

The Documentation of 79 Arrests in “Peace Spring” and “Olive Branch” Strips in July 2022



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63 persons, including four women, from Afrin region and 16 from Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad regions were subjected to detention and deprivation of liberty. 13 of them were released, among them two women while the fate of the rest 66 persons is still unaccounted for.

Introduction

In July 2022, Hevdesti-Synergy Association for the Victims in Northeast Syria documented the arrest of at least 79 persons, including four women, in the areas of [Afrin](#), [Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê](#) and [Tall Abyad](#), where Turkish forces and factions affiliated with the opposition Syrian National Army/SNA are in control.

Detention and deprivation of liberty included 63 persons in Afrin region, which has been occupied by Turkey since March 2018 in Operation Olive Branch, and further 16 persons in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad regions, which have been occupied by Turkey since October 2019 in Operation Peace Spring. Only 13 out of the total toll of the detainees, among them two women, have been released so far, while the fate of the other 66, including two women, remains unknown.

The majority of the detained persons were arbitrarily arrested. Causes and charges behind their arrest varied. Some were accused of dealing with the Autonomous Administration or formerly working in its institutions. Others were accused of trying to cross to Turkey illegally. Some others were arrested merely because they belong to the Kurdish community or to extort their families and get a ransom.

In one single case, Hevdesti-Synergy Association documented that a young man was arrested in Afrin countryside after he refused to abandon his house to an armed group to seize it. In another case, a person in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê was arrested for chanting anti-SNA slogans in a peaceful demonstration denouncing the deteriorating security and living conditions in “Peace Spring” territory.

Hevdesti-Synergy Association relied in its documentation process on the information collected in its database provided by a network of field researchers scattered in the region, and on accounts, they obtained from the detainees and eyewitnesses. Furthermore, it verified the information from publicly available sources (open sources).

Hevdesti-Synergy Association notes that violations committed by Turkey and the SNA-affiliated factions in Afrin, Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad regions are far more than what have been documented and verified by name, surname, date and place of arrest. As the Association believes that the actual number of arrest cases is significantly higher than the figure given in this report.

Legal Liability

The SNA did not respect prisoners’ rights in accordance with international legal obligations. Various factions affiliated with the SNA have arbitrarily arrested individuals. Turkey, in the context of detention, has supported these factions directly which amounts to violation of

Turkey’s obligations to Common Article 1 to the Geneva Conventions (secure respect for the conventions).

Since factions of the Turkish-backed SNA controlled Afrin in March 2018 and Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad in October 2019, they have engaged in practicing widespread and systematic arbitrary and illegal arrests and detention. The armed groups were liable for violations of the right to life and other violations to human rights in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights/ICCPR (para 7, 9, 10, 14, and 26), the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (Articles 2, 3, 37, and 40), and the UN Convention Against Torture (Articles 1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, and 15).

The SNA-affiliated factions continue practicing cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment towards relatives of the detainees and the disappeared in various ways. One way is the deliberate concealment of the fate and whereabouts of the detainees and the disappeared persons in violation to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and fundamental human rights principles.¹ Furthermore, the effective removal of these persons from the protection of the law, if protection is found originally, and the failure to establish their fate constitutes a violation to the right to life.²

Apart from arbitrary arrest and detention, Hevdesti-Synergy Association has documented, since at least 2018, practices of torture in detention centers under the control of the SNA, where such practices were commonly conducted as a means of extracting information from detainees, such as those arrested for racial affiliation, their exercise of freedom of expression or their explicit criticism of these forces. In the light of the continuous documented use of torture against detainees and the failure of the factions’ commanders as well as leaders of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG)/the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) to take effective steps to prevent such practices, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the SNA may be practicing such conduct in pursuance of an organizational policy. Therefore, such conduct may be part of a systematic attack against the detainees in its custody, amounting to the crimes against humanity of torture.

Turkey is under obligation, in the areas under its control, to ensure public order and safety and afford special protection for women and children.³ Turkey remains bound by applicable human rights obligations vis-à-vis all individuals present in these territories. If Turkish forces do not intervene to stop torture, when they are present at the time of torture or when they

¹ ICRC Rule 98. Enforced disappearance are also characterized as a composite war crime by ICRC; See Rule 156.

