




Deir Ezzor ... Detention and Extortion of Civilians, and Oil Smuggling

Brief Report on Latest Updates in Some Deir Ezzor Areas

April 2019

منظمة العدالة من أجل الحياة
Justice For Life Organization



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Despite the control of Syrian government forces and Syria Democratic Forces over the entire province of Deir Ezzor after driving ISIS out, yet the civilians are still suffering from multiple problems as these forces are still committing violations against the civilians including detention, torture, and humiliation. The province is divided into two parts in terms of controlling power; the Syria government forces, supporting and affiliated militias along with foreign forces are controlling the cities, towns, and villages that are located in the south of Euphrates River, whereas the Syria Democratic Forces, with support of the US-led international coalition, control the areas located in the north of the river.

This present report covers the latest developments in the two parts of Deir Ezzor in terms of the existing military powers, most prominent violations, fears of civilians, returning of IDPs, and the provided services.

This report focuses on the cities of Deir Ezzor and Al Mayadin, in the south of the river, along with Al Kasra sub-district, the villages of Gharaneej, Al Kishkia, and Abu Hamam, in the north of the river.

First: Syrian Government Forces Held Areas:

1- Deir Ezzor City

[It became](#) a densely population city following the returning of hundreds of families towards the not destroyed neighborhoods such as Al Joura, Al Qusour, and Harabesh.

The major reasons behind their returning to the city were the expensive rents, extortion practiced either by government forces, SDF, or opposition groups, and lack of humanitarian aid provided to them.

The destroyed neighborhoods are not proper for human living, and only limited number of civilians returned to them, due to the large-scale destruction, unavailability of services, fear from landmines, need for security approval, and collapse of buildings.

Security apparatuses or militias [affiliated](#) groups captured the houses of IDPs and refugees. A lot of the returnees could get their houses back by applying a request of evacuation to the security branch in charge of each area. The applicant must be the owner of the house, or one of the owner's family members.

Fuel is available in Deir Ezzor as it is supplied from SDF held areas or from Homs refinery.

A number of militias is based in the city, some of them are subordinated to the government forces, and other are fully funded and supported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. The number of the military groups and militias decreased to 8, whereas they were more than 13 in April 2018.

The Most Prominent Military Groups:

- Russian Forces: mainly positioned in the city of Deir Ezzor along with some areas of the eastern countryside. The numbers of the forces about hundreds. There is no direct contact with the civilians.
- Iranian Revolution Guard: They are no more than 200, and most of them are positioned in the eastern countryside such as Al Boukmal and Al Mayadin. Their numbers are limited inside the city of Deir Ezzor.
- National Defense Militia: They are about 500-700 members. Most of them are positioned in Deir Ezzor city. Firas Al Jahham, aka Firas Al Iraqia, is heading the

militia in Deir Ezzor. The militias subordinated to the National Defense Administration, National Security which is headed by Ali Mamlouk.

- Tribal Militia: It subordinates to Military Security. The number of this militia is about 700.
- Tiger Militia: it subordinates to the military group headed by Major-General Suheil Al Hasan. Its number is limited and has only one center in Deir Ezzor city.
- Hezbollah: a subordinate to the Lebanese Hezbollah, between 100 to 150 members, their existence is mostly in the countryside, and the districts of Jafra and Hrabesh near to Deir Ezzor Airport, besides their positioning points in the city of Deir Ezzor
- Alfatimion militia: a subordinate to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, however, they write on their cars, "Military Intelligence Division", their number in the city is between 200 up to 300 members, and most of them exist in the eastern country side of Deir Ezzor, and they have positioning points in the districts of Jafra and Hrabesh near to Deir Ezzor Airport
- Jerusalem Brigade: they have an intensive presence in the city and the eastern and western parts of the countryside, their number is around 700 up to 800 members, and they are considered to be one of the largest militias in the city of Deir Ezzor

The relations between the militias are bad, therefore, the city of Deir Ezzor witness from time to time clashes that lead to death and injuries among civilians, the militias of Civil Defense, Jerusalem Brigade and Tiger Militia are considered to be the most brutal militias in terms of their relations with the civilians, because their members are used to beat and insult civilians and they are used to create issues on daily basis against the citizens of the city.

The Iranian Cultural Center:

Founded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, the center is active in all of the province specifically in the city of Deir Ezzor. It carries out many activities in coordination with the government foundations such as the Directorate of Education, the Awqaf Directorate and the Health Directorate. The center began its work with the siege of Deir Ezzor delivering many activities such as aids, gifts

and organizes activities and honoring ceremonies, the center main purpose is not known, however the center focuses on its activities on children.

