



Risks and Challenges of Return to Areas Affected by the 2019 Peace Spring Operation

A Case Study of Eastern Countryside of Ras al-Ain

Research Report

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Our village no longer has any of its original inhabitants. The main reason is that all of us who lived there are of Kurdish ethnicity. We were all displaced on the same day. None of us has attempted to return, out of fear of being killed, arrested, or blackmailed. This fear is especially strong because some of us have family members who were martyred while fighting the Islamic State (ISIS) in the areas of Tel Hamis and Abu Rasen. One of them was my brother.



Newroz, a displaced resident from Ras al-Ain-al-Dawoudiyeh village



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First: Executive Summary

On October 9, 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the launch of the military operation known as "Peace Spring." This operation targeted the areas of Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) and Tel Abyad in northeastern Syria¹.

The offensive was carried out by the Turkish army, along with Syrian armed factions backed by it, known as the "Syrian National Army (SNA)"². It ended with the full control of the aforementioned areas.

The operation was accompanied by a series of human rights violations. These primarily affected property, housing, and land rights. In addition, there were reports of arbitrary arrests, torture, and cruel and inhuman treatment—violations that continue to this day.

These widespread and systematic abuses, committed by the Turkish forces and affiliated Syrian factions, have created significant challenges and fears. As a result, many original inhabitants have been unable or unwilling to return to their homes or reclaim their rights and means of livelihood.

To investigate the obstacles faced by the population and the reasons preventing their return, the field research team at PEL – Civil Waves Organization conducted a total of 43 interviews. These included 18 women and 25 men, most of whom currently reside in camps in the cities of Al-Hasakah and Tel Tamer in areas of northeastern Syria.

All interviewees noted being subjected to violations involving property, housing, and land rights. In January 2024, **PEL – Civil Waves** published a detailed report on property, housing, and land rights

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<https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7/%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7/1607177>

² <https://dam.gcsp.ch/files/doc/sna-structure-function-damascus-ar>

violations in the areas of Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) and Tel Abyad after 2019³.

Property violations were accompanied by widespread looting. Stolen items included household furniture, electrical appliances, and agricultural equipment and machinery. Looting also targeted seasonal crops such as wheat, barley, cumin, and other grains. These crops represent the primary source of livelihood for residents of the region.

Reports by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria also indicated large-scale looting by militants of the SNA factions⁴.

Testimonies also revealed widespread seizure of agricultural lands and their exploitation for the benefit of SNA factions in several cases.

The violations were not limited to looting and land seizure. Turkish forces also directly destroyed many civilian properties and homes. This was confirmed by 10 of the witnesses interviewed. They noted that the Turkish army was involved in destroying their homes. In some cases, entire villages were converted into military bases and headquarters for either Turkish forces or their affiliated factions⁵.

Furthermore, entire villages were depopulated, and their inhabitants were prevented from returning despite the end of the military operation.

This research report focuses on violations committed against individuals who attempted to return to their villages. These violations include killings, arrests, extortion, and ransom demands. The report also highlights the dangers posed by landmines and booby-trapped homes and villages. These hazards have led to the death or injury of 12 relatives of the interviewed witnesses.

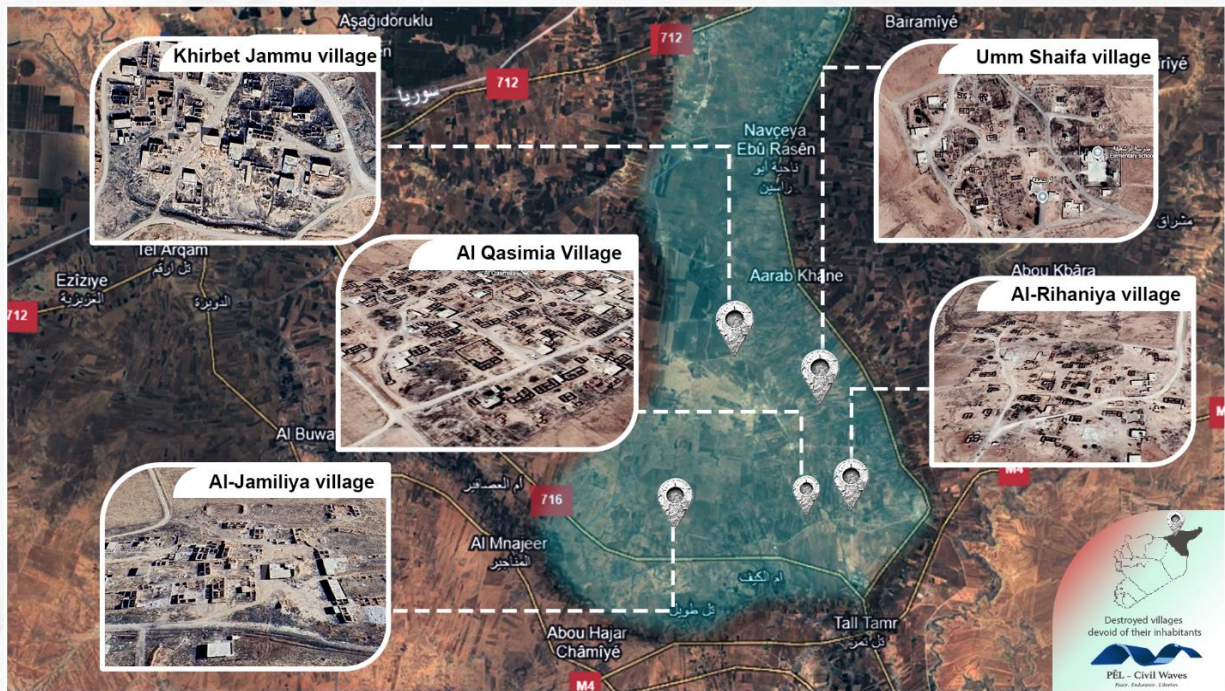
³ <https://pel-cw.org/16468/>

⁴ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/210/88/pdf/g2021088.pdf>

⁵ <https://npasyria.com/169052/>

The majority of interviewees confirmed the absence of basic life necessities in their villages. These include a lack of essential services such as electricity and water. Many also expressed a general sense of insecurity. In addition, several villages have been targeted with shelling. This occurs along the dividing lines between areas controlled by Turkish forces and SNA factions on one side, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the other.

