

"We will kill you wherever you go": Violations by the "Dawn of Freedom" operation led by the "National Army"

A joint report between
"Syrians for Truth and Justice" and the "Taazur Association for Victims"



“We Will Kill You Wherever You Go”

Violations Committed during SNA-Led Operation Dawn of Freedom

A Joint Report by Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) and Synergy Association for Victims

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1. Executive Summary

This joint investigation conducted by Synergy Association for Victims (Synergy) and Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) documents grave human rights violations—including summary (field) executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, and the seizure or looting of property in the cities of Manbij and Tall Rifaat, as well as in Shahba region in Aleppo’s countryside. These violations occurred during and after the military operation code-named Dawn of Freedom, launched on 30 November 2024 by Turkish-backed factions of the Syrian National Army (SNA).

This report draws on **18** interviews with victims and eyewitnesses—most of whom fled the targeted areas fearing arrest or death. Interviewees detailed violations against displacement convoys encompassing thousands of civilians, the majority of them Kurds. Some were prevented from leaving the targeted areas, while others were forcibly directed toward Afrin—a destination many feared due to ongoing reports of arbitrary detention, torture, and the release of detainees only after the payment of exorbitant ransoms. The documented violations also include the killing of civilians in the convoys over alleged ties to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), along with beatings, torture, property confiscation, and acts of humiliation and intimidation at gunpoint.

The killings also targeted women, some of whom were executed for working with institutions affiliated with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) or for alleged ties to the SDF. Captured fighters, with the SDF or related forces, were not spared, including the wounded. In one case, an injured fighter receiving treatment at a hospital in Manbij was executed. His killing was documented in a video circulated online and later verified by partner organizations.

No fewer than **52** civilians were arrested in Manbij and its countryside by factions participating in the operation. **Sixteen** of the detainees were released after paying ransoms, while the fate of the others remains unknown. In most cases, the accusations were similar—alleged affiliation with the SDF, the AANES, or employment in AANES-linked civil institutions. In one documented instance, a Kurdish civilian was forced to pay \$5,000 for his release.

Also in Manbij, factions seized more than **20** homes belonging to Kurdish civilians who had fled the city. Most of these properties were marked as “confiscated.” One woman affected by the seizures reported that she had to pay \$3,000 just to be allowed to remain in her own home.

2. Methodology

For the purpose of this report, [Synergy](#) and [STJ](#) conducted in-depth research between December 2024 and April 2025. The research included interviews with **18** individuals—comprising victims of and eyewitnesses to the violations that took place during Operation Dawn of Freedom, led by Turkish-backed factions of the SNA, as well as violations committed after these factions seized control of the cities of Manbij and Tall Rifaat, and the Shahba region in the northern countryside of Aleppo.

Four of those interviewed were residing in Manbij at the time of the interviews. The remaining **14** had been forcibly displaced from the targeted areas and were living in various locations across northeastern Syria, including the cities of al-Hasakah, Qamishli/Qamishlo, Amuda, Tabqa in Raqqa province, Ayn al-Arab/Kobani in northeastern Aleppo, and Aleppo city.

Thirteen interviews were conducted online over secure messaging applications. The remaining **five** were conducted in person in locations deemed safe and private by researchers and the interviewed people.

The field researchers obtained the interviewees’ informed consent. They clarified to all sources and witnesses the voluntary nature of the interview and the intended use of the information they would share, including the development and publication of this report. The majority of the interviewees requested anonymity and the removal of all identifying details, fearing reprisals from the SNA’s factions in control of their areas. As such, pseudonyms are used in this report to refer to individuals whose testimonies are cited.

In addition to the interviews, the research team reviewed a broad range of open-source materials, including reports issued by international and local human rights organizations and media outlets, as well as videos, images, and social media posts. Some information from these sources was incorporated into the report only after being thoroughly verified.

3. Background

The city of [Manbij](#) and its countryside experienced a serious and unprecedented escalation in human rights violations perpetrated by SNA factions, affiliated with the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SNC)—both the SNA and the SNC receive backing from Türkiye. This escalation followed the SNA’s control over the city on 8 December 2024,¹ after intense clashes with the SDF as part of the military operation dubbed Dawn of Freedom, which began on 30 November 2024.² The operation was launched only days after Operation Deterrence of Aggression, announced on 27 November 2024 by armed groups affiliated with the now-dissolved Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which led to the ousting of the Syrian regime.³

Since the launch of Operation Dawn of Freedom, these factions advanced into the areas of [Tall Rifaat](#) and Shahba, northern Aleppo. Their subsequent capture of Manbij served a strategic objective: to disrupt SDF supply lines and establish a military corridor linking Tall Rifaat to al-Bab city,⁴ which is a part of the Euphrates Shield strip that has been under Türkiye’s effective control since it was seized by the Turkish military and the SNA in late 2017.

¹ “The Turkish-backed SNA Announces Control over Manbij City and Seizing it from the SDF” (in Arabic), al-Araby TV, a video published on YouTube, 8 December 2024 (last accessed: 2 March 2025).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebcpmMqM098>

² “Operation Dawn of Freedom Against Assad Forces, Iran, and PYD Terrorist Militia” (in Arabic), SNC, 1 December 2024 (last accessed: 2 March 2025), <https://en.etalaf.org/press/on-the-dawn-of-freedom-operation-against-assad-forces-iran-and-pyd-terrorist-militia>

³ “Deterrence of Aggression: A Military Operation that Toppled the Assad Regime in 12 Days” (in Arabic), Al-Jazeera, 2 January 2025 (last accessed: 2 March 2025),

<https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2024/11/29/%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7>

⁴ “Syrian National Coalition PM: Operation Freedom Dawn aims to cut PKK supply lines”, Türkiye Today, 30 November 2024 (last accessed: 2 March 2025), <https://www.turkiyetoday.com/region/syrian-interim-pm-operation-freedom-dawn-aims-to-cut-pkk-supply-lines-86862/>

