

Lelun's report on human rights violations in Afrin region during October 2023



HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING OCTOBER 2023 IN AFRIN REGION



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Armed factions affiliated with the Syrian National Army continue to repeatedly commit violations against indigenous people and their property in Afrin region and its environs continually. The frequency of these violations increases and becomes more frequent during the agricultural seasons, especially during the olive harvest season, for which the Syrian region of Afrin is famous.

The “Lelun”'s team monitored some of these violations through field researchers who communicated with the families and relatives of the victims of the violations and Monitoring open source news sites. The “Lelun” team was able to confirm the occurrence of the violations included in the report, which included human rights violations from arrest, torture, and threats to property rights violations, including seizing and stealing agricultural crops, and imposing taxes under various pretexts. It also included imposing taxes and financial fines on those returning from displacement areas to their homes in the villages and cities of Afrin region in exchange for settling their situations or for recovering their properties, possessions, and homes.

The sources that the field researchers contacted were reluctant to mention their personal information and the names of those subjected to violations for fear of being harassed by the armed factions.

It became clear, through “Lelun’s” monitoring of the olive harvesting operations, in which some of the owners were forced to harvest early, that led to a significant decrease in oil production due to the immaturity of the fruits fearing of many thefts by the armed groups carried out while they were heavily armed, without daring to do so. The owners of those stolen fields don't dare to file complaints against them.

What is most striking in this report is the exorbitant taxes imposed by the factions on olive harvests, which ranged from \$4,000 to \$25,000, which burdened the indigenous population and caused some of them to be unable to pay them.

During October 2023, the following cases were monitored and documented by the “Lelun”'s team, as follows: (5) cases of arrest, (11) cases of the theft of olive crops, (4) cases of paying ransom money in exchange for the recovery of their property and homes or for their release, (6) cases of imposing taxes on agricultural crops, which included six villages, (1) case of seizing the olive harvest, (2) cases of threats of arrest and torture, and (3) cases of other violations that included shooting a civilian, a brutal attack on olive trees, and an attempt to harass female students.

The report mentioned the names of the armed factions involved in the violations, which are: (8) cases of the Al-Amshat faction, (4) cases of the Civil Police, (3) cases of Al-Hamzat, (2) cases of Sultan Murad, (1) case of the Jaysh Al-Nukhba, (1) case of Rejal Al-Harb, (1) case of Faylaq Al-Sham, (1) case of Asefat Al-Shemal, (1) case of Anti-Terror Police.

The violations that were documented after being monitored are as follows:





- At the beginning of October 2023, the “Suleiman Shah” faction, known as Al-Amshat, imposed taxes on the people of the “Anqala” village in Sheikh Al-Hadid/Shia district. They also imposed a tax of half a dollar on each empty tin of olive oil, and the faction takes 10% cut from the production of oil extracted from villages under its control, and imposing 4\$ on each olive tree owned by the indigenous people. As for expatriates residing outside the Afrin region, they imposed an amount of 20\$ on each olive tree. These royalties are in addition to taxes on presses, which almost work in favor of the factions due to the large amount of taxes imposed on them. Some of the people who were taxed include: ((Rashid Brim 21,000\$, Zaim Topo 22,000\$, Mohamed Hamo Ahmed 10,000\$, Zaki Hasso 9,000\$, Mohamed Ezzat 6,000\$)).
- At the beginning of October 2023, the “Al-Amshat” faction in the “Alkana” village of the Sheikh Al-Hadid/Shia district-imposed 20\$ on each of the trees owned by “Mahmoud Jameel,” amounting to about 2,500 trees, who resides outside Afrin region. His brother, Faisal Jameel, who resides in the village, was managing his properties, until the faction seized the entire season due to his failure to pay the required tax.
- In mid-October 2023, the “Suleiman Shah” faction (Al-Amshat) imposed financial taxes on the agricultural seasons of the people of the “Sanara” village in the Sheikh Al-Hadid/Shia district. The taxes included most of the villagers and among the names were: “Abdullah Sheikh Mohammed was imposed a tax of 25,000\$ and his brother Mustafa Sheikh Mohammed was charged 3,500\$”. These people manage the properties of their expatriate brothers. The faction imposed 20\$ on each tree for expatriates. A tax of 12,000\$ was also imposed on the citizen “Ahmed Ogrash.” The faction also imposed a tax of 6,500\$ on a very poor man named “Jalal,” a one-eyed shepherd who has 25 heads of livestock and manages his brothers’ property. Villagers circulated news that the Al-Amshat faction, which controls about 90 villages, is seeking to collect an amount of up to 30 million dollars from all of those villages.
- On 2nd October 2023, the “Suleiman Shah” (Al-Amshat) faction of the Syrian National Army imposed a tax of 2,000 \$ on the Kurdish citizen, “Zuhair Mohammed Shaaban”,39 years old, from Maabatli town, in exchange for getting his house back and living in it. The faction also threatened citizen Zuhair to transfer his file to the Free Police (Civilian Police Intelligence) if he refused to pay the required amount. Meanwhile, “Mohammed Ali Khoja”, 35 years old from Maabatli, had gone from Aleppo, Sheikh Maqsoud, with his wife and children to Afrin, but he was unable to pay the tax that was imposed, amounting to 1,000 \$, to the “Sultan Murad” faction to restore his house, so he returned disappointed to Aleppo again.





- On 3rd October 2023, the economic committee that was formed by the Hamzat and Al-Amshat factions held a meeting with the people of the village of “Kokan Fawqani and Kokan Tahtani” in the Maabatli district, in the presence of the mukhtars of those villages. They counted the olive trees owned by the indigenous people and imposed taxes on them. Taxes ranged from 40 to 50 tins of oil, with no less than 10 tins of oil per family. The Al-Amshat faction controlling the village also placed guards over the olive fields in exchange for sums of money paid by the owners of those fields. According to local sources, these same guards steal the harvests, as cases of theft are widespread. In addition to that, another tax of 2 Turkish Liras was imposed on each olive tree, which they must pay in order to be allowed to harvest the crop. The same economic committee asked the people to send the olives after harvesting to the “Dar Kabir/Dargair” olive press, but the villagers refused, and as a result the committee imposed another tax on everyone who refused to send the crop to the Dargair press.
- On 8th October 2023, the “Anti-Terror Police” in Afrin arrested the citizen “Sheikho Hassan Hamdi”, 55 years old, from the village of Mirkan/Husieh in the Maabatli district, on charges of dealing with the Autonomous Administration in Afrin. He was taken to an unknown destination and he has not yet to be released, knowing that he suffers from neurological diseases.
- On 9th October 2023, the Civil Police in Afrin arrested the citizen “Mohammed Ramzi Kelo,” 29 years old, from the village of “Aranda” in the Sheikh Al-Hadid/Shia district. He is a father of four children, and the faction demands that he has to pay a ransom of 1,500\$ in exchange for his release. Otherwise, he will spend three years in prison. The Civil Police arrested the citizen “Mohammed Ramzi Kelo” from his home in “Surkeh” village in the Rajo district after his return from Aleppo city at the end of September 2023, and he is still detained in the “Maaratah Central Prison” in Afrin city.
- On 10th October 2023, the Civil Police of the Syrian National Army arrested the young men, “Mohammed Arif Alo”, 35 years old and “Siwar Mohammed Hamdi”, 27 years old, in Mirkan/Husieh village in the Maabatli district of Afrin countryside, on charges of performing military service at the military forces of the Autonomous Administration in Afrin, and they were taken to an unknown destination, and their fate remains unknown until now.
- On 10th October 2023, a local source from Afrin reported to Lelun’s researcher that there is a school in Afrin region, which is “Sharan Central School,” in which there is a displaced teacher from Aleppo Governorate called “Ahmed Khalil,” who speaks in obscene language with female students and harasses them. The source obtained several testimonies from indigenous and displaced female students, all of whom confirmed the





accuracy of the information. It is noteworthy that the teacher had been deported from Turkey earlier, and he is a Turkish language teacher at the school.