These conditions have deterred many displaced persons from attempting to return. Among the witnesses interviewed, only 11 had tried to go back. However, all of them were subjected to violations that discouraged any further attempts. A number of witnesses were able to identify the party involved in committing the violation. The most frequently mentioned group was Al-Hamzat, cited in 15 cases, followed by the Sultan Murad faction in 2 cases, and the Turkish army in 8 cases. The Civil Police and Military Police were each named in one case, and the SDF in two cases. The remaining witnesses were unable to identify the responsible party for the violation.



The image shows the villages targeted during the report, which were destroyed and emptied of their residents, according to witness statements.



The image shows the villages targeted during the report that were transformed into Turkish military bases, according to witness statements.

Second: Methodology of the Report

This report was prepared based on 43 in-person interviews. These were conducted by the field research team of PEL – Civil Waves in northeastern Syria, in the months of September and November 2024. The interviews were held with individuals displaced due to the military operation led by Turkey, known as “Peace Spring”. The purpose of the research was to examine patterns of violations committed to prevent displaced individuals from returning to their original homes. These violations were carried out by members of the Turkish army occupying the area, as well as militants of the SNA, which is officially under the command of the Syrian Interim Government.

This report focused specifically on the villages in the eastern countryside of Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye), using them as a case study. Out of the 43 testimonies, 30 were related to this area.

The targeted region stretches from the town of Tel Tamer in the south to the village of Kasra in the northwest, near the Turkish border—a distance of 40 km. It also spans from Tel Tamer to the village of Kharbet al-Souda in the west, covering 20 km. From Kharbet al-Souda to the village of Merikiz is another 38 km, and from Merikiz to Kasra is 17 km. In total, this area encompasses around 52 villages.

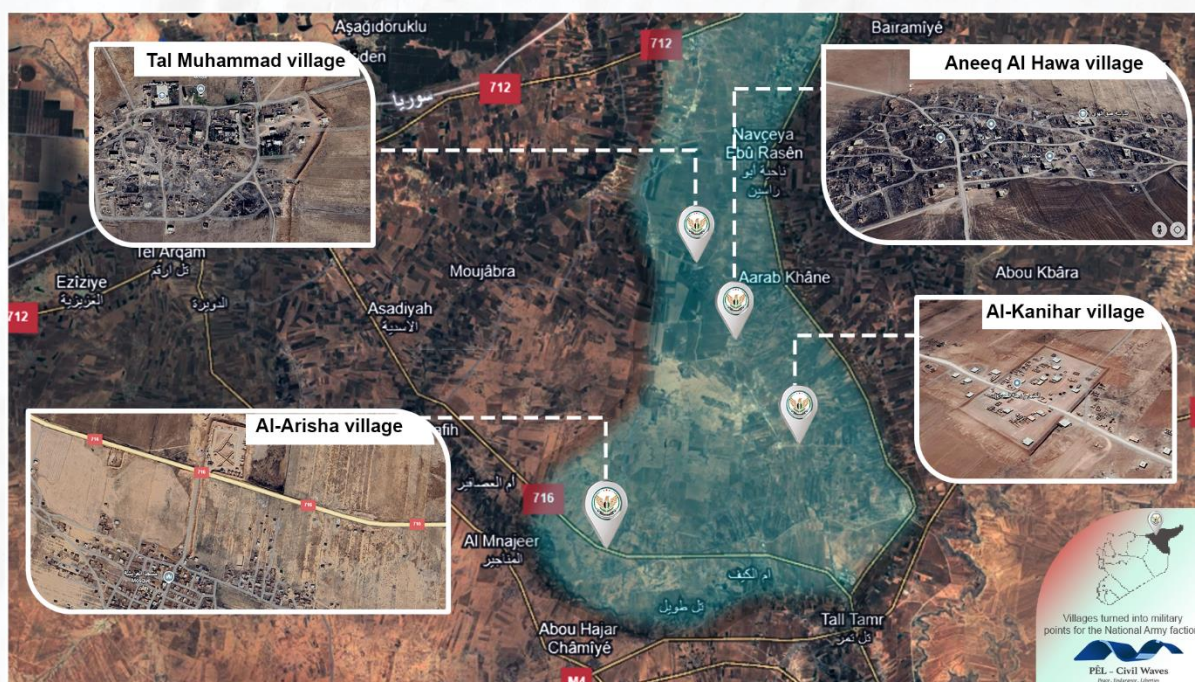
Interviews were conducted in both Arabic and Kurdish. The testimonies were transcribed into forms that were developed and designed by the administrative and legal team at PEL – Civil Waves. These forms included sections on the risks and challenges of return. They also included a section on legal recourse and reparations. Where available, the forms were supplemented with supporting documents verifying the victims’ or witnesses’ ownership of property. In some cases, photographs and videos of the seized properties were also provided. Google Maps was used to help identify the locations of these properties. Researchers were given images or videos showing

evidence of seizure, destruction, and other violations committed by Turkish-backed factions in the region.

In addition to the collected testimonies, the research team consulted several open-source reports about the violations committed by Turkish occupation. These included reports from UN agencies, human rights organizations, media outlets, and social media platforms. It became evident that the testimonies provided by witnesses largely aligned with what was documented in these other sources.

During the interviews, victims and witnesses were asked for detailed information about how they obtained updates on their property situations. They were also asked about their return attempts and the challenges they or close relatives faced.

The identities of witnesses—and other identifying details—were concealed. This was done even for those who did not object to having their real names included. The aim was to ensure their safety and prevent possible retaliation in the future. The field research team advised the participants to choose pseudonyms for use in the report.



The image shows the villages targeted in the report, which were transformed into military points for the National Army factions, according to witness statements.

Third: Patterns of Property Violations in Areas Affected by "Peace Spring" Operation – Eastern Countryside of Ras al-Ain after 2019

After reviewing the 43 testimonies collected by PEL – Civil Waves and analyzing the data within them, several patterns emerged. It became clear that the violations committed against property rights were carried out in a systematic manner. These acts were perpetrated by Turkey, with the support of factions from the SNA. The violations extended across 52 villages in the region. These actions served multiple purposes. Some of them may have been motivated by discriminatory intentions. However, the primary goal appeared to be preventing residents from returning to their original homes.

The following title reflects the key patterns of the documented violations: "Even the Iron Bars Around the Graves Were Stolen."

A. Looting and Seizure:



Statistics on looting and thefts committed by the factions, according to 43 physical interviews conducted by the PÊL Field Team.

