

منظمة العدالة من أجل الحياة
Justice For Life Organization



The Coffin

A Report Issued by Justice for Life Organization

December 2018

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A report issued by Justice for Life
Organization on the international day
of human rights

December 10th 2018

In the course of its work on documenting violations, Justice for Life organization met with Mr. Ahmad Alloush, a former detainee in the prisons of the Syrian regime.

Ahmad is a young man, born in Deir ez-Zor in 1988, he was arrested on 21st November 2012 and released in 2014 after a one-year and nine-month of detention. Ahmad talked about the details of his arrest and torture that he was subjected to by Air Force Intelligence elements. He as well talked about the details of the interrogation, threat of death if he does not recognize what he is accused of and the cases of torture and extrajudicial executions that he witnessed during his detention.

Ahmad was transferred to several detention centers, all of which belong to the Syrian Air Force Intelligence. He was arrested in Al-Raqqqa city, and then transferred to Al-Tabqa, then to Deir ez-Zor and finally he transferred to Damascus where he has been released. Few days after his release Ahmad moved to Turkey.

Arrest in the City of Al-Raqqa:

After the start of battles in Deir ez-Zor and storming of Al-Jora and Al-Qusour neighborhoods in Deir ez-Zor by the Syrian Regime Forces and kill of civilians, Ahmad moved with his brothers and mother to the city of Al-Raqqa which was under the control of the Syrian Regime forces and was a safe area to which tens of thousands of people from Deir ez-Zor moved as a result of the battles.

Ahmad says about the way of his arrest " On 21st November 2012, at approximately 1:40 am, a group of Air Force intelligence officers in Al-Raqqa broke into the house where I was with my mother, my brothers and friends. They arrested all the young men. We were 8, they searched our bodies and the house then they put us in backup cars and drove us to branch of Air Force Intelligence in Al-Raqqa"

Ahmad didn't know the reason behind his arrest and the charges against him, despite his question to interrogators about it. He said about his detention in the Air Force Intelligence Branch in al-Raqqa: " They put me in a cell less than one square-meter, along with 10 more people where we couldn't sit because of the narrowness of the space. They beat us collectively on our backs, heads, and all parts of our bodies. I have been interrogated by a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Air Force Intelligence branch."

After two days of being interrogated, Ahmad was transferred to the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Al-Tabqa city.

Detention in Al-Tabqa city:

Ahmad was transferred with a group of detainees to the Air Force Intelligence prison in the city of Al-Tabqa. Ahmad said to Justice for Life Organization: "We were severely beaten for five continues days. They accused me of being a renegade soldier, stressing the charge even though I am a civilian. I tried to convince them that I'm not, but my trials were on vain. The methods of torture were much developed than it is in Al-Raqqa branch. They squeezed me inside a wheel and laid me on my back with my legs and feet lifted up and they started beating me with plastic water hose."

Five days later, Ahmad was transferred to the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Deir ez-Zor.

Detention in Deir ez-Zor City:

Ahmad was transferred by plane to Deir ez-Zor airport with a group of detainees. Upon the arrival to the airport, they divided them into two groups. Ahmad along with other detainees is transferred to the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Deir ez-Zor and the rest were transferred to branch of Military Security in the city.

When he arrived at the branch, they put Ahmad with other 15 detainees in a very small cell where they could not sit all at once because of the narrowness of the space. Then he was transferred to a solitary cell.

Ahmad Said: In Deir ez-Zor, they accused me of financing the Free Syrian Army and they said that they have receipts proving that I received 550 million Syrian pounds from abroad. I asked them for the receipts, they brought them and I found that the total amount I received is 100 thousand Syrian pounds in batches, which does not constitute any charge."

Interrogators at the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Deir ez-Zor tried to charge new charges. Ahmad said: that an interrogator called Abu Ali - Warrant Officer- , told me that I had met with the dignitaries of Deir ez-Zor, collected money and that I gave the collected to Kaysar Hindawi¹, but when he failed to prove any charge, he transferred me to the head of the Air Force Intelligence Branch who called Brigadier Mounzer, who asked me about my relatives in the Free Syrian Army and about my relationship with them and their whereabouts."

Detainees in the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Deir ez-Zor are exposed to severe beating. Ahmad Said: "The elements of Deir ez-Zor branch use plastic water hose to beat the detainees². I witnessed people exposed to torture more than the others, they were either renegade soldiers or at odds with those who are is close relation with the Syrian security branches."