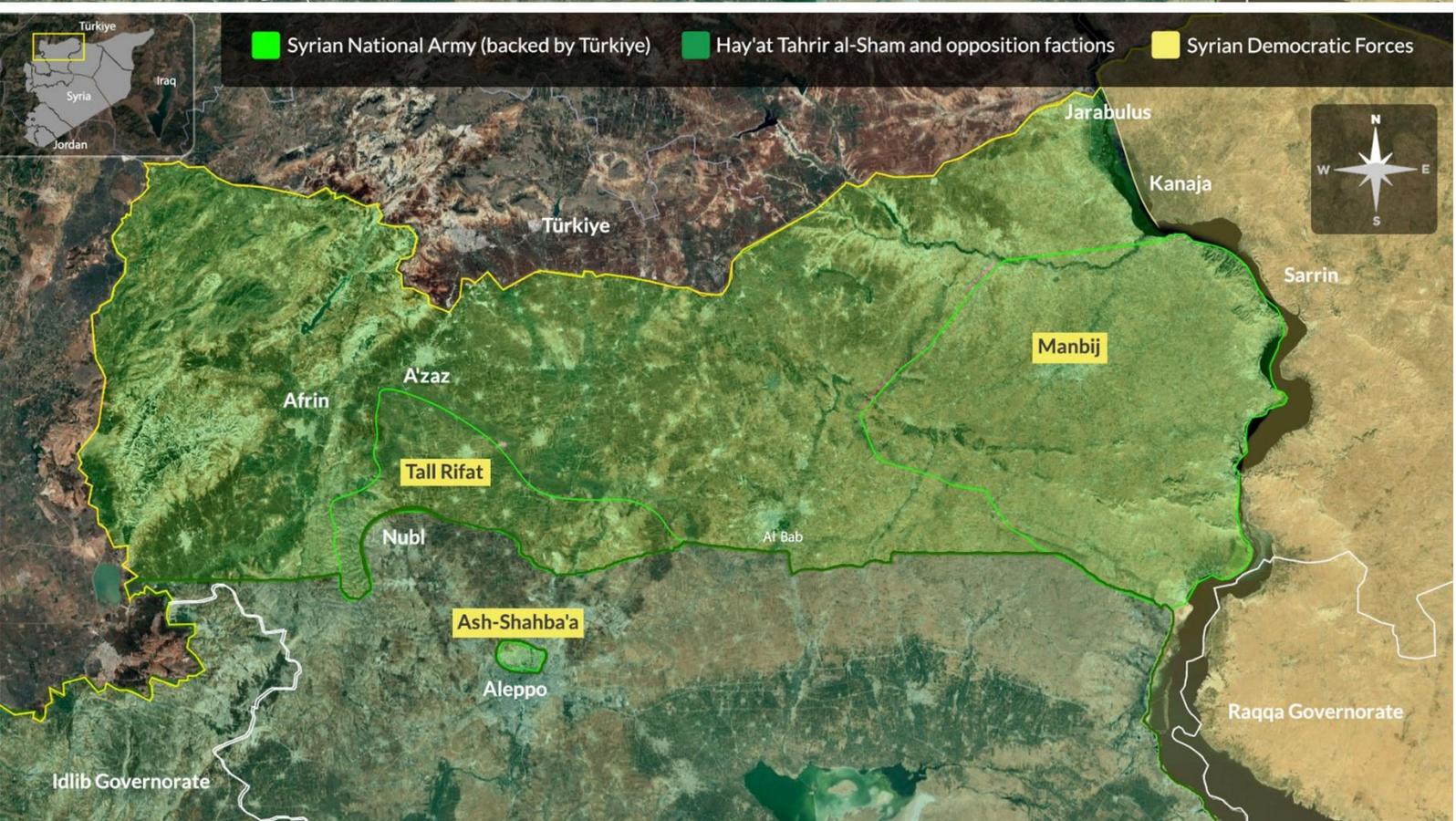
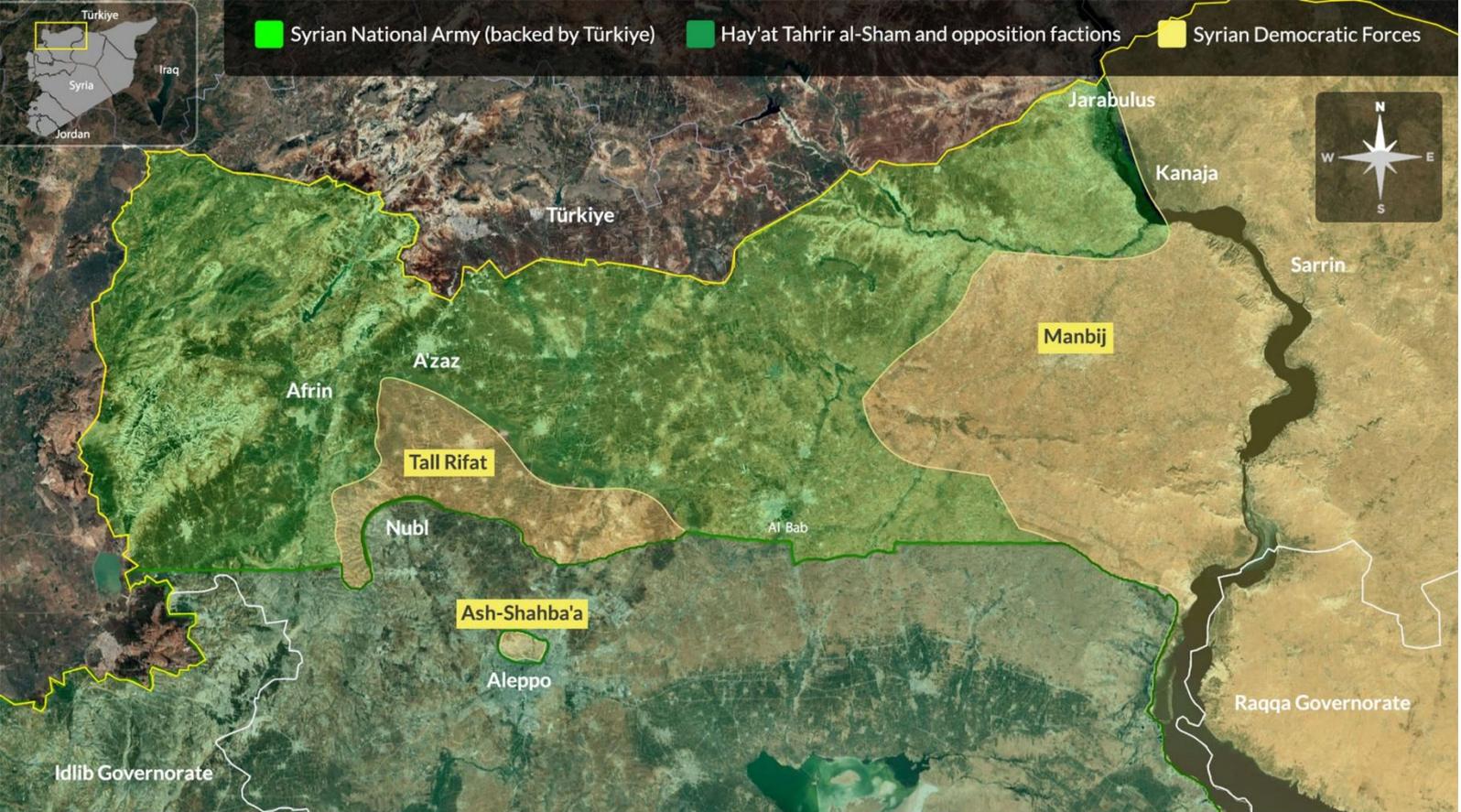


Image 1 and 2 - Maps of the areas targeted during "Operation Dawn of Freedom" in NWS.

The Operation Dawn of Freedom was spearheaded by factions designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury for their involvement in serious human rights violations, including murder, enforced disappearance, and property seizure. Among the most prominent factions are al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division, led by Sayf Boulad, known as Abu Bakr;⁵ the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade/al-Amshat, commanded by Mohammad Hussein al-Jasim (Abu Amsha);⁶ and Tajammu Ahrar al-Sharqiya, led by Ahmad Ihsan Fayyad al-Hayes, known as Abu Hatem Shaqra.⁷ The latter’s group was responsible for the execution of the Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf, along with her driver and two escorts, during the early days of Türkiye’s Operation Peace Spring in 2019.⁸ Notably, the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division and the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade are currently operating under a joint banner known as the Joint Force.

Notably, the integration of SNA factions into the newly established Syrian Ministry of Defense was announced following the “Victory Conference”, convened by Ahmed al-Sharaa, who was appointed president of the transitional period.⁹ Furthermore, reports suggested that the SNC, the political umbrella of the SNA, was considering dissolving itself.¹⁰

⁵ “Treasury Sanctions Two Syria-Based Militias Responsible for Serious Human Rights Abuses in Northern Syria”, U.S. Department of the Treasury, 17 August 2023, (last accessed: 3 March 2025), <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1699>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Treasury Sanctions Syrian Regime Prisons, Officials, and Syrian Armed Group”, U.S. Department of Treasury, 28 July 2021 (last accessed: 3 March 2025), <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0292>

⁸ “Syria: Damning evidence of war crimes and other violations by Turkish forces and their allies”, Amnesty International, 18 October 2019 (last accessed: 4 March 2025), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/10/syria-damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-and-other-violations-by-turkish-forces-and-their-allies/>

⁹ “Victory Conference: Declaring the Triumph of the Revolution, Dissolving the Constitution, the Ba’ath Party and the Army, and al-Sharaa as the President of the Republic” (in Arabic), Shaam Network, 29 January 2025 (last accessed: 4 March 2025), <https://shaam.org/news/syria-news/%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AD%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AB-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B9-%D8%B1%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9>

¹⁰ “Within Days: The Syrian Coalition Set to Dissolve Itself” (in Arabic), Syria TV, 10 February 2025 (last accessed: 4 March 2025). <https://www.syria.tv/%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%BA%D8%B6%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%AA%D8%B2%D9%85-%D8%AD%D9%84-%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B3%D9%87>

Later, the Ministry of Defense appointed Mohammed al-Jasim, known as Abu Amsha, as a commander for the Hama Division,¹¹ stationed in the very location of the 25th Division under the former Syrian regime.¹² This appointment followed al-Jasim’s promotion to the rank of Brigadier General.¹³ Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence had appointed Sayf Boulad, known as Abu Bakr, as a Brigadier General and Commander of the 76th Division in the Syrian Army, assigned to operate within Aleppo province.¹⁴ In an interview that preceded these designations, Minister of Defence, Marhaf Abu Qasra, stated that the ministry’s priority is to integrate the factions and military units from across Syrian territory into the Ministry of Defense. He stressed that the armed factions were not asked to surrender their weapons, but to integrate into the ministry through a structured and legal process.¹⁵

The SNA factions’ attack on and subsequent takeover of Manbij, Tall Rifaat, and Shahba resulted in numerous civilian casualties and triggered a large-scale displacement crisis. Tens of thousands of people fled Shahba areas heading to [Tabqa](#) and [Ragqa](#).¹⁶ Shahba is home to several camps that sheltered the largest portion of Afrin’s population,¹⁷ who were forcibly displaced due to the Turkish military Operation Olive Branch in 2018.

