

# Ras Al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad Four Years of Occupation and Record Rife with Human Rights Violations



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SYNERGY نآر  
HEVDESTÎ هه‌ستێ

## **Ras Al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad: Four Years of Occupation and Record Rife with Human Rights Violations**

*Myriad of human rights violations occurred in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad since the Turkish Occupation in October 2019 under the lack of accountability and persistence of impunity.*

## Introduction:

Synergy Association for Victims has documented the killing of 59 civilians and the arrest of no less than 592, including six people who died under torture, in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad since Turkey occupied them in October 2019, as a result of the military invasion dubbed “Peace Spring” by Ankara.

According to Synergy, at least 79 explosions were carried out in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad during the four years of occupation, killing at least 146 civilians, among them women and children, while injuring more than 300. Furthermore, 65 infighting/clashes between factions of the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) took place, in which 5 civilians were killed and more than 36 were injured.

The information and evidence verified by Synergy suggests that Turkey’s aim is to alter a demographic change in the occupied region through forcing tens of thousands of its indigenous people to displace and to resettle in their homes other people from other Syrian territories, let alone adopting the policy of “Turkification” as an official approach in all the areas of its influence in northern Syria.

The areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad are under the control of the Turkish Armed Forces and the SNA’s factions. The Turkish Army has installed military bases and checkpoints for its forces and the Turkish government provides training and logistical support to the local police forces in the occupied area, and closely coordinates with them, at the highest levels, including instructing executive orders to senior commanders.<sup>1</sup>

Turkey treats these regions as integral parts of its territory. Administratively and in terms of services, the two cities of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad follow Turkey’s governorate of Şanlıurfa. Additionally, the Syria Support and Coordination Center, overseen by Şanlıurfa’s Governor, delivers public services, including water, waste management, city cleaning, healthcare services, and humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to the Turkish scenario that its military operation [Peace Spring] will create a “Safe Zone”, Turkey has failed to assume its responsibilities vis-à-vis the territories it occupies in northern Syria, as it has not taken any serious measures to ensure public safety and security. Rather, the Turkish and the SNA’ forces continue to commit violations against civilians and discriminate between them on ethnic basis under the lack of accountability and continuous of impunity.

All of the above along with the lack of accountability and persistence of impunity, make the Turkish-held territories unsafe and not in meeting with the [criteria](#) of voluntary return and return set by the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> [Turkey restores water supply network for 35 Syrian villages](#), DAILY SABAH, 30 Dec 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [Turkey’s AFAD, Şanlıurfa governorate distribute aid in northern Syria](#), DAILY SABAH, 27 Nov 2020.

## Areas of Ras Al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad Fraught with Human Rights Violations:

Areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad, which have been under the Turkish occupation since October 2019, have been marred by numerous human rights violations perpetuated by the Turkish forces and Turkish-backed factions of the SNA. The documented violations included [murder](#), [arbitrary detention](#), enforced disappearance, [ill-treatment](#), [torture](#), [looting](#), and [property seizure](#), in addition to [forcing](#) the Kurd inhabitants to leave their houses, [hindering the return of the native people](#) and practices of Turkification and demographic changes.

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

Synergy interviewed hundreds of civilian victims and survivors, as well as documented their accounts and testimonies since we are aware of the bulk of our responsibility towards the victims. Our strategy adopts an approach that focuses on the victims, survivors, and their families' experiences, perspectives and priorities as an essential part of our daily work, in addition to seeking multiple perspectives to develop thorough and analytical understanding of the events and adheres to the highest degrees of accuracy and integrity.

Synergy highlights that the violations committed by Turkey and the SNA-affiliated factions in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad are far more than what have been documented and verified, as we assert that the actual number of violations is significantly higher than the figure given in this statistic.




## Murder and Arbitrary Detention:

Since the occupation of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad in October 2019 and over four years, Synergy has documented the killing of 59 civilians, including five women, and the arrest of 592, including 73 women and 53 children, at the hands of Turkish forces and SNA's groups backed by Turkey.

According to Synergy's documentations, 163 of the arrestees were forcibly disappeared and their families are still unable to clarify their fate. Moreover, 492 persons were subjected to torture in detention facilities run by the SNA's factions in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad, among them six persons who died under torture.

Synergy Association has confirmed Turkey's complicity in the crime of concealing citizens from northeast Syria and transporting them to Turkish territories. It has been documented that no less than 92 Syrian arrestees were transferred to Turkey during and following "Peace Spring" Operation. 55 persons out of them were tried with arbitrarily sentences, ranging from 13 years to life imprisonment.




**Four years since the occupation of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad**

**Violence and Killings:**

**59** civilians have been killed, among them **5** women.  
**11** field executions have been carried out.

**79** explosions have killed more than **146** civilians, including women and children, and wounded more than **300**.

At least **65** cases of internal fighting/clashes between "Syrian National Army" factions that at least killed **5** civilians and wounded more than **36** others.



Human Rights Violations Committed by Turkish forces and the SNA


October 2019- October 2023

## Forced Displacement and Property Seizure:

More than 150,000 indigenous people from Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad continue to be forcibly displaced, due to the Turkish occupation. Turkey and the Turkish-backed factions affiliated with the opposition SNA have resettled more than 2,815 displaced families from other Syrian regions in the homes of these forcibly displaced individuals.

Synergy verified the resettlement of at least 72 families, mainly women and children of ISIS's fighters, primarily Iraqis, in the homes seized in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad.

Furthermore, the Association documented that Turkish forces and the SNA's factions seized more than 5,650 homes, 1,200 shops, and around one million donum (100,000 acres) of farmlands in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad. Additionally, 55 villages were depopulated by their original inhabitants.



**Four years since the occupation of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad**


**Displacement and Demographic Change:**

More than **150,000** people from Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad are forcibly displaced.

More than **80%** of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê population have not returned home yet since Turkey's occupation of the region.

More than **2,815** displaced Syrian families from other cities have been resettled in the homes of displaced civilians.

At least **72** ISIS wives and children, mostly Iraqi, have been resettled in seized houses in Ras al-Ayn and Tall Abyad.



**Human Rights Violations Committed by Turkish forces and the SNA**

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### Armed Chaos and Insecurity:

Contrary to the Turkish narrative that it will create a "Safe Zone", Turkey has failed to assume its responsibilities towards the territories it occupies in northeast Syria and has not taken any serious measures to ensure public safety and security. In addition, Turkey turned a blind eye to the intra-factional clashes between the SNA's groups which are led and supported by Ankara, and to the proliferation and use of weapons between civilians under the lack of accountability and continuous of impunity.

From October 9, 2019 to October 9, 2023, at least 79 blasts took place in areas of Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad, claiming the lives of 146 civilians, among them women and children, and injuring more than 300. Furthermore, 65 cases of infighting/clashes between factions of the SNA occurred, in which at least 5 civilians were killed and more than 36 were injured.