² UN Human Rights Committee, general comment no. 36 (2018), para 58.

³ “Human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations in the Syrian Arab Republic, 21 July 2016–28 February 2017”, para. 103.

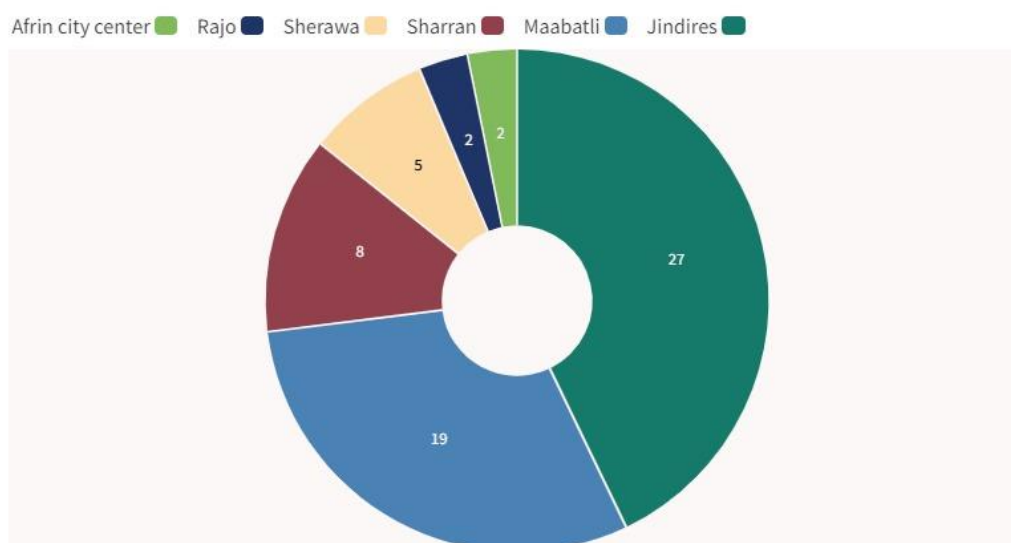
are informed about, they may be violating Turkey’s obligations to the Fourth Geneva Convention.⁴

As the SNA forces are under effective command and control of the Turkish forces, the Turkish military commanders are held criminally responsible for violations committed by these parties [the SNA forces] in instances where the Turkish leaders knew or should have known about such crimes or failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures to prevent their commission.⁵

Arrests in Afrin:

Hevdesti-Synergy Association documented in July 2022, the arrest of 63 persons, including four women in the Kurdish-majority region of Afrin. Five of them were released, among them two women. However, the fate of the other 58 persons, including two women, is still unaccounted for. (Hevdesti-Synergy Association did not get reliable information documenting the release of the others).

The biggest toll of arrests in July was felt in Jindires District in which 27 arrests took place. In Maabatli/Mabeta district, 19 persons, including three women, were arrested, and in Sharran district, eight persons were arrested, including a woman. Five arrests took place in Sherawa district. Only two persons were arrested in Rajo district and two in Afrin city center.



Geographical distribution of the arbitrary arrests carried out by factions of the opposition SNA in Afrin region in July 2022