¹¹ “Syrian Defence Ministry Appoints “Abu Amsha” as Hama Brigade Commander” (in Arabic), Enab Baladi, 3 February 2025 (last accessed: 4 March 2025), <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2025/02/syrian-defense-ministry-appoints-abu-amsha-as-hama-brigade-commander/>

¹² “The Syrian Regime Appoints Suheil al-Hassan as the Commander of the “Special Forces”” (in Arabic), Enab Baladi, 10 April 2024 (last accessed: 4 March 2025), <https://www.enabbaladi.net/695254/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B8%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%91%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF%D9%8B%D8%A7/>

¹³ “Appointment of ‘Abu Amsha’ as Commander of the 25th Division Sparks Controversy in Syria—Who Is He (Video)?” (in Arabic), Erem News, 4 February 2025 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.erenews.com/videos/jkmdfdi>

¹⁴ “Sayf Boulad: From a Defector Lieutenant of the Syrian Regime to Commander of the 76th Division in the Syrian Army” (in Arabic), Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, 24 March 2025, (last accessed: 30 March 2025), <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B4%D9%82-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9-76-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A>

¹⁵ “A Special Interview with the Syrian Minister of Defence Marhaf Abu Qasra- the Ministry’s Priority, the Role of the Factions, and the Future of the SDF” (in Arabic), al-Araby, YouTube video, 21 January 2025 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDQ3b7ZENbU>

¹⁶ “Explainer: Thousands of Civilians Driven Out of Shehba”, Rojava Information Centre, 4 December 2024 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://rojvainformationcenter.org/2024/12/explainer-thousands-of-civilians-driven-out-of-shehba/>

¹⁷ “Tens of Thousands of Kurds Flee Shahab in Aleppo Countryside to Tabqa after Being Displaced by Turkish-Backed Factions” (in Arabic), Kurd Online, 2 December 2024 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://kurd-online.com/%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%87%D9%85-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%AA/>



Image 3- Displaced people from towns and villages of Tall Rifaat and Shahba heading toward Azaz and Afrin on 2 December 2024. Source: Enab Baladi/Dayan Junpaz.¹⁸

Manbij also experienced a substantial wave of displacement, with an estimated 200 to 300 Kurdish families, along with a few Arab families, fleeing amid escalating violence and documented human rights violations. These violations included summary executions, arbitrary arrests, torture, and property seizures, as reported in cross-verified testimonies from displaced individuals, who were interviewed by the partner organizations.

It is noteworthy that the violations committed in the targeted areas—particularly in Manbij, and mostly against Kurdish civilians—are consistent with those documented in the Kurdish-majority regions of Afrin in northwest Syria, as well as Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and Tall Abyad in the northeastern parts of the country. These latter areas were previously seized by SNA factions, following the two Turkish military operations Olive Branch in 2018 and Peace Spring in 2019, respectively.¹⁹ Residents in these regions have faced arbitrary arrests, torture, the release of detainees for exorbitant ransoms, and the widespread and systematic confiscation of properties, homes, and land—all perpetrated continuously by the SNA factions with no

¹⁸ “Displaced People Head North Following Operation Dawn of Freedom” (in Arabic), Enab Baladi, 2 December 2024 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.enabbaladi.net/726838/%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%b2%d8%ad%d9%88%d9%86-%d9%8a%d8%aa%d8%ac%d9%87%d9%88%d9%86-%d8%b4%d9%85%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%8b%d8%a7-%d8%a8%d8%b9%d8%af-%d8%b9%d9%85%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%81%d8%ac%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84/#>

¹⁹ “‘Everything is by the Power of the Weapon’: Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria”, Human Rights Watch, 29 February 2024 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/everything-power-weapon/abuses-and-impunity-turkish-occupied-northern-syria>

accountability. This raises serious concerns that Manbij could become another hotspot for similar violations and impunity, unless the Syrian Transitional Government (STG) takes decisive action to prevent the recurrence of such documented abuses and holds both individuals and factions accountable.

The population of Manbij is also enduring the devastating consequences of ongoing security instability and lack of services. The city was shaken by seven car bomb explosions since the SNA factions took over.²⁰ The deadliest of these took place on 3 February 2025, claiming the lives of 21 women and one man.²¹ Moreover, essential services such as water and electricity have been disrupted for over two months since the [Tishrin Dam](#) went out of service on 10 December 2024. The dam has been the site of fierce clashes between the SDF and SNA factions, with Turkish air force backing the latter. This rendered the dam area a potential hotspot for war crimes, as civilians continue to protest near the dam against the targeting of this crucial facility vital to their survival.²²

4. Legal Commentary and Recommendations

The statements of the victims interviewed for this report confirm that the armed groups involved in the Operation Dawn of Freedom have perpetrated serious violations, including killing, torture, verbal abuse, degrading treatment, sexual violence, and looting and seizure of properties and personal belongings. These violations will accordingly be addressed under international and national laws.

4.1. Under Applicable Syrian Laws

The Syrian Constitutional Declaration, issued on 13 March 2025, asserts that all existing Syrian laws shall remain in effect unless formally amended or repealed.²³ Therefore, the violations documented in this report will be addressed under the relevant legal frameworks. In particular, the targeting and killing of civilians based solely on their Kurdish ethnicity—an act of ethnically motivated murder—falls under Article 534 of the Syrian Penal Code, issued by Legislative Decree No. 148 of 1949, which stipulates that anyone who kills another for a base or ignoble motive, or whose actions result in the deaths of two or more individuals, shall be sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. Furthermore, the torture, ill-treatment, or degrading treatment of the victims contradicts Article 391 of the Penal Code, which states: **“Anyone who subjects a person to any form of hardship not permitted by law, with the intention of obtaining a confession or information about a crime, shall be punished by imprisonment for a**

²⁰ “What Lies Behind Accusing SDF of Manbij Bombings” (in Arabic), Enab Baladi, 14 February 2025, (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.enabbaladi.net/737424/%d9%85%d8%a7-%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d8%aa%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%85-%d9%82%d8%b3%d8%af-%d8%a8%d8%aa%d9%81%d8%ac%d9%8a%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%85%d9%86%d8%a8%d8%ac/>

²¹ “Syria/Manbij Bombing: “The Terrifying Scenes Haunt Me Every Moment””, STJ, 16 April 2025 (last accessed: 28 April 2025), <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-manbij-bombing-the-terrifying-scenes-haunt-me-every-moment/>

²² “Northeast Syria: Apparent War Crime by Türkiye-Backed Forces”, Human Rights Watch, 30 January 2025 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/01/30/northeast-syria-apparent-war-crime-turkiye-backed-forces>

²³ “Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic”, Constitution Net, 13 March 2025 (last accessed: 30 March 2025), <https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025.03.13%20-%20Constitutional%20declaration%20%28English%29.pdf>

term ranging from three months to three years. If the violence leads to illness or injury, the minimum penalty shall be one year in prison.” Additionally, Article 540 and related provisions of the Penal Code criminalize all forms of assault and bodily harm without requiring specific conditions for the act to be punishable. Likewise, the documented abuses violate Law No. 16 of 2022 on the Prohibition of Torture, which criminalizes torture in all its forms—regardless of the perpetrator’s status as a public official or the motive behind the act.

Furthermore, the arbitrary detention of victims, withholding information about their whereabouts, preventing relatives from finding their whereabouts or the reasons for the arrest, and demanding financial ransoms for their release constitute a crime of deprivation of liberty without any legitimate grounds as established in Article 556 of the Penal Code. The penalty for the perpetrator shall be temporary hard labor if deprivation of liberty exceeds one month, or if it is accompanied by physical or psychological torture. Moreover, the Penal Code criminalizes sexual assault—such as those committed against several women documented in this report—classifying them as criminal acts subject to severe penalties under Article 489 and subsequent provision.

With regard to the confiscation of the victims’ movable assets accompanying acts of violence and threats, such conduct constitutes the crime of robbery under Article 624 of the Penal Code, punishable by temporary hard labor. In turn, the unlawful confiscation of victims’ real estate is classified under the Penal Code as property seizure, with the perpetrators facing a sentence of up to six months’ imprisonment. This penalty increases to one year if the offense involves threats or coercion. Furthermore, if the seizure is carried out by two or more armed individuals—as is the case in most incidents documented in this report—the punishment may extend to three years’ imprisonment, in accordance with Article 723.

Insults and expressions of hatred or discrimination based on ethnicity—such as referring to victims as “Dogs of Qandil” or “Kurdish pigs,” as documented in this report—are criminalized under the Penal Code. Article 307 stipulates that any act, written material, or speech intended to incite sectarian, racial, or ethnic hatred, or to provoke conflict among different groups within the nation, constitutes a criminal offense. Perpetrators of such acts are subject to imprisonment for a period ranging from six months to two years.

4.2 Under International Laws

The right to life is a sacred right in international covenants and charters, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, alongside other international treaties concerning human rights and the fundamental freedoms. These instruments unequivocally prohibit extrajudicial killings and summary executions without trial before courts that uphold the essential standards of fair trial. Moreover, the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 – which constitute the core of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)—prohibit the killing of civilians and of individuals who have ceased to participate in hostilities, whether in international or non-international armed conflicts.