The Military Security Branch performs most cases of detention, especially those who have carried out the settlement / reconciliation with the Syrian government. Several arrests of persons released after payment of millions of Syrian pounds were recorded.

2. The City of Almayadin:

The City of [Almayadin](#) is located east of Deir Ezzor, and has witnessed a returning of displaced people, [the return](#) is due to the lack of aid in the areas of displacement and the high cost of living. The adults who are young of age avoid the return to the city, however, adults who ages under 18 or above 42 years old choose to return since this group of ages is not bound to mandatory or compulsory service. The Government employees return to the Deir Ezzor because the Syrian government has forced them to return.

Humanitarian assistance and services:

The one and only humanitarian organization in the city is the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which is responsible for providing monthly aid to those who have registered for aid, and those aids includes: (15) kilos flour, (7) lentils, (8) L of vegetable oil and (5) kilo sugar. In addition to the aid of cleaning and canned materials every two months.

Services:

The Postal Center activated 300 telephone lines in the area from Al-Barid Street to Al-Jish Street and opened offices for the security forces at the telephone center.

The city witnessed a marked improvement in water and electricity services as the garbage problem continues. It is noted that the salaries of municipal staff are still suspended up to the date of 19 April 2019.

Medical services are poor in the city, where medical specialties are not available and there is no radiographic center in the entire city. Al Hammad Private Hospital was opened in addition to the presence of the Iranian hospital which many people has complained about the poor treatment by the hospital staff.

Fuel prices remain within acceptable limits in the city, where the city's needs are met by bringing fuel from areas controlled by Syria's democratic forces north of the Euphrates River.

Military forces and militias in the city:

There are many military and militia forces in the city of Almayadin, some under the leadership of Syrians and others under the leadership and direction of non-Syrian elements.

- Iranian Revolutionary Guards: stationed in the fortieth Street south-west of the city, seized a number of houses and prevents anyone from approaching the street, including Syrian government forces. Their number is about 150, half of them in the area and half on the city sides.
- Russian forces: stationed in the western section of the rural recovery center which is adjacent to the National Hospital and in the pre-fabricated area, their numbers are few and do not harass civilians.
- The Fourth Brigade: one of the Syrian government forces, stationed in the street (16) west of the city and in the hospital Nuri al-Said east of the city. Their numbers are large and are considered the strongest military group in the city, dominating the river bed area and the western entrance of the city.
- The National Defense: Their number is about (700) elements, stationed in the market area of the new Hal, most of its elements are from the city citizens and headed by Mohammed Tayseer Al-Zaher, who is a citizen of the city.
- Jerusalem Brigade: stationed in the eastern section of the rural rehabilitation center and their number is about (50) elements

The [Fourth Brigade, the National Defense Forces and the Jerusalem Brigade](#) are the main officials responsible for the looting campaigns that the city has witnessed in particular and in the areas of the Syrian government control in general in the city Deir Ezzor.

- The Military Security shield: The Military Security Branch has developed this group because of the tension between the its elements and the elements of the National Defense Army, their number is 25 and are increasingly and they are stationed in the Military Security Branch.
- Fifth Brigade: It is located in the orchard of Said al-Obeidi south of the city and near the military security branch east of the city
- Hezbollah: stationed in the area of the automatic oven and in the water station, their number is about (100) element, no one is allowed to approach the areas of its positioning points
- Alfatimion militia: It is located in al-Tammu district in the south of the city, where it has taken over all houses and prevents anyone from approaching it. Their number is about 300, most of them are Afghan and Pakistani nationalities, even those who join them are not allowed to enter the militia headquarters in al-Tammu neighborhood.

The Arrests:

The security devices detained some civilians on various charges, including civilians who completed the reconciliation / settlement procedures. The Air Security Branch arrested a person for 15 days and released him. They arrested another and have not yet been released. The detainees are beaten and insulted by the elements of the branch.

Second: Areas under the control of Syria's democratic forces:

1-The town of Kasra:

[Kasra](#) district, which is considered one of the largest districts in Syria in terms of area with an area of about 3930 square kilometers, is located west of Deir Ezzor. It was taken over by the Syrian forces in mid-October 2017 after the withdrawal of the ISIS.