Interviews revealed that looting of civilian property occurred in 61 documented cases. The stolen items included household belongings such as furniture, home appliances, and electrical equipment. In many cases, civilian homes were repurposed and used as storage warehouses for the looted goods. This was confirmed by Manal Al-Ahmad, a displaced person from the village of Al-Rihania, Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye).

"All the villages in the area were looted. People say that the armed groups brought large trucks regularly and loaded them with specific

items. For example, in the first period, all the electrical equipment was moved. Then came the carpets, followed by agricultural tools, and so on. The looting continued until the homes in the villages were completely emptied over the course of three months. My home was one of them," Al-Ahmad said.

Similarly, a witness from the village of al-Qasimiyah, who used the pseudonym "Abu Mahmoud," said, "Looting, theft, and the confiscation of civilian property happened on a daily basis. We used to watch through binoculars as large trucks arrived with nothing inside and left fully loaded with furniture, household goods, and civilian vehicles."

Another witness, Jamila, who was displaced from the village of Al-Dawudiyah, shared her experience, "All of my household items were looted. This included electrical appliances, furniture, a power generator, and water-pumping engines. They also took cotton planting equipment, tractors, and all their tools. In addition, they stole 60 livestock animals. They stole everything from a food storage warehouse and another one that stored seeds for wheat, barley, cotton, and chickpeas. They even seized six diesel tanks, each containing 18,000 liters."

Looting extended beyond private property to public property, such as cemeteries. This was mentioned by witness Abu Khalil, a displaced person from the village of Khirbet al-Dibs and father of four children. He is currently residing in Al-Tala'a Camp (Sere Kaniye) in Al-Hasakah. When he was asked about the status of his property, he said, "During a visit by some friends to the city of Al-Hasakah for medical reasons, they told me about our village and the surrounding villages. Through them, I was told about the fate of my property and that the

village cemetery had been looted. Even the iron bars around the graves were stolen."

B. Turning Villages into Military Bases and Positions

This pattern of violation is one of the most prominent in the targeted area for this research report. It is a method used by Turkey in its military operations "Peace Spring" and "Olive Branch." These operations aimed to solidify the displacement of the original inhabitants from their villages and towns.

PEL – Civil Waves published an extensive study in March 2024 on property violations as a means of enforcing forced displacement in northeastern Syria⁶. Through these violations, committed by Turkey and its allied factions, the opportunities for Internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return became increasingly difficult and dangerous.

The number of Turkish military bases in the targeted area (eastern countryside of Ras al-Ain) is five. In addition, there are numerous military points operated by SNA factions. According to the testimonies, there have been 17 instances of homes or villages being turned into military points.

Witness Manal Al-Ahmad, an alias for a displaced person from Al-Rihaniyah village, a mother of a child, was interviewed in October 2024 by PEL – Civil Waves' field researcher. She explained that she and her family cannot return to their village because it had been turned into a military point by Al-Hamzat faction. "I cannot return; my village is in an area that is prohibited for entry. It is controlled by Al-Hamzat faction under the pretext that it is located in a military zone," Al-Ahmad said.

⁶ <https://pel-cw.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%83%D8%A3%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7.pdf>

This was further supported by the statement of witness Zaynab, also from Al-Rihaniyah. She explained that she does not want to return to the village due to the danger to her family's life, the destruction of her house, the seizure of her land, and its conversion into a military point for the SNA factions. "We do not want to return to the village because we might be exposed to death. The roads leading to the village are mined, and the village has been turned into a military point for the SNA factions, specifically Al-Hamzat faction," Zeynab said.

In attempts to prevent the original inhabitants from returning to their villages, armed factions targeted anyone trying to approach these areas with gunfire. Witness "Muhammad Ahmad," an alias for a displaced person from the village of Al-Manakh, testified in October 2024 about how Al-Hamzat faction burned his house and turned his village into a military point. "The village has become a military point for Al-Hamzat faction, and anyone attempting to cross towards the village is shot at," Ahmad said.

C. Destruction of Property to Secure Military Bases

Turkey and the factions supported by it in the targeted area deliberately destroyed and damaged properties. This destruction occurred either completely, through demolition, or partially, through shells and airstrikes. The report has documented 40 cases of residential property destruction. Among these, 10 homes were completely demolished, and in 3 cases, homes were set on fire after their contents were looted. These practices further weakened the possibility for residents to return to their original areas.

Witness "Fakhri" from the village of Al-Aziziya was one of the victims of these destructive violations. His house was demolished, and the rubble was used to create earthen berms around the Turkish military base in the village. He explained, "On December 1, 2019, my house in Al-Aziziya was demolished by the Turkish army, and they turned the

village school into a military base. They were wearing Turkish army uniforms and raising the Turkish flag."

He added, "We cannot return due to the presence of a Turkish military base. They consider the village a military zone, and it is prohibited to approach it. Many of the village's homes were demolished, as we saw in satellite images. About 50% of the village was destroyed. I would be arrested or shot at if I tried to go back there. Every house that is completely demolished has its rubble used as fortifications around the base."

This statement is consistent with the testimony of 'Sipan,' a witness from the village of Darbo who is currently living in Washokani Camp. Sipan explained, "My stepmother's house was demolished with a tractor, and they then turned the site into a military base yard."

The destruction of properties did not target only homes in villages turned into military bases. It extended to nearby villages as well, in order to protect these bases and prevent access to them. In this context, "Majid Muhammad," an alias for a witness from the village of Knihir, stated that his house and several others in the village were demolished to secure the nearby military base. He shared, "On October 20, 2019, the factions took control of the village, looted and stole anything that could be sold. After 20 days, and before the arrival of the Turkish governor, they demolished 29 out of 35 houses and turned the rubble into berms to protect the military base."



Fourth: Risks and Challenges of Return, Lack of Livelihood, and Accountability Mechanisms

The types of violations that have hindered or discouraged return attempts are varied. The most significant factor is the lack of security in areas controlled by Turkey and the factions of the SNA. This lack of security has been repeatedly highlighted in reports by the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria. Additionally, Human Rights Watch's report, issued in February 2024, also confirms these concerns, under the title "Achieving Everything Through Military Force⁷."