The aforementioned conventions and treaties also prohibit acts of torture, and other ill, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Such prohibition is absolute and is not subject to any justifications, limitations, or excuses, and is applicable in both times of peace and war. The UN

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984 (CAT) also prohibited torture and defined it as any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person. Torture is also prohibited under rules of the Customary IHL.²⁴ Hence, the acts of beating, torture, as well as insults and words that touch the dignity, such as “dogs and pigs, or requesting to imitate the sounds of dogs” lie under the crimes in aforementioned instruments.

Sexual violence is one of the principal prohibitions under IHL, as it constitutes violence against life and the person, an assault on personal dignity, degrading treatment, and a form of torture. Such acts are considered grave breaches of IHL. Moreover, sexual violence is recognized as a standalone crime under various international treaties and instruments. The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC), includes a list of war crimes and crimes against humanity that categorically defines all types of sexual violence as separate crimes due to their gravity. Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993 defines “violence against women” as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts. Article 2 further clarifies that violence against women includes—but is not limited to—physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the family or the broader community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and intimidation in the workplace, educational institutions, or elsewhere.²⁵

On the other hand, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance have been prohibited and criminalized pursuant to the abovementioned conventions and charters. This act has been defined, criminalized, and explained upon in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance of 2006, which affirmed that no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.²⁶

The testimonies collected for this report indicate that the violations were carried out as part of a systematic policy. These acts did not target specific individuals, but rather the Kurdish population as a whole in the three areas covered by the report, based on the available evidence. The phrase “**We will kill you wherever you go**” most clearly reflects the deliberate nature of this targeted policy. Many of the reported violations—such as extrajudicial killings, acts of torture, degrading and humiliating treatment, sexual violence, and the unlawful seizure of real estate and movable property—constitute war crimes under Article 8 of the Rome Statute.²⁷ Furthermore, these and other violations, including arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, may amount to crimes against humanity if proven to be part of a widespread or systematic attack.

²⁴ Rule 90: Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule90>

²⁵ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>

²⁶ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

²⁷ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>

The Syrian State assumes responsibility for the acts contradicting international law and are committed by its officials, representative parties, or entities acting on its behalf or under its authority. This responsibility entails the obligation to halt such violations, hold perpetrators accountable, and provide reparations to victims. The STG, which has declared itself the legitimate representative of the Syrian State and its legal personality, publicly announced during the “Victory Conference” that all SNA factions—including those implicated in the reported violations—have been integrated into the Syrian army, with Mr. Ahmed al-Sharaa named as president. Furthermore, Türkiye’s overall and/or effective control over several groups participating in the so-called Operation Dawn of Freedom constitutes a legal basis for holding the Turkish State responsible for the actions committed by these groups, insofar as such actions are deemed attributable to Türkiye by virtue of that control.

4.3. Recommendations:

The ongoing violations and crimes threaten to undermine the foundations of civil peace, heighten tension among affected communities, and increase the risk of escalating cycles of violence and retaliation. Therefore, the partner organizations believe it is crucial to direct a set of recommendations to the STG and other actors involved in the Syrian context. These recommendations aim to cease ongoing violations, prevent their recurrence, and ensure reparations for victims:

- 4.3.1 The STG should enact legislation that explicitly provides for the accountability of individuals responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, as the current Syrian laws do not adequately address these crimes. Such legislation must ensure that these crimes are not excluded under the principle of non-retroactivity of laws, regardless of the party involved. Furthermore, these laws should not limit accountability to crimes committed solely by the Syrian regime, as implied in Article 49(2) of the Constitutional Declaration.
- 4.3.2 The STG should conduct impartial and transparent investigations into the crimes and violations committed across Syrian territory, including in the areas covered by this report. Perpetrators must be brought before an independent, neutral, and impartial judiciary. The principle of impunity must be abolished, and no immunity should be granted based on official capacity. Unbiased judicial committees should be established to investigate the crimes detailed in this report, as well as other large-scale, systematic violations across Syria. This is particularly relevant given the involvement of leaders from SNA factions, which took part in the Dawn of Freedom Operation—such as Ahrar al-Sharqiya, the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade/al-Amshat, and the al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division—in human rights abuses, as documented in this report.
- 4.3.3 Syrian civil society organizations, especially those working on documentation of violations, should intensify their efforts in collecting and reporting data, publish regular updates on their findings, advocate for accountability, and work to prevent the recurrence of such violations. Additionally, they should promote legal awareness around human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- 4.3.4 UN bodies—including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP)—should increase their field visits to Syria. These missions should engage directly with victims in affected areas, publish periodic reports, and directly address the STG to demand an end to the ongoing violations.
- 4.3.5 The international community should actively monitor the STG’s compliance with human rights standards and obligations as outlined in international covenants and charters. It should consistently call on the STG to fulfil its legal obligations by ending violations and holding perpetrators accountable.

5. Killing of Civilians and Looting of Others' Properties During Displacement

Six civilians interviewed for this report described the suffering endured by residents who were displaced—or attempted to flee—immediately after SNA factions involved in Operation Dawn of Freedom entered their areas. They recounted witnessing killings and arrests of those fleeing alongside them, looting of personal belongings, and acts of physical assault and intimidation during the displacement.

Badr Salih narrated the ordeal of one of his relatives, a man displaced from Afrin to [Dayr Jamilah/Dayr Jamal](#) village, administratively affiliated with Tall Rifaat city. Quoting his relative’s wife, Salih said that the man and his family tried to join a convoy heading to Aleppo city, but an armed faction intercepted them in a nearby village and forced them to return to Dayr Jamal.²⁸ Salih added:

“Upon arriving at their home in Dayr Jamal, some members of the factions, claiming to be from the SNA’s Military Police, attacked them. The wife could not identify them as they were masked. They seized all their money and belongings, including two cars—one a Suzuki pickup of Changhe brand, and the other a Volkswagen known locally as 'Guinness' – and all their household items. They also destroyed their cell phones and burned all their personal documents, including their family booklet, right in front of her eyes. As if that was not enough, they brutally beat her husband and took him to an unknown location, accusing him of links to the AANES, even though he was simply a blacksmith who left early each morning for work and returned late at night, and had no affiliations with any group or faction.”

The wife later learned that her husband had been transferred to Azaz, in the northern countryside of Aleppo, but she was unable to obtain further information about his whereabouts, as the factions of the SNA, that the family contacted denied having arrested him. Salih added that a member of the SNA told the family that, in exchange for \$800, he could provide information about the detainee’s fate. However, the family refused to pay, as they did not trust him.

²⁸ An online interview conducted by STJ’s researcher on 29 January 2025.

Ari Raman, a displaced dentist from [Tell Qarah](#) village in Tall Rifaat city, currently residing in Qamishli/Qamishlo city, said he joined a convoy of civilians who fled the village as the SNA factions advanced on 1 December 2024. He added that they spent an entire night outdoors, during which some people were forced to burn their extra clothes to keep warm, as the roads were blocked, and the vehicles run out of fuel.²⁹

Raman added that after the Administration of Shahba Regions, affiliated with the AANES, distributed fuel, the convoy was able to resume its journey. During their movement, they witnessed several violations. While riding his motorbike, Raman heard that one part of the convoy heading toward northeast Syria had been diverted to Afrin, while the section of the convoy he was in had its route blocked by SNA factions. He added:

“We had barely moved when they [factions’ members] blocked the road ahead and got in between the people in the convoy. Suddenly, I heard a gunshot from behind, very close by. When I went back, I found a man lying on the ground with his family crying over him. At first, I thought a sniper had shot him. But when I got closer, I realized he had taken his own life by shooting himself in the lower jaw. He had told his family, ‘I will not surrender to them.’ His name was Abdurrahman Khalil Murshid,³⁰ a displaced man from Afrin, and a well-known car dealer in Tall Rifaat and Shahba.”

Following the incident, fear and confusion swept through the convoy of displaced people, causing cars to crash into one another. At the same time, a drone—likely Turkish—was seen hovering above the convoy, according to Raman.

The convoy then proceeded towards [Ahdath](#) area, where HTS members were deployed with their weapons alongside the roads. Signs of recent fighting were clearly visible—burnt-out vehicles and shop doors riddled with bullet holes. There, the displaced civilians were told to head toward Afrin, which sparked panic among them, fearing they might be pursued by SNA factions. About half an hour later, an HTS member informed them that they were free to continue to their destination of choice, Raman said, adding that he saw **“the beheaded body of a young, beardless man left in the middle of Ahdath Roundabout.”**

In Ahdath, a convoy of the displaced people from [Fafeen](#) village, in Shahba, joined Raman’s group. Some members of the convoy reported that **“massacres had taken place in [Babins](#) region, and that al-Amshat (Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade) entered the region. They also said that four persons were slaughtered in the centre of the market in Tall Rifaat, and their heads were placed on their chests,”** Raman recounted.