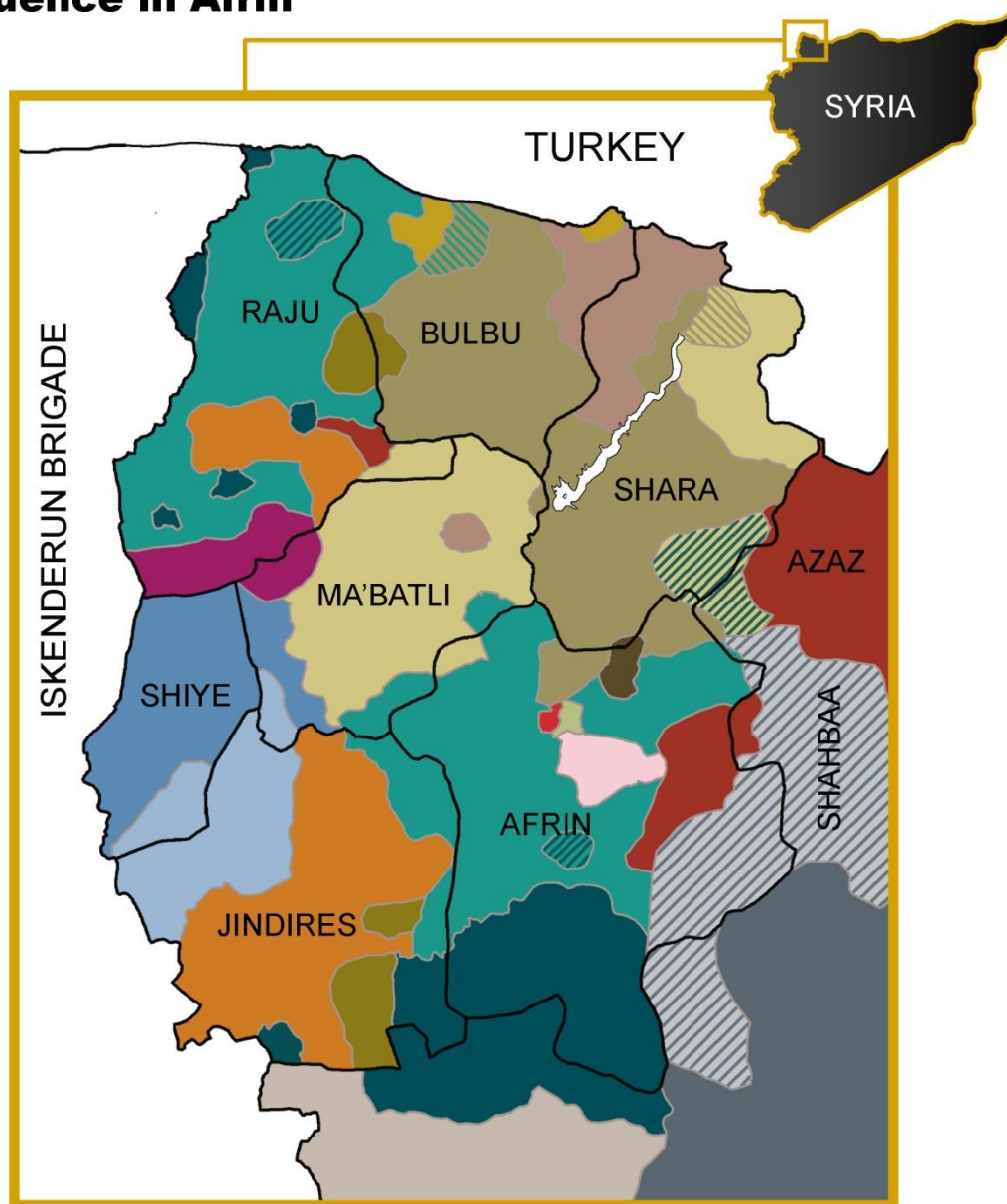
Source: Hevdesti-Synergy



⁴ The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 14 August 2020, Document NO A/HRC/45/31. Para (69-67).

⁵ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 28.