¹ One of the leaders of the military factions in Deir ez-Zor

² whom they were hung either from their hands or feet

Humanitarian Conditions in the Prison of Air Force Intelligence in Deir ez-Zor:

Detainees in Syrian Air Intelligence prisons suffer from a lack of food and water. They have to adapt their live in the prison according this condition. Ahmad Said: " The food they gave us was just to keep us alive, each detainee was getting half a loaf of bread and 3 or 4 olives for breakfast and some rice and tomato broth for lunch. Detainees of each cell used to get one bottle of water each day. Every detainee must take into account that he cannot go out to the toilet whenever he wants, that is why all the detainees reduced the portion they eat or drink as much as possible - Even when we go out to the toilet, the duration given to us was very short - equal to jailer's counting from 1 to 5³. Not allowing the detainees to take shower, caused spread of scabies among them and spread of insects in their clothes and blankets".

Military Police in Deir ez-Zor:

Ahmad was transferred with a group of detainees to the Military Police Prison in Deir ez-Zor. He said: "after a day from our arrival, the military police took us to the prison yard. An officer ranked " Brigadier" sprayed water on us, ordered us to lay on our backs, fixed us using wheels and sticks in apposition that our feet became up and our head down and then he started to beat us using a tank chain (300 times each detainee) and while beating he asked us not to talk or scream. After the detainees were tortured in the prison yard, the military police distributed the detainees to the cells, which were actually toilets, they put each three detainees in one cell."

Severe beatings caused injuries to the detainees. So, they asked the military police and the prison director to provide treatment for them. Ahmad said: "The prison director, Sergeant Ahmad, gave blades, gauze and disinfectant to one of the injured detainees and asked him to treat us. The method of treatment was to cut the wound with the blade, clean, disinfect and wrap it with gauze."

³ The jailer counts from one to five where after that the detainees must leave the toilet

Ahmad's foot was severely injured as a result of severe beatings, but no one responded to his request to provide treatment for him despite deterioration of injury's condition.

Arrival to the Prison of Mezzeh Military Airport:

After 15 days Ahmad was transferred with other detainees to Tadmor prison and after a day he was transferred to Al-Ballouni prison in Homs and from there to the military prison of Qabun and then to Prison of Mezzeh Military Airport.

Ahmad Said: "At Prison of Mezzeh Military Airport, they put me in a cell which assigned to the patients because of the injury of my feet, there were 70 detainees in the cell (50 of them from Darya). All those in this cell were suffering from injuries because of the torture. There was only gauze, repairing cream and disinfectant which the head of the cell used to treat the detainees (head of the cell was a detainee appointed as head of cell by the jailers).

Torture of Detainees at Prison of Mezzeh Military Airport:

A month later, Ahmad was transferred from the cell that was assigned to the patients to a 4 square-meters solitary cell, where there were 24 detainees (20 of them from Darya). After that has been interrogated.

The interrogator attributed to Ahmad a set of charges and asked him to admit the name of the military battalion to which he belonged, the amounts he received from that battalion and the regime check point he had attacked. As a result of Ahmad's rejection of the charges, Ahmad was severely tortured.

Ahmad talked about methods of torture during his stay in this prison saying:

"The torture program began with the start of my interrogation at Mezzeh Military Prison. They put me in a large water container and they inserted electric wires in the water, I fall to the ground because of the running electricity. They put me back into the container and turned on the electricity, this process repeated for many times." Ahmad continued saying: "The interrogator brought a coffin, with a red sponge in its inner surface and removed the blindfold from my eyes and said to me: Either you confess or we will send you to your family in this coffin. I refused to admit anything I did

not do. They put me in the coffin and closed it and I stayed in it for about 3 hours.”

After Ahmad's refusal to admit, the interrogator hanged him in the prison yard. Ahmad said: “They took me to the prison yard and hanged me to an old window at one-meter height and I stayed hanged for 5 days without food or drink and I was beaten many times during this period.”

Ahmad described the interrogator saying: "According to what the old detainees told me, his name is Lieutenant Colonel Ziad, he is tall with white hair, his voice is rough, ha has broad moustaches and his accent similar to the accent of the people of the Syrian coast.

The severity of the torture increased with Ahmad insistence on not talking or admitting anything he did not commit. Ahmad talked about his situation in a room specified for torture, saying: “The interrogator took me to a room in the basement of the prison, the room was dark, Suddenly, the interrogator lit up about 100 spotlights and I saw a large number of detainees hanged from their feet or from their hands and being exposed to torture. Jailers of the prison hanged me from my feet and put barrel full of water under my head and they dropped me in the water and pulled me out of it repeatedly, until I told them that I am ready to admit what you want.”

Ahmad was taken out of the torture room to the office of the interrogator to admit the charges attributed to him but he refused again. The interrogator got angry and ordered five of the jailers to put Ahmad in the prison yard and to beat him, where he fainted due to the sever beatings, then they brought him back to his cell.