As the convoy moved forward, armed men positioned along the roadside—whose affiliation with either the SNA or HTS remained unclear—filmed the convoy and verbally insulted its members, as Raman narrated:

²⁹ An online interview conducted by STJ’s researcher on 4 February 2025.

³⁰ “A Testament to the Resistance against Turkish-backed Factions, Abdo Khalil Murshid Ends his Life rather than Surrendering” (in Arabic), Kurd Online, 3 December 2024, (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://kurd-online.com/%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83/>

“Every armed man we passed by filmed us and insulted us with phrases like ‘Dogs of Qandil (indicating affiliation with Kurdistan Workers’ Party-PPK’s fighters operating in Qandil Mountain in Iraqi Kurdistan) and ‘Kurdish pigs’ until we reached the thermal power station. I saw seven bodies of Syrian regime soldiers, burned and discarded on the northern side of the road. They were wearing Syrian military uniforms. This area was under the control of al-Amshat Brigade (Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade)”.

Raman concluded his statement by sharing that people from the convoy reported seeing "a black-bearded man standing next to a beheaded body with his head placed on his chest. The man was eating sunflower seeds, tossing the husks on the body’s head, while filming the convoy and spitting on it."



Image 4- Civilians fleeing Tell Qarah village in Tall Rifaat city on 1 December 2024. Source: Witness Ari Raman.

On the other hand, Ezzat Abdullah said that on 1 December 2024, he left Tall Rifaat within a convoy that comprised thousands of people. Today, he lives in [Amuda](#) town, administratively affiliated with [al-Hasakah](#) city. Ezzat mentioned that armed factions intercepted the convoy in Tell Qarah where many of their members positioned themselves along the convoy's sides, with some infiltrating the crowd and beginning to insult the people. They referred to them as "pigs" and threatened them, saying: "**We will kill you wherever you go**".³¹ Ezzat added that the armed men pointed firearms at the heads of young men, attempting to intimidate them:

“I witnessed the killing of three young men, who appeared to be between 20 and 28 years old. They were afraid of the armed members and fled, as young men were often accused of being SDF fighters. The armed men shot at them.”

Abdullah could not identify the three young men, but he managed to recognize the factions' members who killed them. He said they were from al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division and Sultan Suleiman Shah/al-Amshat as it was clear from their shoulder patches. Their camouflage uniforms had Türkiye's flag and the three-star flag of the Syrian revolution. They carried weapons like (a riffle, M6T, a knife). Abdullah noted that the features of some of them suggested that they were from **Uzbekistan or the Chechen Republic**. Former reports revealed that armed men from Central Asia were in the Joint Force.³²

Nouri Hilal, a displaced man from Tell Qarah village in Tall Rifaat, currently residing in al-Hasakah city, said he witnessed the seizure of an elderly woman's belongings and the shooting of a man on 2 December 2024, when a convoy of displaced people reached the [Azaz-Kaljibrin](#) area and was intercepted by armed members.³³ He stated:

“When we were forced to stop, I saw them beating a woman with the butts of their rifles after taking all her cash and gold. They knew she had valuables because they were searching people's belongings and shouting ‘God is the Greatest.’ They kept asking people, ‘What do you have? Do you have gold? Money?’ The woman was around 60 years old, and four of them looted her money and gold.”

Hilal added:

“I also witnessed a shooting incident involving a man who owned a Hyundai pickup truck. He was shot in the shoulder because his vehicle had a Syrian license plate bearing the regime's flag. They asked him: ‘Why have not you removed the license plate with the regime's flag yet?’ I do not know what happened to him after he was shot. The incident occurred in front of his family, but no one could intervene due to the intense fear caused by those armed members who were intimidating people with their weapons. There were four members inside the convoy, along with another group walking on both sides of it.”

³¹ An in-person interview conducted by STJ's field researcher on 4 December 2024.

³² Alexander McKeever, “Turan Tugayı: Central Asians in the Syrian National Army”, This Week in Northern Syria, 9 October 2024, (last accessed: 6 March 2025), https://akmckeever.substack.com/p/turan-tugay-central-asiants-in-the?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=606588&post_id=149978966&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=false&r=4oeg9&triedRedirect=true

³³ An in-person interview conducted by STJ's field researcher on 4 December 2024.

Hilal was unable to identify the man who was shot, or the exact affiliation of the faction members. He noted that they were dressed in military uniforms and carried pouches filled with magazines for Russian Kalashnikov rifles.

On the other hand, Sherwan Ali, joined a convoy that fled Fafeen in Shahba area on 2 December 2024, around 3:00 a.m. He said that armed men along the road humiliated and insulted the displaced people using abusive language. They told them: “You are going to the dogs” and “You are going to the infidels,” and threatened them, saying: “Your turn is coming—we are coming for you”.³⁴

Sherwan added that he witnessed the killing of a teenage boy by armed men stationed at a checkpoint located after a power station. He did not know the name of the station, as it was his first time taking that route. He said: **“I saw with my own eyes a group of armed members kill a boy aged 14 or 15. He was just a kid, riding a motorbike, and they shot him because he did not stop at the checkpoint.”**

Ali, who currently lives in al-Hasakah, said he learned the boy was Kurdish and from Shahba area after speaking with him on the road shortly prior to his death. He added that around five armed members were stationed at the checkpoint, with many others nearby. They were dressed in camouflage military uniforms.

Mahmoud Haji recounted what happened to his friend Avan, during his displacement from Fafeen in Shahba region on 2 December 2024,³⁵ saying that the Sultan Murad Division arrested him.³⁶ He added:

“At around 3:00 p.m. on the same day [December 4], Avan Mahmoud was driving a vehicle belonging to the AANES, and the car behind him was driving his wife, his two daughters, and another family ... The arrest took place near the Infantry School in [al-Muslimimiyah](#), approximately 2 KM away from Fafeen. Avan was forcibly pulled out of the car, beaten, and his car was seized at gunpoint.”

Mahmoud said that Avan was taken to an undisclosed location, and his family had no information about his whereabouts at the time of the interview. At one point, a video of Avan surfaced on social media but was later taken down. In a copy of the video that Mahmoud shared with partner organizations, Avan is seen surrounded by two armed men who repeatedly insult him and force him to mimic dog sounds. In the video, Avan claims that he stole a car belonging to the AANES, seemingly in an attempt to convince them to release him. Mahmoud believes the reason behind Avan’s arrest was that car.

³⁴ An in-person interview conducted by STJ’s field researcher on 4 December 2024.

³⁵ An in-person interview conducted by STJ’s field researcher on 27 December 2024.

³⁶ The Division was founded in March 2015, and commanded by Fahim Issa who acquired the Turkish citizenship. The Division is from the SNA’s 2nd Corps, and it took part in the military operations launched by the Turkish Army in Syria. The Division is deployed in all the areas where the Turkish Army is in control. It is distinguished from other groups founded by Ankara by its large number of members of the Turkmen component. It is also known that this Division was repeatedly visited in Syria by the former Turkish interior minister, Suleiman Soylu.



Image 5- A screenshot of the aforementioned video showing Avan Mahmoud surrounded by the armed men.

6. Killing Women and Wounded Military Personnel in the Held Territories

The partner organizations obtained two testimonies concerning the killing of women during and after the military operations launched by the SNA factions in the areas they entered. In one of the testimonies, Suad Ibrahim, a resident of [Ahras](#) village in Shahba region, stated that she, along with other villagers, witnessed an SNA-affiliated armed group assaulting four women in the village square on 1 December 2024.³⁷

Ibrahim stated that the assailants were wearing green military uniforms with red and yellow shoulder patches. She recounted that the group beat the four women while accusing them of collaborating with “military forces,” referring to the SDF. She added:

“After being severely beaten and having their clothes torn, they were taken to the yard of a house next to ours. I was watching the incident from my home. They were sexually assaulted and then stabbed to death with knives. Their bodies were left in the yard, and no one dared to retrieve them.”

On the same day, Suad Ibrahim joined a convoy of fleeing residents heading toward northeastern Syria. She eventually settled in Tabqa city in Raqqa province. There, she heard from acquaintances—also displaced from areas targeted by the operation—about the killing of three other women. One of the victims was an elderly woman, around 70 years old, who was reportedly killed in Tell Rifaat on 3 December 2024, “**after being interrogated and accused of working with the SDF and staying [in the town] to relay information to them.**”

³⁷An online interview conducted by Synergy’s researcher on 4 December 2024.

The other two victims were a woman and her young daughter. The daughter sustained multiple gunshot wounds to her leg during an attack by members of armed groups who were pursuing and assaulting their convoy as it was preparing to leave Tell Qarah village—located in the Azaz area of northern Aleppo countryside—toward the eastern bank of the Euphrates River.