- On 15th October 2023, the Al-Amshat faction in “Kakhra” village in the Maabatli district stole the olive harvest owned by a number of citizens, including the theft of 150 entire trees, the theft of seven other trees owned by another citizen, and also the theft of trees from other citizens. Some of the people whose harvests were stolen include: "Mohammed Isso, Samir Hassan, Mohammed Hassan, Hassan Hanan, Fatima Isso". The Al-Amshat faction also informed the people on 30th October 2023, of imposing a fine of 3.5\$ on each olive tree, and objected. The villagers object the decision because they were unable to pay the amount. The next day, the faction gathered the youth of the village and took their personal phones, threatening them that they missed the sounds of torture.
- On 19th October 2023, the Civil Police and the “Asifat Al-Shamal” faction, which controls of “Gamruk” village in the Maabatli district, arrested the citizen “Mohammed Sheikho,” nicknamed “Haji Kasko”, 52 years old, because he was demanding his property and his house in the village and they accused him in dealing with the Autonomous Administration, they imposed on him a fine of 10,000 \$, which he paid until he was released on 29th October 2023. It is noteworthy that the so-called “Mohammed Sheikho” was residing in the town of “Tal Rifaat” in the Shahba region and he went to Afrin with his children.
- On 20-21st October 2023, olive fields were stolen by armed factions in “Maydanki” village in the Sharan district. The stolen fields belong to the following people: ((Khalil Haji Mohammed Abu Walid, Ibrahim Dawoud, Nouri Othman, Abdo Rahim, Hassan Koussa)) and other names. It is not known exactly who is the party that committed the violations, but the factions controlling the village are all suspected of committing them, namely: ((Al-Hamzat, Sultan Murad, Jaysh Al-Nukhba, Rejal Al-Harb, and Faylaq al-Sham)). The armed factions prevented the people from harvesting olives before the month of November, but members of those factions go at night, armed with weapons, and pick large numbers of trees from fields owned by the villagers, without any of the owners daring to file a complaint.
- On 25th October 2023, members of the armed factions controlling “Gamruk” village in the Maabatli/Mobato district stole 50 olive trees located between Gamruk and Maydanki, which belong to the citizen “Mohammed Mustafa Shoto”, 65 years old. For its part, “Lelun” obtained a video clip showing the process of stealing the harvest and brutally attacking the olive trees in Gamruk, owned by the citizen “Mohammed Mustafa Shoto,” by members of





the Hamzat faction without showing any respect or interest in the property of the indigenous people.

- On 25th October 2023, the “Suleiman Shah” faction (Al-Amshat) in the “Kakhara” village of the Maabatli/Mobato district sent financial receipts to pay taxes to the people, as the receipts contained high amounts compared to the season. Even widows were not spared, as they considered their property to be part of the “expatriate” category. There are 67 widows in the Kakhara village. The faction also imposed taxes on the share of each family member residing outside the country, and the amounts imposed exceeded 4,000\$ on some families. The faction gave them until New Year's to pay the required amounts, and anyone who is late, will be subject to penalties.
- On 21st Saturday October, 2023, a member of the “Sultan Murad” faction shot the young man, “Khalil Siso,” from Basuta village, accompanied by his fiancée and his cousin, “Ahin Siso,” while buying wedding supplies. Then, a member of the faction called Al-Chechani followed them near the “Kabso” restaurant located on Rajo Road, and shot the young man Khalil, as a result of which he suffered a shoulder injury. He was taken to the hospital to receive treatment, and the girl “Ahin” was handed over to the Military Police. This is because the faction had pressured Ahin’s father to marry her to one of its members, which was rejected by her cousin, Khalil.



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.