The most prominent violations in this context include:

A. The Danger of Landmines:

"My husband's body remained under the rubble of our house for a month after it exploded as he entered." This is what "Sara" said about her husband's attempt to return to the village to bring some clothes for their children. He tragically lost his life due to a landmine that was planted inside their home. The explosion caused the destruction of their house and his death. Sara explains, "On November 7, 2019, my husband returned to the house to get some clothes because of the cold. He went with his aunt, cousin, and our neighbor. They told me that my husband, when he entered the house, was surprised to find a dead dog in the living room. He told them he would take it out while they checked on their homes. But minutes later, they heard a loud

⁷ <https://aawsat.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/5053276-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B6%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%86%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A1>

explosion, and my house had turned to rubble. My husband's body remained under the rubble for a month because it was difficult to bring machinery to the site. After a month, the men of the village went to the house and retrieved my husband's body with great effort. I suffered the greatest tragedy in my life; my husband was killed when my house was blown up by a mine, and I don't know who placed it."

"Mustafa" from the village of Al-Arishah, married and a father of a child, also shared his experience of landmine tragedies. His son needs surgery due to a landmine explosion. He stated, "I will never think of returning. My son lost his upper limb when he was playing on the ground and picked up a strange object that exploded. He was hit with shrapnel in his head, and he is still bedridden. The mines also killed two people from the village, a woman and a man."

Zaynab, also from Al-Rihaniyah, now living in a tent with her family of five children in an IDP camp in Al-Hasakah, told the PEL team, "I was displaced on October 27, 2019, when the clashes reached the village. Two days later, I returned with some of my family members, but on the way, my nephew stepped on a landmine, and it exploded. We couldn't continue the journey out of fear for our lives. After this incident, I didn't think about returning until the armed factions left."

Witness "Haitham" from the village of Al-Rihaniyah tried to return to the village but was injured by landmines planted along the road leading to the village. He explained, "On November 2, 2019, around 11 a.m., my cousin and I decided to return to the village. But on the way, before we reached home, a landmine exploded. We believe it was planted by members of Al-Hamzat faction, as we crossed the same road on October 27, 2019, when we were displaced, and no one but them had entered the area. As a result, my cousin and I sustained serious injuries, and we remained on the road for half an hour in pain, bleeding, until our cousins arrived and helped us."

""Abd," from the village of Al-Abush, residing in the Sere Kaniye camp in Hasakah, talks about his unwillingness to return unless protective

measures are in place. He stresses that mine clearance teams must conduct surveys and remove all explosive materials before any return can take place. He also shared the tragic story of his uncle, "My uncle returned on the 15th of Ramadan in 2023 at around 8 a.m. to check his house. When he entered, the house exploded, and he died. The house was booby-trapped, and we don't know who rigged it or what type of mines were planted. His house was located on the front line between the armed factions (SNA) on one side and the Syrian regime and SDF on the other. This incident was the reason we didn't think of returning. We cannot return under the current situation with the factions and landmines."

Twelve other witnesses interviewed spoke about the planting of landmines along roads leading to their villages and around their homes. They described victims who lost their lives or sustained serious injuries due to these practices. The witnesses were often unable to identify the parties responsible for planting the explosive devices. This is despite the international ban on their use under the 1997 Mine Ban Convention, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

B. Killing:

"Um Saleh," a housewife from the village of Khirbet Qaraj, a part of the Tel Tamer district, and currently residing in Washokani camp. She recounts a tragic incident linked to the military operation carried out by Turkey and the SNA factions in her village. She says the operation caused intense fear for her and her children, lasting for a long time. It also prevented them from considering a return to the village until the armed factions eventually withdrew.

"My husband was killed when he was targeted by a shell, and my father died in a landmine explosion as they were trying to return," Um Saleh said.

She explains, "On October 27, 2019, the clashes reached our village. My cousin (K) was at my house at the time, nursing her baby. She was struck by shrapnel from the shells the armed factions were firing at the village. She died instantly."

She adds, "This incident caused great panic. We left the body behind and took her child with us. The little child was still alive, and we headed to a valley near the village. Later, my husband and the men from the village returned and retrieved the body. The look of terror on the children's faces is something I'll never forget."

In the same context, "Khalil" talks about losing three family members due to shells that hit their home, preventing them from attempting or considering returning again.

"On October 31, 2019, the village was shelled with mortar shells by Al-Hamzat faction. It was around 10 a.m. when a shell hit our house, and my brother, uncle, and his wife were in the house. All three lost their lives to the shrapnel from the shell. After this incident, we didn't think of returning as long as the armed factions are still there," Khalil said.

Similarly, Nazli Ahmad, a widow, lost her husband when he was killed by a shell. He had returned to their village, Seybatya, to bring back a gas cylinder and some flour so she could bake some bread for their children. That day, he never came back. In addition to losing her husband, Nazli also lost her agricultural land. It was taken over by Al-Hamzat faction after they seized control of the area.

"The day after we were displaced, on October 18, 2019, my husband told me he wanted to return to the village to get some flour and a gas cylinder. I tried to stop him, but he said he wouldn't be long. Two hours later, I received a call from his cousin informing me that my husband had been killed by a shell. His body was left outside for 27 days. Later, my husband's brother received a call from one of the faction militants, informing him that my husband had been buried," Ahmad said.

She adds, "My father also returned to the village two months later after my uncles contacted him to come back before his properties

were seized. But despite staying in the village, he couldn't protect his property or my brother's. He was threatened with death by the armed factions and lost his life later while going to buy bread from a nearby village due to a landmine explosion."

C. Arrest:

There were threats of arrest sent through voice recordings on WhatsApp, such as: "These days, they'll drag you by your hair through every street in the town of Al-Manajir," said a woman who had been insulted.

Since the Turkish occupation of Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) in October 2019, and despite the passage of five years, human rights violations by Turkish forces and SNA factions continue in the region. Among the most prominent of these violations are arbitrary arrests. The Ta'azur Association for Victims documented, in a report⁸ published in October 2024, the arrest of 808 people since October 2019, including 86 women and 56 children.

Detainees have been subjected to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment⁹, particularly those of Kurdish origin. The lack of accountability remains a major challenge, as many people who were previously arrested are hesitant to return or even attempt to do so due to the practices of the SNA factions in the region.

Majed Suleiman, a witness from the village of Salhiya currently residing in one of the displacement camps in Al-Hasakah. He talked about the arrest of his uncles when they tried to return and his subsequent decision not to return due to the practices of these factions.

"My uncles were arrested a month after we were displaced when they tried to return, by Al-Hamzat faction. Later, they were transferred to the Sultan Murad faction in exchange for 5 million Syrian pounds (SYP). They remained in detention for 20 days, during which they were tortured and humiliated. One of my uncles was even prevented from

⁸ <https://hevdesti.org/ar/ar-ras-alayn-tall-abyad-five-years-after-turkish-occupation/>

⁹ <https://hevdesti.org/ar/ar-torture-as-a-systematic-policy-in-northern-syria/>

praying when he asked for a prayer mat, and they told him, 'You are a Kurdish infidel; you are not allowed to pray,'" Suleiman said.