The second testimony detailed the killing of a young woman, Qamar Ibrahim al-Sud, in Manbij on 10 December 2024. Nisreen Suleiman,³⁸ a friend of the victim and who lives in Manbij reported:

“My friend was killed by her uncle—her mother’s brother—who went straight to her house upon arriving in the city and shot her multiple times, killing her instantly. I knew that Qamar had received many threats from her uncle, but no one expected that he would actually carry them out. He had been threatening her because she was working as a journalist in the office of Zenubiya Women’s Community.”

Qamar was not the only member of the Community to lose her life. According to Nisreen, two other members—Aisha Abdul Qader and Iman—were also killed on 9 December 2024. The Community, associated with the AANES,³⁹ focuses on family and social issues, as well as negative societal phenomena that affect women’s lives. It places particular emphasis on combating child marriage.⁴⁰

Moreover, the partner organizations verified and geolocated two videos filmed [south of Manbij](#). In one video, a lorry is seen carrying several individuals accused of associating with the SDF, while in the second video, armed members are seen shooting at them. The two videos were published by the OPERASYON HABER Channel on Telegram, which shares images and analyses of local and international operations by Turkish armed forces.⁴¹ The two videos were posted on 10 December 2024, under the caption: “**The SNA Neutralize Terrorists of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the People’s Protection Units (YPG)**”. In one video, an armed man refers to one of the murdered individuals beside the lorry as “**one of PKK’s pigs. We trod on his head. He was killed**”.⁴²

³⁸ An online interview conducted by STJ’s researcher on 15 December 2024.

³⁹ “The killing of 3 Female Activists by Turkish Mercenaries in Manbij Sparks Widespread Outrage among Women” (in Arabic), ANHA, 11 December 2024 (last accessed: 6 March 2025),

<https://hawarnews.com/ar/%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-3-%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AA%D8%B2%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%AC-%D9%8A%D8%AB%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%BA%D8%B6%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A9>

⁴⁰ “Zenubiya Women’s Community: An Ongoing March Towards Strengthening Women’s Rights” (in Arabic), JINHA, 17 February 2025 (last accessed: 6 March 2025), <https://jinhaagency.com/ar/alhqwg/tjm-nsa-znwbya-msyrt-mstmrt-nhw-tzyz-hqwq-almrat-47405>

⁴¹ OPERASYON HABER Channel, <https://t.me/operasyonhaber>

⁴² “The SNA Neutralize Terrorists of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the People’s Protection Units (YPG)” (in Turkish), OPERASYON HABER, a video on Telegram, 10 December 2024, (last accessed: 23 March 2025), <https://t.me/operasyonhaber/37983>



Image 6 and 7-A screenshot from the two aforementioned videos: the image on the right shows an armed man stepping on the head of a murdered individual next to the lorry.

The same Telegram channel published another video, now deleted, on 9 December 2024. The video showed gunmen, some speaking a Turkic language, entering a hospital and executing two wounded individuals. One of the wounded men states that he is in the SDF's Self Defence Units, while the other is likely a soldier from the former Syrian regime. The video was captioned: **“PKK/YPG Terrorists Leaving Behind the Wounded Terrorists to Die in a Shameful Way While Fleeing Manbij City Centre”**.⁴³

⁴³ “PKK/YPG Terrorists Leaving Behind the Wounded Terrorists To Die in A Shameful Way While Fleeing Manbij City Centre” (in Turkish), OPERASYON HABER, a copy of the video is stored on WayBackMachine website, 10 December 2024 (last accessed: 26 March 2025), <https://web.archive.org/web/20241210090500/https://t.me/operasyonhaber/37946>



Images 8 and 9 - Screenshots from the aforementioned video that was reposted on other social media platforms, retaining the original source's watermark. The first screenshot shows the recruit from the Self-Defense Units moments before his death. While the second screenshot captures the weapon directed at the recruit at the time of his killing. Source: Destina on X Platform.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ “A Massacre is Being Committed! The World has Never Witnessed Such Atrocity Before” (in Turkish), Destina, a video on X, 10 December 2024 (last accessed: 26 March 2025), <https://x.com/d3stne/status/1866259281244541267>



Image 10- Turan Battalion Forces in the Russian-Iranian joint base in [Arima](#) village, west of Manbij, published on 8 December 2024. Source: OPERASYON HABER.⁴⁵

Numerous human rights and media reports have linked the aforementioned video to information on summary executions of several military personnel from the Manbij Military Council, noting that those personnel were receiving treatment in a military hospital near [al-Matahen Roundabout](#), north of Manbij city, Aleppo eastern countryside, after being encircled and having their evacuation routes blocked.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ “Turan Battalion Forces in the Russian-Iranian Joint Base in Arima Village, West of Manbij” (in Turkish), OPERASYON HABER, image on Telegram, 8 December 2024 (last accessed: 26 March 2025), <https://t.me/operasyonhaber/37835>

⁴⁶ “Killing Wounded of War and Looting Kurds’ Houses in Manbij” (in Arabic), North Press, 10 December 2024 (last accessed: 26 March 2025), <https://npasyria.com/199913/>
Also see: “Manbij: Field Executions, Looting, and Displacement Without Accountability”, Synergy Association for Victims, 11 December 2024 (last accessed: 26 March 2025), <https://hevdesti.org/en/en-manbij-fielf-executions-looting-and-displacement-without-accountability/>

7. Arbitrary Arrests and Exorbitant Ransoms

Badr Salih’s relative was not the only person to be arrested or forcibly disappeared. Partner organizations have documented the arrest of at least 52 civilians by SNA factions in Manbij and its surrounding countryside. Sixteen of them were released after their families paid large ransoms, while the fate of the others remains unknown.

In connection with these arrests, the organizations obtained four detailed statements, one of which came from Aida Qasim, a resident of Manbij, who reported three separate arrests of Kurdish civilians in the city.⁴⁷

According to Qasim, the first arrest occurred on 13 December 2024, when an unidentified armed group arrested the Kurdish civilian A.E., whose fate remains unknown to this day. She added that the young man’s family had fled the city at the onset of the SNA’s attack, leaving him alone in their home. Neighbors later informed the family that a group of six armed men had arrested him, handcuffed and blindfolded him, and transported him in a white pickup truck.

Regarding the second arrest, Qasim said that on 15 December 2024, factions of the SNA arrested the 50-year-old Kurdish civilian A. S., without knowing which factions precisely. He was subjected to brutal treatment, including verbal abuse that targeted his dignity and ethnicity. The perpetrators hurled insults, such as “pigs,” “separatists,” and “dogs,” directed at him for being Kurdish. He was held for one day in difficult conditions, denied access to food and water, despite being ill and reliant on daily medication. Qasim added that he was released after his health deteriorated significantly, but only after the perpetrators confiscated his car and demanded \$4,000 for his release—a sum he paid without ever being informed of the charges against him. He was never brought before a court.

In a similar incident, Qasim said that on the same day—15 December 2024—another Kurdish civilian, identified as Th. D., was arrested by unidentified armed men. He was detained for three days, during which he was handcuffed for two consecutive days. He was only given one meal per day and was subjected to beatings, including punching, kicking, and being struck with the butts of rifles. He, too, was verbally abused—targeted with racist slurs against Kurds, including the same derogatory terms: “pigs,” “separatists,” and “dogs.” His family was forced to pay \$5,000 for his release. Like the others, he was never brought before a court. In addition, the perpetrators looted his workplace and stole furniture from his home. After his release, he chose not to return home and instead stayed with friends, fearing that he might be arrested again.

Fadwa Hussein, a resident from Manbij, reported that on 15 December 2024, two women employees working with AANES institutions were also arrested—one of whom was a displaced woman from Homs. Hussein stated that the families of the two detainees had been trying to obtain information about their whereabouts through tribal mediation, but as of the date of the interview,⁴⁸ these efforts had not yielded any results.

Hussein also detailed that five civilians were killed in the city following its takeover by factions of the SNA. Four of the victims were killed in the context of theft, while the fifth—a displaced

⁴⁷ An online interview conducted by Synergy’s researcher on 18 December 2024.

⁴⁸ An online interview conducted by Synergy’s researcher on 16 December 2024.

person from Idlib residing in Manbij—was reportedly killed in an act of revenge amid the prevailing chaos and insecurity.

She added that homes were searched under the pretext of pursuing members of the SDF, during which cash and jewellery were looted. The looting also extended to medical equipment and supplies from [Manbij National Hospital \(al-Furat Hospital\)](#). Security completely collapsed, and theft became widespread in the city’s countryside, where cars and agricultural machinery were also stolen.