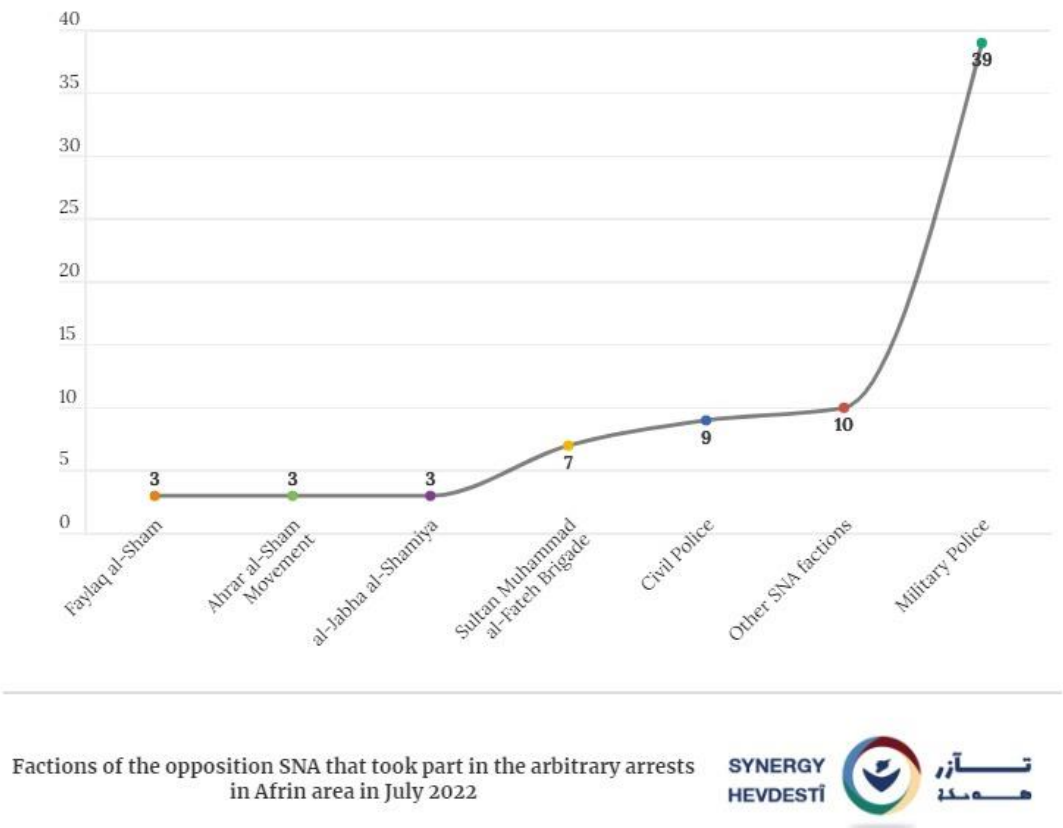
The Opposition Syrian National Army's Areas of Influence in Afrin



The Sultan Murad Division, Elite Army\Jaysh al-Nukhba	The Levant Front\al-jabha al-Shamiya	The Northern Hawks Brigade
Ahrar al-Sham	Army of Islam\Jaysh al-Islam	Elite Army\Jaysh al-Nukhba
Ahrar al-Sherqiya	Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade	The Glory Corps\Faylaq Al-Majd
The Sham Legion\Faylaq al-Sham	13th Division	Turkish Control & Turkish-Backed Groups
Faylaq al-Rahman	Suleiman Shah Brigade\al-Amshat	SDF
The al-Hamza\al-Hamza Division	HTS- Extremist Group	Government of Syria

Forces of the Military Police, affiliated with the SNA, was exclusively in charge of 29 arrests in Afrin area in July. Together with the Civil Police, it arrested seven persons, and together with the Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Brigade/Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh, it arrested two persons. Finally, it arrested one person along with the Turkish Intelligence forces.

Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh, in turn, was responsible for five arrests. The Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya, the Sham Legion/Faylaq al-Sham and Ahrar al-Sham Movement were responsible each for at least three arrests. The Turkish intelligence forces conducted two arrests. The Civil Police and the Eastern Army/Jaysh al-Sharqiya were responsible each for at least one arrest. Other SNA-affiliated factions conducted nine arrests.



The SNA-affiliated factions charged the crime of dealing with the Autonomous Administration or formerly working with its institutions to 16 detainees in Afrin. Two of them were released after their families each paid 2,200 Turkish Liras to the Military Police which had arrested them. Two other persons were arrested in order to extort their families and ask them to pay ransoms. The Military Police and Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh asked their families each to pay \$200 for their release.

In one single case, Hevdesti-Synergy Association documented the arrest of one young man in Afrin countryside as he refused to give up his house to an armed group that tried to seize it. On 28 July 2022, fighters of Jaysh al-Sharqiya faction arrested Nabi Fawzi Nasero (25 years

old), from his house located in Jindires district because he refused the evacuation order by Abu al-Hareth Boqres, a commander in Jaysh al-Sharqiya. The house originally belongs to a displaced family from Afrin who currently reside in Turkey. More than five years ago, Nasero and his family rented the house. The next day, Nasero was released after he was forced to sign a document in which he pledged to move from the house and hand it over to the mentioned faction.