This testimony aligns with that of "Gula Sheikhi," a 56-year-old seamstress. She was arrested upon her return to Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) three months after Turkish-backed factions took control of the city to check on her home and take some belongings.

"I didn't know if it was the plane or a shell that caused the destruction in my house, so I grabbed some clothes and put them in my bag. Within minutes, the Military Police stormed the house, stomped on the clothes with their feet, and started asking about my husband and children," Sheikhi said.

Sheikhi added, "I will never return. I spent 13 days in detention, three of which were in solitary confinement. Over the next 10 days, they interrogated me every two hours. They asked me about my work, my husband's work, and some of the neighbors. During this time, I was subjected to insults and harsh words because of my gender and ethnicity. They accused me of infidelity and mocked my appearance. I was released only after my husband paid a sum of money to get me out of the city."

Heba Rashid is a current seamstress in one of the camps in Hasakah. She was threatened with arrest through voice recordings on WhatsApp such as:

"These days, they'll drag you by your hair through every street in the town of Al-Manajir." This threat led to her displacement. Her sister was arrested upon returning to Al-Manajir, Ras al-Ain, due to visiting her sister in the Al-Talai camp in Sere Kaniye. As a result of this incident, she no longer considers returning, despite her desire to.

"I will be arrested and tortured just like my sister, who has been detained by the factions for over four years. She was sentenced to seven years in prison for allegedly collaborating with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), even though she was neither employed nor worked with the AANES or anyone else. The real reason for her arrest was simply her visit to us in the camp. When we

were displaced, my sister, father, and stepmother stayed behind in Al-Manajir. The Civil Police arrested her and subjected her to severe torture. The harsh practices included severely beating her, locking her in a dark room, releasing gas from a canister inside the room, and holding her head underwater until she couldn't breathe—all while accusing her of collaborating with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)," Rashid said.

Rashid added, "My cousins, three young men, were also arrested and remained detained for three years. The reason was that one of the militants of a faction in the village of Al-Amiriya killed the dog belonging to one of my cousins. I don't know the exact name of the faction. When my cousin asked them why they killed the dog, they arrested him, beat him, and tortured him. This incident was posted on social media."

Reem Ahmad, a mother of four children, living in the Sere Kaniye camp, and forcibly displaced from the village of Aniq al-Hawa. She said that her brother-in-law was tortured because of his mandatory service in the Self-Defense Forces during the period of the AANES presence in Ras al-Ain (Sere Kaniye). They no longer think of returning to their village. This is due to the discriminatory practices carried out by the factions backed by Turkey. The situation is especially difficult for them because they belong to the al-Sharabiyeen tribe. They are accused of being loyal to the SDF and the AANES.

"My brother-in-law was arrested and brutally beaten in the presence of the villagers because he served in the Self-Defense Forces of the AANES. After his release, he sneaked away from the village and fled to Al-Hasakah," Ahmad said.



Factions involved in committing violations according to witness testimonies

D. Extortion

Approximately seven witnesses or their relatives have been subjected to extortion, forced to pay money either for their properties or in exchange for the release of detained family members. One such witness, Sherin, from the village of Abdul Salam, spoke about the seizure of their agricultural tractor by a militant of one of the armed factions. She described how they were later extorted to buy it back.

"We found out who stole our tractor and asked a friend from the village of Al-Hilewa to retrieve it. They demanded money for its return, so we had to buy it back. We sent 1.3 million Syrian pounds, but they

confiscated it again after they realized we were living in areas controlled by the SDF," Sherin said.

Another witness, Dara Abdul Latif Kurdi, who is 35 years old, described how his father was arrested a month after the factions took control of the city. This was used as a means to pressure the family into handing him over in exchange for his father's release, as he had worked for the AANES.

They even sent pictures of his father's torture to the family via one of their phones. They demanded \$50,000 in exchange for his release. They demanded the money from his brother, who resides in Germany, through voice recordings sent via the WhatsApp application.

Similarly, the witness 'Yazan' adds details about his father's arrest, the extortion he was subjected to, and the demand for a sum of money in exchange for his release.

"My father was arrested by the Sultan Murad faction. Five people in a white van, wearing the SNA uniform, blindfolded him. His eyes remained blindfolded for five consecutive days. My father had left his phone at home. On the fourth day, they asked him for a relative's number. They called Mr. Ismail Al-Sufi, the brother of his second wife, and demanded \$5,500. We sent the money via the Al-Bouti Company in Al-Hasakah to the Atarib office in Idlib. My father was released and dropped off in the village of Al-Amirt. They warned him not to return, as other factions might arrest him," Yazan said.

E. Evacuation of Villages

The evacuation of villages and the lack of services and basic living conditions have posed a significant obstacle to the return of displaced people. Another major reason is the absence of protection guarantees. This reality is clearly reflected in the testimonies of those interviewed for this report.

Ahmad Al-Barho, a witness from the village of Darbo, has been residing in the Washokani camp since his displacement on October 27, 2019. He explains that his village is devoid of people. "I can't return to the village; there is no one in the area. Even neighboring villages are completely empty," Al-Barho said.

In a related context, Ivan, a witness from the village of Al-Jamiliya, has been living in Tel Tamer since October 20, 2019.

When asked by the field researcher from PEL about his reasons for not returning—and whether he or anyone he knows has tried to return—he replied, "The village is unsafe, mined, and empty of people. No one has returned for these reasons."

Abu Khalil, who was displaced from the village of Khirbet al-Dibs, has been residing in the Sere Kaniye camp in Al-Hasakah since 2020. He said, "I haven't tried to return. I can't go back alone, and if the villagers haven't returned, I can't return due to the lack of life-sustaining conditions."