According to media reports, the looting at Manbij National Hospital included three ambulances, three power generators, the hospital’s entire diesel fuel reserve, and some of the building’s furniture. The incident took place during a raid carried out by one of the SNA factions on 9 January 2025.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Sahar al-Fadl, displaced from Manbij due to the military operation and settled in [Sarrin](#) town, in the countryside of [Ayn al-Arab/Kobani](#) city, spoke of multiple extortion attempts following the arrest of her son, S. M., who was a member of the SDF.⁵⁰ She said:

“A week after the battle of Manbij, he was captured by an armed group. They contacted us using his phone, but my son was not on the call—they had his phone. They said, ‘We want money. If you want your son, send the money.’ I told them I would pay if they let me speak with him, but they refused. Later, another person called and asked for \$3,000. I agreed, on the condition that I could hear my son’s voice, but they refused again. Another call came with the same demand—\$3,000. I insisted on a video call with my son, but they declined. Then they requested \$15,000, and I told them I did not have that cash. I even said, ‘Keep him, let him live with you. Where would I get that much?’ Eventually, I said I would pay if they gave me any proof that he was still alive—a recent photo, a video, an audio recording, or even just a voice call. But they kept asking for money without offering any evidence”.

Sahar learned that her son was still alive—after initially believing he had been killed—about a month after his arrest. She was informed by someone from the prison, where her son had been held, that he was first detained in Jarabulus Prison, and then he was transferred to al-Rai Prison, which is designated for those accused of affiliation with the SDF.⁵¹ She added that her son has two daughters and a young son who suffers from a heart condition. His children are currently living in Shams al-Din School in al-Hasakah, which was converted into a shelter for displaced persons.

⁴⁹ “Pro-Türkiye Faction Accused of Stealing Equipment from Hospital in Manbij” (in Arabic), North Press, 9 January 2025 (last accessed: March 27 2025), <https://npasyria.com/202505/>

⁵⁰ An online interview conducted by Synergy’s researcher on 2 February 2025.

⁵¹ “Every Faction Has Its Own Jails: Chaos in Prisons and Detention Centres in Northwest Syria” (in Arabic), Syria Direct, 3 May 2020 (last access: 27 March 2025), <https://syriadirect.org/%D9%84%D9%83%D9%84-%D9%81%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%87-%D9%81%D9%88%D8%B6%D9%89-%D8%B3%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A/?lang=ar>

One of the SDF’s fighters said that he was arrested for 20 days by members of Maghawir al-Sham, a faction of the SNA, in Manbij countryside.⁵² He was first transferred to Manbij and then to Jarablus. He recounted, “at first, they tried to slit my throat while I was blindfolded”. He was then subjected to beatings, kicking, electric shocks, and verbal abuse. “They either wanted to kill me or exploit me, so we eventually agreed that I would pay \$9,000,” he added. During the interrogation, it became apparent to him that they were trying to obtain information about the location of hidden weapons caches or equipment—presumably to sell or benefit from.⁵³



Image 11- A screenshot from a video published on 1 December 2024, showing members of SNA-affiliated Maghawir al-Sham. The video is captioned: “The Participation of Maghawir al-Sham-Brigade 26 in the Battles in Aleppo Countryside #Dawn_of_Freedom”. Source: Telegram channel Maghawir al-Sham reporter.⁵⁴

⁵² “Two Factions of the SNA Merge under the Name (Brigade 26)” (in Arabic), Syria TV, 6 June 2024 (last accessed: 27 March 2025), <https://www.syria.tv/%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D9%81%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%85%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A9-26>

⁵³ An online interview conducted by Synergy’s researcher on 15 February 2025.

⁵⁴ “The Participation of Maghawir al-Sham-Brigade 26 in the Battles in Aleppo Countryside #Dawn_of_Freedom” (in Arabic), Maghawir al-Sham Reporter, a video on Telegram, 1 December 2024 (last accessed: 27 March 2025). https://t.me/m_m_alsham26/245

According to the information obtained by the partner organizations, the arrests in Manbij took place in the civilians' houses, or headquarters, offices and institutions affiliated with the AANES. The statements showed that the majority of the arrests were based on accusations of affiliation with the SDF or the AANES, or for working in their civil institutions.

For the purpose of this report, several videos showing detainees being humiliated and their dignity violated by SNA factions were verified. One of the most notable videos shows a group of captives being severely beaten and repeatedly insulted. The caption reads that they are affiliated with the SDF, and it was published on Facebook in mid-December 2024.⁵⁵

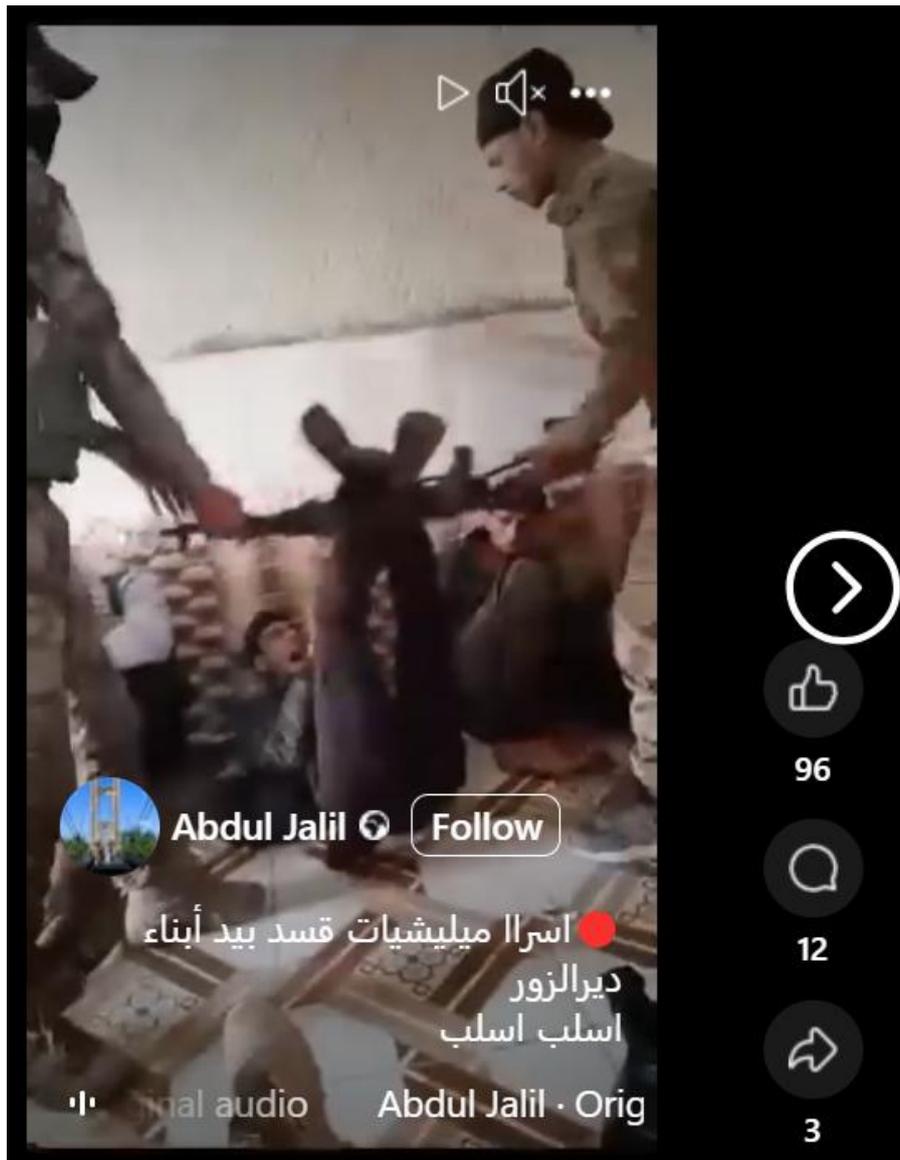


Image 12-A screenshot from the aforementioned video showing two members in military uniforms beating a person identified in the video as an SDF fighter.

⁵⁵ “Captives of the SDF Militia Held by Deir al-Zor People” (in Arabic), Abdul Jalil, a video on Facebook (last accessed: 27 March 2025), <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1631394030785849>

Another video, published on 1 December 2024, by News of the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch Telegram channel, shows seven SDF fighters captured in Tall Rifaat city while being beaten by armed members wearing camouflage military uniforms. Among them is a reporter, identified by partner organizations as Abdul Rahman al-Halabi,⁵⁶ who is seen kicking one of the detainees in the head.



Image 13- A screenshot from the above-mentioned video shows the reporter kicking one of the detainees.

8. Property Seizure

Property seizure emerged as the most common pattern of violations following Operation Dawn of Freedom. Kurdish civilians were the primary targets, according to six testimonies collected by partner organizations. In her statement, Aida Qasim reported that after the SNA factions took control of Manbij city, they seized approximately 20 houses belonging to Kurdish civilians. Most of these homes were labelled “confiscated.”