Ahmad Said: “The next day, Lieutenant Colonel Ziad summoned me to investigate and put me in a small box, the Jailers inserted me in the box with difficulty. After 5 hours the interrogator took me out by kicking the box with his foot. I was not able to get out of the box which I stayed in for 5 hours in the same squatting position because I was not able to move my limbs.”

Execution of Detainees at Prison of Mezzeh Military Airport:

After 15 days of interrogation accompanied with torture, Ahmad was summoned along with three detainees to the prison yard. Ahmad said: " Lieutenant Colonel Ziad ordered us to line up and face the wall by putting

some space between each other. Then the jailers removed the blindfolds from our eyes. The Lieutenant Colonel Ziad said "Turn to me". He was standing back of 4 soldiers who are carrying guns. The Lieutenant Colonel Ziad asked the first detainee "Would you admit the charge?", the detainee rejected to admit. The Lieutenant Colonel Ziad asked the same question to the second detainee but in a sharp tone and a speech full of insults, the second detainee as well rejected to admit. The Lieutenant Colonel Ziad raised his hand and once he dropped it the soldiers started to fire at the second detainee who has killed by approximately 30 bullets in his chest.

Ahmad Continued: The Lieutenant Colonel Ziad asked me "Do you admit?", I said, yes, I admit what you want. They took me to the interrogation room. Lieutenant Colonel Ziad recorded the statements he wanted in terms of the type of weapon and the number of Magazines and ordered jailers to return me to the cell." After that, the investigation with Ahmad was stopped and the torture sessions were limited to the mass torture. A witness described the mass torture saying" In the cell there is a small window in the ceiling, from where the jailers fill the cell with water using a water hose. Once the water covers our feet the jailers put electricity wires in the water and they turn on the electricity in form of shocks. This process last for 10 minutes".

Death Because of Torture at Mezzeh Military Prison:

Ahmad told Justice for Life Organization that a man who was detained at the Mezzeh Military Airport Prison was died as a result of torture. He said:" A young detainee who was from Rif Damascus and was owner of a clothing shop. When the fight began in his area. Every time he went to his shop, he gave money to a colonel from the Air Force Intelligence branch at one of the check points near his area. When he decided to empty the goods of his shop, he was arrested by that colonel and his men. They brought him to Mezzeh Military Prison and began to interrogate him. One day they took him from the cell and brought him back in a blanket after 5 days, his body temperature was very high, I touched him and felt as if I'm touching a stove. We went out to the toilet and as we were standing in the turn; the young detainee fell to the ground. One of the jailers asked me to pour water on his face but he did not move. I checked his pulses and confirmed his death. The prison doctor came and confirmed his death, and said to one of the Jailers: "This, kicked

the bucket” the Jailer replied saying “OK”, They wrapped him in a blanket and ordered us to go back to the cell.”

Kill of Sick Detainees in Hospital 601:

Ahmad said about the fate of detainees transferred to hospital 601 in Damascus as a result of the disease:” I met a young man who is from Darya in the prison. He had been transferred from investigation branch to hospital 601 for treatment of an abscess in his foot. This young man told me that every detainee transferred to this hospital from any place other than the investigation branch is killed by a Warrant Officer who comes at night and beats the head of the patients with a stick until they die. Then they carry them and throw their bodies in the toilet on top of each other. Every two days a car comes and takes the bodies to an unknown place. Only those who are transferred to the hospital from the investigation branch are returned back to the branch for continuation of their investigations. ”

The Placement of the Detainees after End of the Investigation:

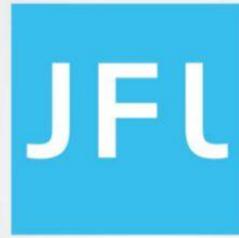
After completion of the investigation in prison of Mezzeh military airport the detainees are being transferred to other prisons. Amriyet Altayaran, Alkasa’a Prison in Damascus, Hangars at Mezze Airport, Halls in Madraj Almatar are some of these prisons.

Ahmad said: “I was transferred to a collective cell in Amriyet Altayaran prison in Damascus. I asked one of the jailers about the reason for my transfer. He said to me:” after completion of your investigation, your file is submitted to the head of the branch of the Air Force Intelligence, who determines your punishment and then they place you in somewhere (prison) until the end of the punishment determined by the head of the branch, and then your file will be sent to the judiciary and he told me that they do not believe (Trust) in the judiciary.

A few days later Ahmad was returned back to Mezze airport prison where his eyes were blindfolded, fingerprinted on papers he doesn’t know its content, then he transferred to the military court in Damascus and then to Adra prison.

Ahmad said:” I was presented to court of terrorism; where I have been charged by leading a military battalion, possessing a weapon against the state and carrying out acts of terrorism that resulted in the loss of life. ”

Ahmad was released on bail of 25,000 Syrian pounds.



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