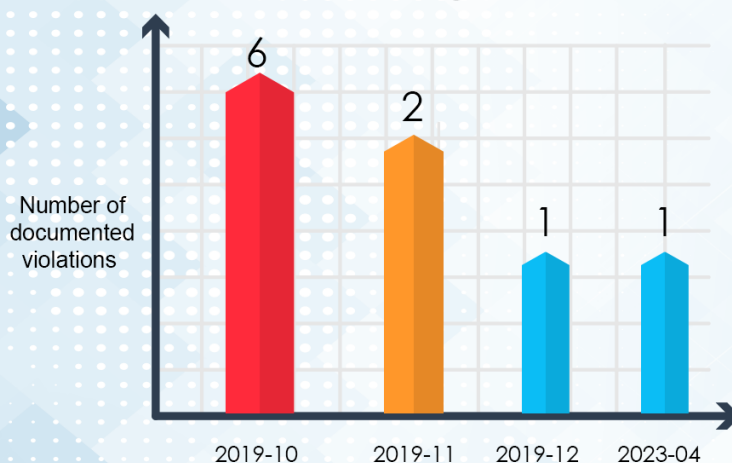
He also added, "No one from our village, Khirbet al-Dibs, has attempted to return. There have been very few attempts by people from Ras al-Ain, as far as I know."

Based on these testimonies and reports by human rights organizations, media outlets, and other open sources, it becomes clear that Turkey and the factions it supports have pursued a policy of forcibly evacuating villages and displacing their inhabitants. This has continued despite the end of military operations. These actions demonstrate Turkey's failure to uphold its claims of creating a safe zone. They also violate Article 7 of the Turkish-American ceasefire agreement¹⁰, which stated Turkey's commitment to ensuring the safety of the population in areas under its control, while avoiding harm to civilians and civil infrastructure.

¹⁰ <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/united-states-turkey-agree-ceasefire-northeast-syria/>



Documented violations according to testimonies - Eastern Rif, Ras al-Ain



The wind graph shows the quantitative wind patterns in the area of the report, based on witness testimonies, and the timeline for the start of the operation in 2019.



The wind graph shows the quantitative wind patterns in the area of the report,

Fifth: Legal Opinion

A. An examination of the Turkish presence in the areas covered in the report

According to Article 42 of the Hague Convention of 1907¹¹, which pertains to the respect of the laws and customs of war on land, **“The territory of a state is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army, and occupation only applies to territories where this authority is exercised.”** This article requires effective control by the invading state. Based on the testimonies collected for the purposes of this report, as well as reports from various international bodies, including the International Commission of Inquiry for Syria dated February 8, 2022 (paragraph 93)¹², under the heading of "Northern countryside of Aleppo and the areas of Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad", which states that these regions are effectively

¹¹ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/hague-conv-iv-1907>

¹² <https://docs.un.org/ar/A/HRC/49/77>

under Turkish control, the presence of Turkey in these Syrian areas is indeed considered an occupation. Additionally, reports from organizations such as Amnesty International¹³ and Human Rights Watch¹⁴ confirm that Turkey's presence in the Syrian regions under its control constitutes an occupation.

*** Legal Responsibility for Violations in the Areas Affected by the Operation "Peace Spring"**

According to testimonies collected by the PEL – Civil Waves team, and following a detailed analysis of the data, it was found that human rights violations—particularly violations of property rights—occurred in the region covered by the report.

These violations were directly committed in several instances by factions of the SNA and the Turkish military.

These factions are legally affiliated with the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Interim Government, which operates under the umbrella of the Syrian National Coalition for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. This affiliation necessitates the accountability of the defense ministers of that government. This is especially important in light of the collapse of the former al-Assad's regime and the formation of an interim government.

The accountability applies to the time periods during which these individuals held official positions and during which the documented violations occurred. Several reports by the International Commission of Inquiry for Syria have already attributed responsibility for such violations¹⁵ to the SNA.

Therefore, the newly formed Syrian transitional government must take steps to hold the responsible leaders and members accountable. This is an essential step toward achieving justice and ensuring that impunity is not tolerated.

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/latest/news/2018/08/syria-turkey-must-stop-serious-violations-by-allied-groups-and-its-own-forces-in-afrin/>

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2021/02/03/377722>

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation>

As for Turkey, it is considered an occupying power—as previously stated in the report—and thus bears legal responsibility for the protection of civilians and their property in the areas it occupies. So, Turkey is obligated to apply international humanitarian law in these regions. This legal obligation means that Turkey is not permitted to seize or destroy civilian property unless such actions are justified by military necessity. Accordingly, Turkey must be able to demonstrate and prove the existence of such necessity in each case.

Furthermore, Turkey must also hold accountable all individuals responsible for these violations, whether they belong to the Turkish military or the SNA factions. This is critical since these groups are operating under Turkey's command and control.

B. Legal Classification of Violations under International and Syrian Law

The practices carried out by the authorities controlling the region covered in this report—particularly regarding the treatment of property and civilians—constitute crimes punishable by law. These actions are violations under both local and international law. Each violation will be analyzed in detail as follows:

- According to International Law:

The right to property is considered sacred and is protected under numerous international covenants and agreements. These instruments prohibit the violation of this right. The Article 17¹⁶ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of every person to own property. It also prohibits the arbitrary deprivation of property.

¹⁶ <https://www.un.org/ar/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Similarly, the destruction or demolition of homes or the forcible displacement of their residents violates Article 17¹⁷ of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

This article clearly states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy, family, home, or correspondence.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement reaffirm **the right of every individual to be protected from arbitrary displacement from their home or usual place of residence.**

Under international humanitarian law, the right to property and the prohibition of forcible displacement are further protected. Civilian homes are explicitly referred to as "civilian objects" and "civilian property". Accordingly, the destruction or appropriation of civilian property, as well as its seizure without military necessity, constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. This is specifically addressed in Articles 147 and 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and entails criminal accountability under Article 146¹⁸ of the same convention.

Additionally, the destruction or arbitrary seizure of civilian property is classified as a war crime under Article 8(2)(b)(13) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on July 17, 1998.¹⁹

Looting, likewise, is a violation of international humanitarian law. Article 33²⁰ of the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949 prohibits looting, as do provisions regarding retaliatory actions against protected persons.