The security situation:

The town and neighboring villages are witnessing security checks by members of the Syrian Democratic Forces, especially after the Battle of Baguz, the last stronghold of ISIS in Deir Ezzor, where security forces fear the escape of elements of ISIS to the rest of the areas.

On April 10, 2019, a suicide bomber, who is likely to be ISIS member, targeted a checkpoint of the Syrian Democratic Forces in the village of [Al-Muhaimida](#) in the area of Al-Kasra.

The security forces of the Syrian Democratic Forces carry out arrests from time to time, where the detainees can be divided into two types: the first to be suspected or affiliated to be ISIS member; those are deported to a prison in the town of Sour in the northern countryside of Deir Ezzor; the second is accused of committing offenses or crimes and has no connection with ISIS and those are tried by the "Justice" and are often released after a few days

The number of people who returned to the town has decreased due to lack of confidence in the promises of the government and the assurances provided by the coalition during meetings with social and military leaders in the region in terms of the government forces entering the area again.

Camps:

The [Abu Khashab](#) camp is still located in the village of [Abu Khashab](#), which is the only one in Kasra district, which is supervised by the civil councils and organizations. As of the date of writing this report, there are about 1000 families in the camp with

more than 1,200 tents. The lack of water and the impact of heavy rains are the most difficult problems faced by IDPs in the camp.



Abu Khashab camp - 20 April 2019 the date of this photo



Abu Khashab camp - 6 April 2019 the date of this photo

IDPs in the random camps do not receive adequate assistance. These camps are spread in the Badia, near the villages of Al-Kasra. IDPs in these camps suffer from worn tents and lack of medical and educational points.

Organizations:

There are at least 10 organizations working in the town and its villages focusing on mine action, relief and medical assistance such as prostheses, physiotherapy, psychosocial support especially for children and women, education, rehabilitation and operation of water stations and road maintenance.

Main organizations: Handicap / HI, Cooperative Housing Organization / CHF, Concern, ERT, Relief, and others.

Mine Action:

A group of electricity workers found a number of mines near the 66th line between the village of Al-Buhumid and Al-Salhiyya village near the train track while they were trying to repair the line, as the floods that happened in the area contributed to the discover those mines.



A picture of the mines that were discovered and disposed - Date of photo 15 April 2019

Services:

Electricity works intermittently in the town after a year of electricity break down, where electricity was limited during the period before for the institutions of self-administration and houses of those who had close relations with the Syrian Democratic forces, in addition to some villages, such as the village of Abu Khashab.

After repairing most of the water stations, the village of Al-Kasra and its surrounding villages have witnessed an improved water supply.

OIL:

Hundreds of civilians demonstrated in several areas of Deir Ezzor protesting the smuggling of oil into the areas of the Syrian government control. According to the Justice for Life researcher, at least 10 to 15 tanks transporting oil on daily basis to areas of the government. "The tanks are heading to the city of the Tabaka and from there to Homs and Banias." oil is also smuggled to the opposite bank of the Euphrates through large pumps and hoses.



The town of Al-Kasra - Pictures of tanks transporting petroleum to areas of the Syrian government – Date of the photo 19 April 2019

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2- The villages of Gharanij and Kashkia and Abu Hammam:

It is located in the eastern part of Deir Ezzor and administratively a part of [Hajeen](#) district. It is one of the most densely populated villages in Deir Ezzor. It is characterized by the presence of oil wells. In 2014, ISIS committed a [massacre](#) in these villages.

After the control of Syria's democratic forces on the three villages, most of the IDPs returned, and the those who have flown from the recent battles ISIS.

There are not many organizations operating in the three villages due to the fear of the security situation that accompanied the battles in the east of Deir Ezzor in the face of ISIS. One of these organizations is Furatna, which works in the agricultural field in Abu Hamam village.

According to the Justice for Life researcher in the area, and the nearby areas, such as the villages of al-Jaradi, Soudan and Abu Hardub, have witnessed shooting, targeting of checkpoints and assassinations, as well as the spread of mines in the villages of Hajin and Sha'afa near the three villages have been confirmed.

The Justice for Life researcher confirmed the existence of oil smuggling operations to the Syrian government control areas in the village of Abu Hamam and neighboring villages and towns.

Civilians stay at their homes in the evening due to the instability of the security situation. Electricity is not available in the three villages and the water is delivered intermittently to some areas near the river only.

There are (7) hospitals: (3) in Gharaneej and (2) in Kashkia and (3) in Abu Hammam.



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