that his son would return to the village, and they demanded him to pay a financial ransom of 2,500\$ two to allow him to return to the village, but they arrested him after his return, and he is still under arrest under the pretext of settling his situation.

On 27th December 2023, the Military Police in Afrin, in conjunction with the “Sultan Murad” faction controlling the village of Mirkan/Husieh in the Maabatli district, arrested three Kurdish citizens from their homes in the village of Mirkan. They are:

- Fahima Ahmed Taher, 25, it is not known why she was arrested, but her husband recently got out of prison after three years.
- Muhammad Ahmed Mustafa Haji, 40, on charges of joining the military forces of the Autonomous Administration.
- Abdo Ezzat, 30, did not know the reason for his arrest.

The citizen “Kawa Sheikho”, 27, was arrested by the Military Police on 20th September 2023 in “Khalalka” village in the Bulbul district because of his claim to his hoose. He was taken to the center of the Bulbul district, where he was coming from Lebanon. He is still under arrest.

Second - Cases of theft of olive crops:

On Tuesday, 12th September 2023, a number of members of the Syrian National Army stole the olive harvest of (75) trees from the field of the citizen “Hanan Hassan,” a resident of “Sarinjak” village in the Sharan district, located on the road to al-Nabi Hourri castle, and then cut down the trees to sell it for firewood.

The theft of olive harvests began on the farms of the village of Maydanki in mid-September 2023. According to the source, many olive fields were stolen in the village owned by the following people:





- 20 trees for Sheikhu Haidar Sheikh Issa
- An olive grove owned by Muhammad Hami Sheikh Issa
- 70 trees for Ibrahim Sheikh Othman, nicknamed “Abu Ali”

In addition to other fields without mentioning the names of their owners. All of them are residents of the village of Maydanki. Members of the Faylaq- al-Sham, led by Abu al-Nour, the commander of the Legion controlling the area extending from Maydanki to the town of Bulbul, are stealing olives. Sultan Abu Mahmoud Safiri, head of the dam headquarters in Maydanki, is directing his heavily armed members to harvest olive trees that belong to Kurdish civilians in the region, and the “Jaish Al-Nukhba” faction, led by “Abu Khaled Al-Idlibi” participates in the operations of stealing and harvesting olives. The owners of those fields were later surprised by the theft of the season and the breaking of tree branches, which prompted them to file complaints with the concerned authorities, but to no avail, according to the source.

On 23rd September 2023, at night, the “Sultan Murad” faction, accompanied by a group of displaced people close to it, stole (60) trees on the road to the “Bafilion” village in the Sharan district, owned by the citizen “Hanan Rashid Jawish Abu Rashad,” 69, from the people of Sinka/Sinkerli village in Sharan district, where the stolen olives were transported to the presses of the city of Azaz.

Third - Other violations:

Citizen Rasul Habib, 58, from the town of Maabatli, still lives with his wife in a house in his private orchard after the Al-Amshat faction took over his house in the village. When Afrin was occupied, he went and lived in the orchard for fear that its trees would be cut down and stolen. Some time ago, he began demanding his house, which is located in the village and is inhabited by the families of the militants. He paid an amount of \$400 to the Al-Amshat faction in exchange for receiving the house.

On Friday, 8th September 2023, a number of members of the “Ahrar al-Sharqiya” faction of the Syrian National Army barbarically attacked the home of the young man, “Ahmed Mustafa Suleiman,” a resident of “Birka” village in





the Maabatli district, who is residing in Afrin city near the School of Industry. After cutting an electrical wire extending between his house and his neighbor's house, which was seized by a member of the "Ahrar al-Sharqiya" faction. Ahmed cut the wire after he discovered that his neighbor was stealing electricity from him, which upset the member and he attacked the house with a group of heavily armed members of the faction. As a result of his feeling of panic and fear, he tried to flee with his wife and mother by escaping from the balcony, which led to him suffering a broken foot and various bruises on his body, and he was transferred to the Syrian Specialized Hospital to receive treatment. Note that the young man Ahmed was deported months ago from Turkish territory to Syria, and he got married a short time ago.



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.