The prohibition of looting is further emphasized in Articles 28 and 47²¹ of the Hague Regulations (1907). It is also recognized as a war crime

¹⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

¹⁸ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-146?activeTab=>

¹⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court>

²⁰ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ar/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-33?activeTab=1949GCs-APs-and-commentaries>

²¹ <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/2398d7/pdf>

under Article 6(b)²² of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal Charter. Looting and plunder are additionally considered part of customary international law, binding on all states and non-state actors involved in either international or non-international armed conflicts, as defined in Rule 52 of customary IHL.²³

Among the practices documented in the region were the forcible evacuation of entire villages and the planting of landmines and other explosive devices. These weapons were deployed both around the villages themselves and along the roads leading to them. This took place despite explicit prohibitions under international law. The 1996 Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) prohibits or strictly limits the use of mines, booby-traps, and similar devices. According to Article 3²⁴, Paragraph 7 of the protocol, the use of such weapons is banned under all circumstances—whether in offensive, defensive, or retaliatory military operations—if they pose a threat to civilian populations or civilian property. Paragraph 10 of the same article requires that all feasible precautions be taken to protect civilians from the effects of these weapons. These precautions may include the installation of fences, the placement of warning signs, the issuance of public alerts, and the implementation of monitoring mechanisms. In addition, Rule 81²⁵ of customary international humanitarian law imposes further restrictions on the use of landmines. This rule highlights their indiscriminate nature and long-term destructive impact, which often extends beyond the period of conflict.

However, testimonies collected during this investigation reveal that the military forces operating in the region did not adhere to any of these protective measures. Landmines and explosive devices were deployed without warning, with no visible signs, and in areas known to be populated or regularly used by civilians. As a direct result, at least 12 individuals—including witnesses themselves, their family

²² <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/nuremberg-tribunal-charter-1945/article-6b?activeTab=>

²³ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ar/customary-ihl/v1/rule52>

²⁴ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/ccw-amended-protocol-ii-1996/article-3?activeTab=>

²⁵ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ar/customary-ihl/v1/rule81>

members, and other relatives—were injured or killed by these devices. These acts were carried out with little to no regard for the devastating long-term consequences. The consequences affect not only the victims and their families, but also undermine their livelihoods. Additionally, they hinder reconstruction and recovery efforts across these already devastated areas.

- According to Syrian Legislation:

Although the current Syrian constitution does not fully reflect the aspirations and hopes of the Syrian people, the demand for a new constitution—one that respects rights, freedoms, and the principles of justice and equality—remains a top priority.

Nevertheless, the existing constitution of 2012 contains several legal provisions that align with international treaties and conventions, particularly in relation to property rights.

Article 15²⁶ of the Syrian Constitution guarantees the protection of private property. It states that property may only be expropriated for public benefit, and only with fair compensation. Furthermore, private property may only be confiscated through a final court ruling. In cases of war or public disaster, property may be confiscated by law, but only if fair compensation is provided for its actual value.

Despite these provisions, none of the individuals interviewed for this report—whose properties were seized or destroyed—reported receiving any form of compensation. In addition, the acts of destruction and appropriation they described were not justified by military necessity, as previously discussed in the report.

The practices carried out by the Turkish military and the SNA factions—including the forced evacuation of villages and the displacement of residents—also contradict Article 38²⁷ of the Syrian

²⁶ <https://wipolex-res.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/ar/sy/sy014ar.html>

²⁷ <https://wipolex-res.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/ar/sy/sy014ar.html>

Constitution. This article prohibits the expulsion of citizens from their country or the prevention of their return.

Such actions also violate Syrian civil law. Article 771²⁸ of the Syrian Civil Code prohibits deprivation of property unless explicitly authorized by law, and even then, it requires fair compensation. Article 768 of the same code affirms that property owners have the exclusive right to use, exploit, and dispose of their property. They are also entitled to benefit from its fruits and products unless otherwise specified by law or agreement according to the Article 770.

Witness testimonies, however, tell a different story. Many confirmed being denied access to their properties, which were instead used and exploited by factions of the SNA—without the owners' consent.

These actions constitute criminal offenses under Syrian criminal law. Legislative Decree No. 148 of 1949, which serves as the Syrian Penal Code, defines unlawful appropriation of another person's property as "property usurpation." According to Article 723²⁹, this offense is punishable by up to three years in prison.

Moreover, entering and looting private homes is a violation of the sanctity of the home, as outlined in Article 557³⁰ of the Penal Code. If such acts are accompanied by violence, threats, or forced entry, they may be classified as aggravated theft under Articles 624 and 625.

Moreover, according to testimonies collected by the PEL – Civil Waves team, the violations went beyond mere appropriation and looting. At least 12 witnesses were subjected to arbitrary detention when they attempted to return to their villages. In several cases, their detention involved extortion, with money demanded from the victims or their families in exchange for their release. Such acts constitute the crime of "unlawful detention" under Article 555³¹ of the Syrian Penal Code.

²⁸ <https://alp-city.sy/File/DataBank/file/pVvk4MEymEkihYCfxsTpxSboeA3XVBzaHyFbLJSjs.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.undp-aciad.org/publications/ac/compendium/syria/criminalization-lawenforcement/sy-penal-code.pdf>

³⁰ <https://www.undp-aciad.org/publications/ac/compendium/syria/criminalization-lawenforcement/sy-penal-code.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.undp-aciad.org/publications/ac/compendium/syria/criminalization-lawenforcement/sy-penal-code.pdf>

If torture was involved during detention, this serves as an aggravating factor according to Article 556.

Upon reviewing the relevant legal texts, it becomes evident that the penalties outlined in Syrian law for violations of property rights are insufficient given the severity of the offenses committed. Syrian legislation does not address these crimes within the context of armed conflict or as part of a widespread or systematic pattern of violations.

Furthermore, Syrian law does not recognize the supremacy of international treaties over domestic law. This is especially significant given that Syria is not a party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. As a result, it is not legally bound by the Statute's provisions concerning war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This legal gap places a considerable responsibility on any future transitional government in Syria. It will be necessary to establish a transparent and just legal framework that addresses gross violations of rights, protects the dignity of Syrian citizens, and ensures equality under the law. Such a framework must uphold the rights of all citizens—regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, or political affiliation. It must also adhere to the principle of separation of powers and guarantee the independence of the judiciary.

Sixth: Highlighting the Situation of the IDPs

The Turkish military operation "Peace Spring," launched in October 2019, resulted in the occupation of Ras Al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) and Tel Abyad. This offensive led to the displacement of over 150,000 people. Approximately 85% of the population of Ras Al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) remains forcibly displaced³².

Around 40,000 of them currently live in dire humanitarian conditions. Many reside in camps and shelters that lack basic living essentials. These facilities—including Washokani Camp, Sere Kaniye Camp (Al-Tala'a), and nearly 40 shelters in the city center of Al-Hasakah—have

³² <https://hevdesti.org/ar/ar-ras-alayn-tall-abyad-five-years-after-turkish-occupation/>

not received official recognition from the United Nations or its agencies. Some shelters have recently been relocated to Sere Kaniye Camp following its expansion³³.