The following table shows detailed data of the total toll of the arrests conducted in Afrin region in July 2022 :

#	Name	Place of arrest	Date of arrest	The party that carried out the arrest	Status
1	Nihad Muhammed Bakko	Maabatli/Mabeta	03/07/2022	and the Military Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Police together	unknown
2	Mustafa Abdeen Faris	Maabatli/Mabeta	03/07/2022	and the Military Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh Police together	unknown
3	Ali Hussein Walid	Jindires	03/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
4	Akram Zuheir Hussein	Jindires	03/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
5	Sharvan Khalil Abdo	Jindires	05/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
6	Mahmoud Hussein Hamo	Jindires	05/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
7	Nawras Darwish Mahmoud	Jindires	05/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
8	Najeeb Farid Muhammed	Jindires	05/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
9	Ali Nizar Jameel	Jindires	05/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
10	Rukia Mustaf	Maabatli/Mabeta	06/07/2022	Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh	Released later
11	Heveen Hameed Altono	Maabatli/Mabeta	06/07/2022	Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh	Released later
12	Hanifa Ibrahim	Maabatli/Mabeta	06/07/2022	Liwa Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh	unknown
13	Diab Haj Ibrahim	Jindires	07/07/2022	al-Jabha al-Shamiya	unknown
14	Muhammed Hasan	Jindires	07/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
15	Muhammed Hameed Naser	Sherawa	09/07/2022	Ahrar al-Sham Movement	unknown
16	Hussein Aboud Hamo	Sherawa	09/07/2022	Ahrar al-Sham Movement	unknown
17	Ahmed Abdo Sitaf	Sherawa	09/07/2022	Ahrar al-Sham Movement	unknown
18	Walid Barakat Salmo	Sherawa	09/07/2022	Faylaq al-Sham	unknown
19	Ali Sher Mahmoud	Jindires	13/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown
20	Mahmoud Ahmed al-Ali	Jindires	13/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown
21	Nawras Khalil Ali	Jindires	13/07/2022	The military Police	unknown
22	Omar Hussein Abdo	Jindires	13/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown
23	Khalil Hussein Muhammed	Jindires	13/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown

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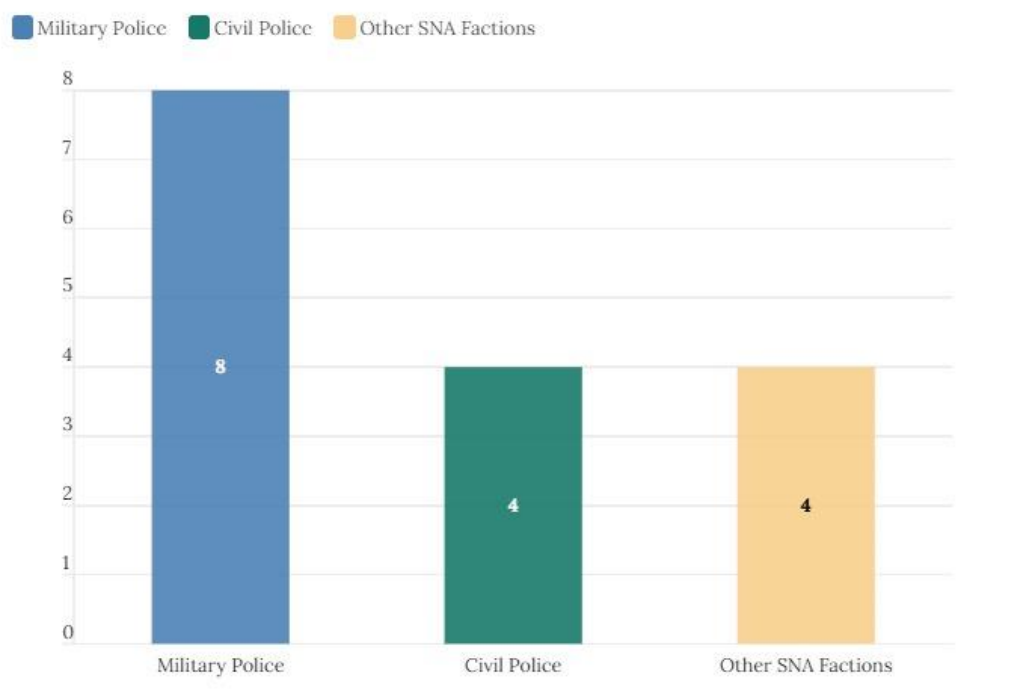
24	Ali Ahmed Rasho	Jindires	14/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
25	Hussein Hidek “Sagher”	Sharran	14/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
26	Najati Wahid Lotfi	Sharran	14/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
27	Walid Barakat Salmo	Sherawa	15/07/2022	Faylaq al-Sham	unknown
28	Othman Hanan	Maabatli/Mabeta	15/07/2022	Faylaq al-Sham	unknown
29	Athom Aliko Muhammed	Maabatli/Mabeta	16/07/2022	The Turkish intelligence	unknown
30	Mustafa Muhammed	Sharran	16/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
31	Mahmoud Ali Hussein	Jindires	16/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
32	Farzat Ahmed Mahmoud	Jindires	16/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
33	Midhat Murad Saweek	Maabatli/Mabeta	16/07/2022	The Turkish intelligence and the Military Police together	unknown
34	Ahmed Beram	Maabatli/Mabeta	16/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
35	Adel Beram	Maabatli/Mabeta	17/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
36	Ahmed Brimko	Maabatli/Mabeta	17/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
37	Jameel Muhammed	Maabatli/Mabeta	17/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
38	Mustafa Jamal	Maabatli/Mabeta	17/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
39	Medhat Muhammed	Maabatli/Mabeta	17/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
40	Hasan Muhammed	Maabatli/Mabeta	18/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
41	Muhammed Rasoul	Maabatli/Mabeta	18/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
42	Bahri Hussein Salim	Jindires	19/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
43	Fawzi Mahmoud Ali	Jindires	19/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
44	Ali Abdo Hasan	Jindires	20/07/2022	The Civil Police	unknown
45	Mustafa Seleem Hussein	Sharran	21/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
46	Manan Seleem Hussein	Sharran	21/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
47	Muhammed Riyad Khalil	Jindires	23/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
48	Abdo Mahmoud Darwish	Jindires	23/07/2022	The SNA	unknown
49	Horik Dawood	Rajo	23/07/2022	The Military Police	Released later
50	Ali Sheikho Ahmed	Rajo	23/07/2022	The Military Police	Released later
51	Khalil Ismael Hakim	Maabatli/Mabeta	24/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
52	Rif’at Ahmed Zenki	Maabatli/Mabeta	24/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
53	Mustaf Kamal Kurdi	Maabatli/Mabeta	24/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
54	Abdulhadi al-Omar	Afrin	25/07/2022	al-Jabha al-Shamiya	unknown
55	Muhammed Amin	Afrin	25/07/2022	al-Jabha al-Shamiya	unknown
56	Aisha Ni’esan	Sharran	28/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown

57	Muhammed Kinjo	Sharran	28/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown
58	Hosni Seleem Hasan	Sharran	28/07/2022	The Military Police and the Civil Police together	unknown
59	Nabi Fawzi Nasero	Jindires	28/07/2022	Jaysh al-Sharqiya	Released later
60	Fawzi Sheikh Muhammed	Jindires	29/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
61	Abdo Sobhi Yousef	Jindires	29/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
62	Najeeb Jiwan Sheikho	Jindires	29/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown
63	Rasheed Ismael Hamid	Jindires	29/07/2022	The Military Police	unknown

“Peace Spring” Arrests:

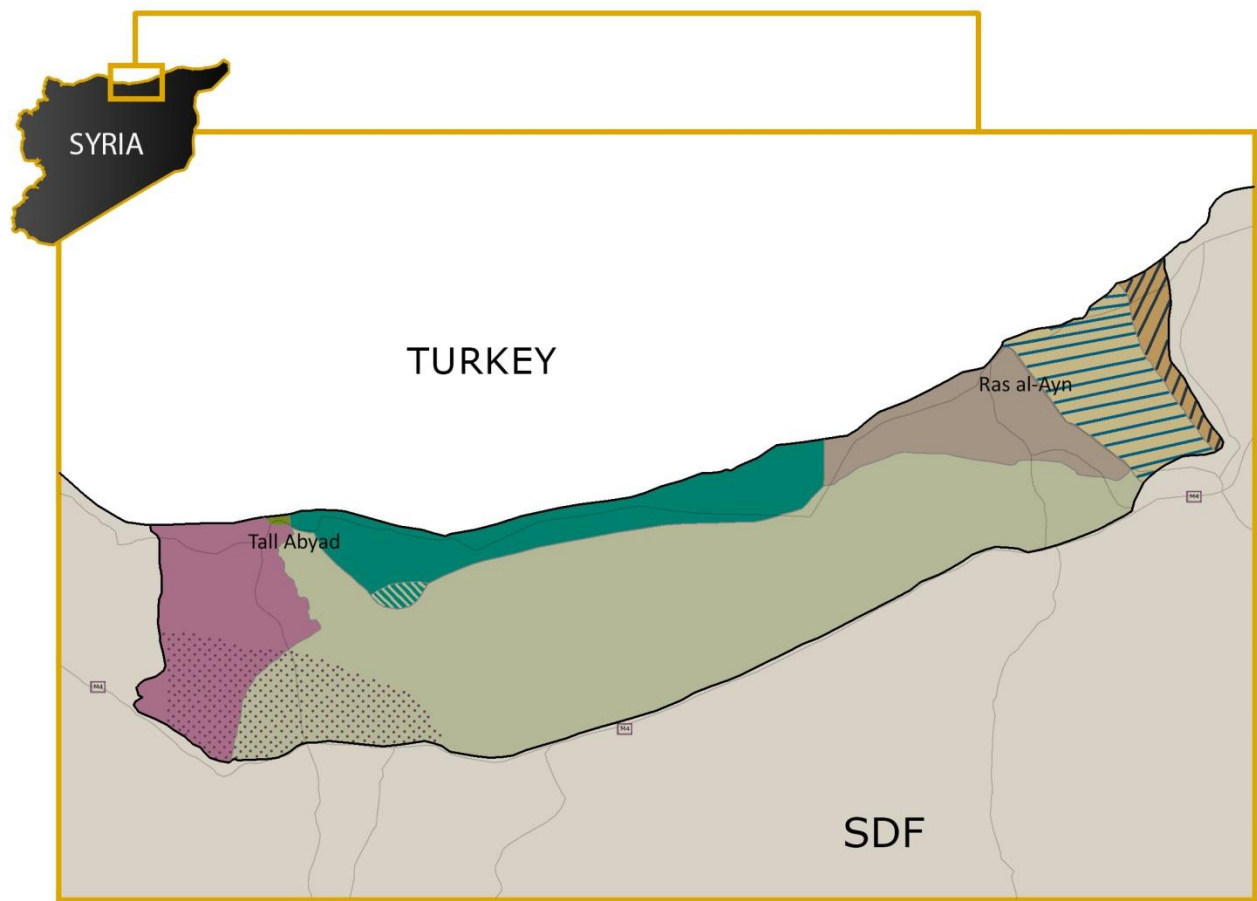
Hevdesti-Synergy Association documented, in July 2022, the arrest of at least 16 persons by the SNA-affiliated factions in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad regions. Only eight detainees were released while the fate of the rest remains unknown.

Like Afrin, the Military Police conducted the majority of the arrests in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad regions as it was responsible for at least eight arrests. The Civil Police conducted four arrests and other SNA-affiliated factions were responsible for the other cases of arrests.



Geographical distribution of the arbitrary arrests carried out by factions of the opposition SNA in "Peace Spring" areas in July 2022

The Opposition Syrian National Army’s Areas OF Influence
In Ras al-Ayn and Tall Abyad



- al-Jabha al-Shamiya
- Faylaq al-Majd
- Ahrar al-Sharqiya
- 20rd Division
- The al-Hamza/ al-Hamzat Division
- The Sultan Murad Division
- The Mutasim Division
- Army of Isalm/ Jaysh al-Islam
- The Northern Hawks Brigade
- The Levant Front/ al-Jabha al-Shamiya, Faylaq al-Rahman, The Sham Legion/ Faylaq al-Sham

Reasons and motives behind the arrest and the accusations the detainees faced varied. Nine persons were arrested for trying to cross to Turkey illegally. One person was arrested on the way back to Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê after he had displaced to areas under the control of the Autonomous Administration during Operation Peace Spring. While another person from Ras al-Ayn was arrested for chanting anti-SNA slogans in a peaceful demonstration condemning the worsening security and living conditions in "Peace Spring" strip.