“A three-storey building located in al-Rabita Street in Manbij was turned into military headquarters for the factions. In addition, a house owned by a Kurdish civilian in Al-Jazira Roundabout was looted and then set into fire on the pretext that the owner was working with the SDF—despite being a civilian with no ties to any military group. The majority of Kurdish residents fled the city, while those who remained refrained from

⁵⁶ “Seven Fighters of the SDF Militias are Taken Captives in Tall Rifaat City” (in Arabic), News of the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch Channel, a video on Telegram, 1 December 2024 (last accessed: 27 March 2025), https://t.me/Forat_zaytin/5499

opening their shops or even leaving their homes, fearing arrest or death amid the widespread chaos that followed the factions’ takeover of Manbij”.

On 7 December 2024, Antar Naasan along with his wife and three little daughters fled Manbij and headed to Ayn al-Arab/Kobani, fearing arrest after news circulated that the SNA factions are intended to enter the city. He said that his neighbours later informed him that these factions had stormed five fully furnished houses owned by his family on al-Jazira Street. He added, **“The factions told the neighbours that these houses now belong to them, claiming their owners were affiliated with the SDF—even though I have never carried a weapon in my life”**.⁵⁷

On the other hand, Mariam Qader, a displaced Kurdish woman from Manbij, fled the city with her husband and six children on 8 December 2024, at the onset of the clashes. They resettled in al-Hasakah city, along with other Kurdish families and some Arab families. Mariam said that her apartment—located on al-Jazira Street, next to al-Hayat Hospital—was seized and turned into a military headquarters. She added that the seizure took place on 11 December 2024, just three days after their displacement. Her neighbours later sent her a photo via WhatsApp showing the apartment labelled “Military Police” in large, spray-painted letters.⁵⁸



Image 14- A photo of Mariam Qader’s house, marked with the words ‘Military Police,’ was obtained by partner organizations directly from the victim herself.

⁵⁷ An online interview conducted by STJ’s researcher on 10 February 2025.

⁵⁸ An in-person interview conducted by Synergy’s field researcher on 23 January 2025.

On the same day, 8 December 2024, Farid Issa, Kurdish man working in a private company, fled Manbij with his family and relocated to al-Hasakah, where they currently reside. Farid reported that both of his houses in Manbij were seized. One was set on fire and later converted into a military headquarters for the Sultan Murad Division, while the other was taken over by the Military Police, according to what his neighbours told him.⁵⁹

On 8 December 2024, Gewan Hamo, who worked as a driver with the Civil Administration in Manbij, fled the city and settled in Ayn al-Arab/Kobani, fearing arrest or even death after seeing a video of armed men raising the flag of the “Free Army”—a reference to the SNA—near al-Matahen Roundabout.⁶⁰ Hamo said that the following day, he contacted his neighbours, who informed him that his father’s house had been looted and taken over. The words the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya had been written on the walls,⁶¹ and one of the group’s members had moved into the house the very next day. The house, which was fully furnished, measured 250 square meters and included five rooms, as well as kitchen and bathroom facilities. According to his neighbours, Hamo’s own house, located on Asmahan Street in the city centre, had also been completely looted.

On 8 January 2025, Kurdish worker Ramadan al-Sayd, along with his seven-member family, fled Manbij city and headed to al-Hasakah. He reported that neighbours who stayed behind in Manbij informed him via WhatsApp that his home, located on al-Jazira road, had been looted and subsequently seized by armed men who turned it into a military post. The neighbours did not identify the group responsible but noted that the men were wearing military uniforms.⁶²

Reem Sheikho, a resident in Manbij, recounted how she was compelled to pay royalties of \$3,000 to keep her home in the city.⁶³ She said:

“This violation occurred at midday on 22 December 2024, when three members of the Joint Force—comprising al-Hamza/al-Hamzat Division and Sultan Suleiman Shah/al-Amshat—entered the house. Three other members were waiting in a car outside. We were given a choice; either pay \$3,000 or vacate the house. We asked for a two-day grace period to secure the money, and one of the members warned us not to leave the city during that time because we were under surveillance.”

On the afternoon of 25 December, Reem and her husband paid the money. When her husband asked for guarantees that the incident would not happen again, one of the members responded: **“If anyone comes, tell them the Joint Force already took the money.”** She added that the members had marked their house with an “X,” which she believed was a sign indicating that the residents had already paid. Reem also said that just a few days before the extortion incident, their house had been raided and looted by members of the same group. She added:

⁵⁹ An in-person interview conducted by Synergy’s field researcher on 23 January 2025.

⁶⁰ An online interview conducted by an STJ’s researcher on 8 February 2025.

⁶¹ “Al-Jabha al-Shamiya: SNA 3rd Corps” (in Arabic), 13 December 2024 (last accessed: 27 March 2025), <https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/2024/12/13/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4>

⁶² An in-person interview conducted by Synergy’s field researcher on 23 January 2025.

⁶³ An online interview conducted by STJ’s researcher on 4 February 2025.

“In my opinion, this happened to us because we are Kurds. They kept accusing us of being affiliated with the intelligence services of the SDF.”

In another part of his statement, dentist Ari Raman, said that a while after his displacement, a person reached out claiming to be the real owner of the property where Raman had operated his dental clinic in the Tall Rifaat. The man demanded rent for eight years, even though Raman had only rented the clinic for two years from someone else and had fully paid the rent for that period.

“I asked him about my equipment. He told me the factions had taken it. Its value was estimated at \$9,000. He sent me photos of the clinic—it had been vandalized and looted. I told him I wanted my equipment back, and he replied sarcastically: ‘If you’re a real man, come and get them—and I will even throw in a bullet and give you a little extra.’”

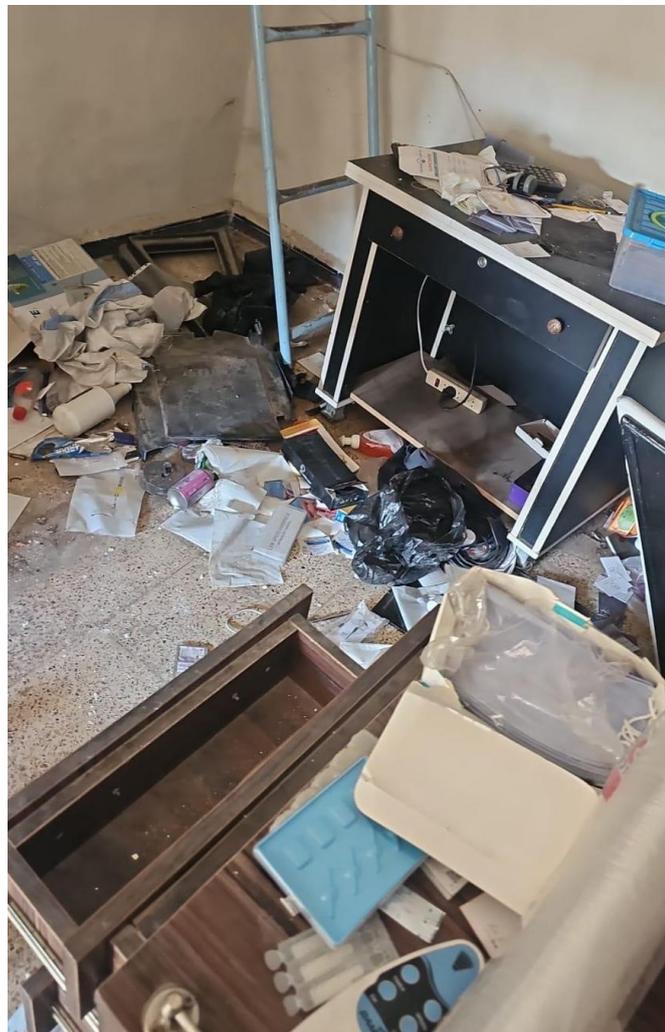


Image 15- A photo of the damage caused to Dr. Ari Raman’s clinic in Tell Qarah, Tall Rifaat, following the entry of SNA factions into the village. Source: Eyewitness Ari Raman.

About STJ:



Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) started as an idea in a co-founder's mind while attending the U.S. Middle-East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF) in 2015. The idea became a reality and flourished into an independent, non-profit, impartial, non-governmental human rights organization.

STJ's beginnings were more than humble; initially, it only reported stories of Syrians who experienced arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or torture. Planted in fertile soil, the seed of this project grew into an established human rights organization licensed in the Middle East and the European Union. STJ today undertakes to detect and uncover violations of all types committed in all Syrian parts by the various parties to the conflict.

About Synergy:



Synergy Association for Victims is a non-governmental, non-profit association, aimed at seeking justice for the victims of conflict in Syria, through empowering them to represent themselves, claim their rights, actively participate in accountability efforts, and achieve justice.

Synergy was founded on March 11, 2021, by a group of Syrian victims, and it adopts the community-based approach to organize the victims and survivors, enhance their capabilities, and engage them in shaping plans and policies, as well as implementing activities in order to reveal the truth, accountably, and accomplish justice.