On 1 July 2022, Khalid Def, a shopkeeper in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê, was detained for his participation in a demonstration in Tell Halaf town west of Ras al-Ayn. Def condemned the worsening security and living conditions in "Peace Spring" territory and was arbitrarily arrested by a patrol of the Civil Police. He was released the next day after he signed a document in which he pledged not to participate in anti-SNA protests again.

Despite the variety of reasons for the arrest, families of at least six detainees who were released said they paid ransoms for the release of their loved sons from detention centers run by the SNA-affiliated factions in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê.

A witness whose four members of his family were arrested in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê told Hevdesti-Synergy Association that forces of the Military Police asked them to pay ransom for the release of the detained ones. He recounted:⁶

"Four individuals of our relatives were arrested by the Military Police in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê while trying to cross to Turkey illegally. They were released on 5 August 2022 after we paid \$2,500 to the Military Police. One of the detained persons has yet to be released under the pretense that the prosecutors are on vacation."

The witness said that the detainees underwent severe physical and psychological torture, adding they have no information regarding the proceeding of the prosecution or the mechanism of their release in terms of the legal aspect.

Another witness⁷ told Hevdesti-Synergy Association that his brother along with three other detainees were brought before a military court prior to their release. He narrated the details of his brother's arrest as following:

"On 5 July 2022, my brother along with three other young men were heading to Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê coming from the direction of the Autonomous Administration-controlled areas. The Military Police forces arrested them on the M4 Highway, interrogated them and kept them in a custody in Mabrouka town for 25 days. The imprisonment situation was bad. The detainees were subject to verbal abuse, mental pressure and shortage of

⁶ The interview was conducted via the Internet on 6 August 2022. The identity of the witness is withheld for his family members' safety. One of his family members is still detained by the Military Police in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê.

⁷ The interview was conducted via the Internet on 5 August 2022. The witness's identity is withheld according to his request.

food. In early August 2022, they were released after they were brought before a military court.”

The accounts and information collected by Hevdesti-Synergy Association infer that some factions and leaders of the opposition SNA are running human trafficking operations and transport people illegally to Turkey in exchange for money. Intra-factional fighting repeatedly breaks out between members of the SNA-affiliated factions over disputes on dividing smuggling profits. On 7 August 2022, Hevdesti-Synergy Association published a detailed [report](#) on the internal fighting between the SNA-affiliated factions in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad over the first half of 2022. The report was titled: [Armed Chaos and Insecurity in the “Peace Spring” Strip](#).

The arrests documented by Hevdesti-Synergy Association for the Victims in the regions of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad since the onset of Operation Peace Spring on 9 October 2019 until the end of July 2022, has reached up to more than 478 detainees, including 64 women and 36 children, where the arrests were carried out by Turkish forces and factions affiliated with the Turkish-backed SNA. Moreover, at least 293 cases of torture of detainees in the prisons of those factions have been documented. Five persons at least have died under torture.



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Hevdestî - Synergy Association for Victims, is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, aimed at educating and providing a platform and a space for victims to represent themselves and claim their rights. Synergy was founded on March 11, 2021, to seek justice for the victims of conflict in North and East Syria and to contribute to the process of accountability and justice.

We work to document all human rights violations in North and East Syria, and preserve evidence, documents and testimonies in order to contribute to the processes of truth-revealing, accountability and justice. In addition to build the capacities of the victims and advocate for their issues, with the aim of building a society demanding its rights.

We are committed to the highest degrees of accuracy and integrity, including seeking multiple perspectives to develop an in-depth and analytical understanding of events. We are cognizant of our responsibility towards the victims and witnesses who share their experiences with us. We are working closely with a wide range of actors in local and international civil society to achieve the greatest possible impact.



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