The remaining IDPs are dispersed across neighborhoods in Al-Hasakah, Qamishli, and villages in the Tel Tamer area.

For the past five years, these individuals have endured poor living conditions and a severe lack of services³⁴. No viable solutions have been offered to ensure their safe and dignified return to their original homes.

Samar, a mother of two children, lives in one of the camps and shares her experience, "Life in the camp is extremely difficult, and I can no longer bear it. The lack of a private space for my children to play makes me feel miserable."

Hevin, from the village of Al-Qasimiyah, expresses a deep longing for home, "I want to return to my land; I can't stand being away from my village. I want my children to grow up there, just like I did".

Alia, who suffers from the chronic disease hemolytic anemia, describes the severity of her situation in the camp. She and her family are unable to return to their village, Al-Dardara, due to constant shelling. Her husband attempted to cross into Turkish territory in search of better opportunities, but was severely beaten and tortured by Turkish border guards. As a result, he suffered rib fractures and kidney damage. This ordeal has added significant financial strain to the family. Her husband now requires ongoing medical care and diagnostic imaging—services that are unavailable in the camp³⁵.

³³ <https://npasyria.com/193886/>

³⁴ <https://npasyria.com/191141/>

³⁵ <https://aawsat.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/5053276-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%B6%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%B8%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%86%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%A1>

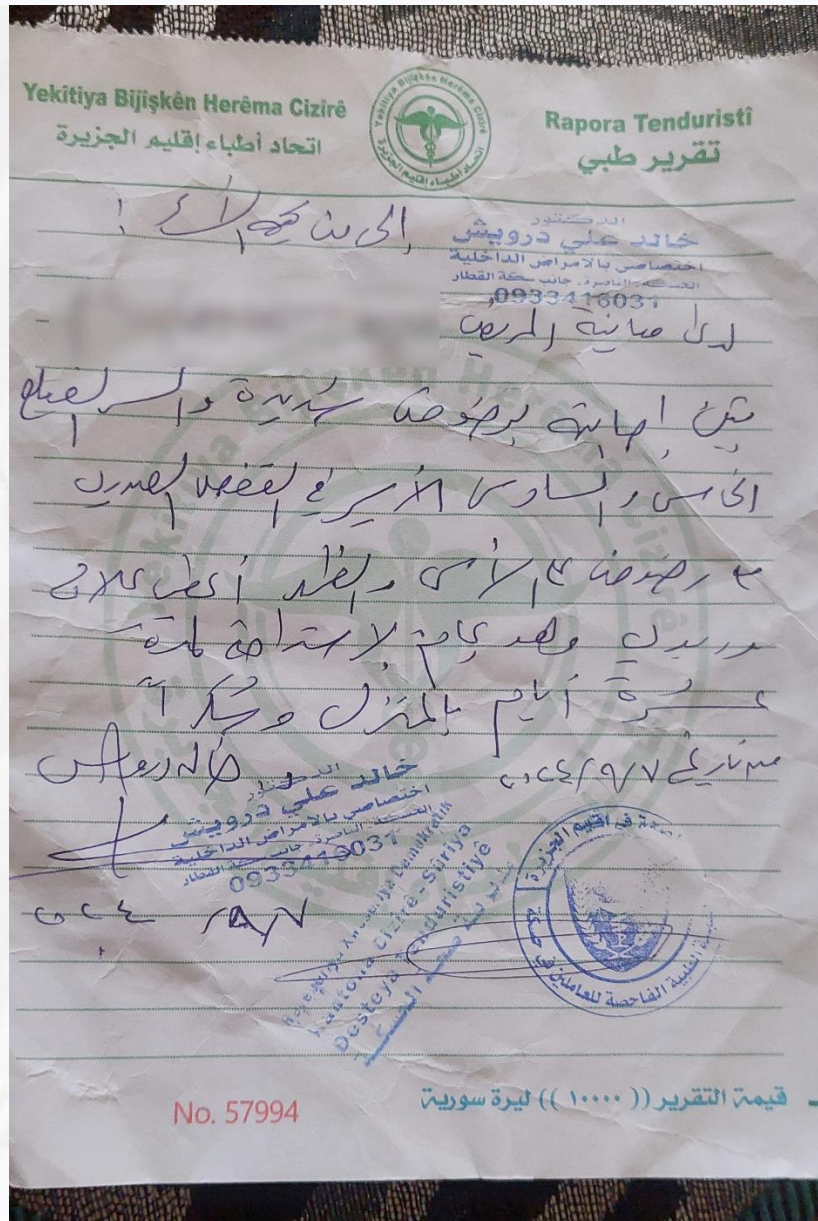


Al-Hasakah - Washokani Camp - North Press Agency



Al-Hasakah - Washokani Camp - North Press Agency

The two photos are from Washokani camp, which houses the displaced people of Ras al-Ain/Sari Kani in the city of Hasakah, and they show the deterioration of services and living conditions inside the camp.



The attached image is a medical report of the witness's husband, which shows the husband's medical and health condition after he was subjected to beating and torture at the hands of the Turkish gendarmerie.

Seventh: Recommendations:

The period during which this report was prepared marked a historic moment for Syrians. On December 8, 2024, al-Assad regime and the Arab Socialist Baath Party fell after fifty-four years of oppression, injustice, and the suppression of freedoms.

Over the years—particularly in the past fourteen—serious human rights violations were committed. These abuses were not limited to the former regime but were carried out by all parties to the conflict. This has only deepened the suffering of Syrians and widened the societal divide.

Amid this historic shift, many Syrians now believe in the possibility of a new future. They envision a state governed by justice, the rule of law, equality, and the protection and promotion of human rights. In this context, it becomes essential to address the ongoing human rights violations, especially in the regions covered by this report. The restoration of rights to their rightful owners must be treated as a top priority. It is important to ensure the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of all IDPs to their original homes. Victims must be adequately compensated for their losses and suffering.

As discussed in detail throughout this report, continued displacement and the ongoing difficulties faced by those who wish to return may lead to long-term and potentially catastrophic consequences.

Based on the testimonies collected and the in-depth analysis of the victims' challenges, PEL – Civil Waves puts forth a set of recommendations. These are directed at decision-makers, both international and local actors, and the newly established Syrian

government (or future governments). The goal is to contribute to lasting peace and a dignified life for all Syrians.

The following recommendations are directed to the parties involved in the Syrian issue:

1. The Current Syrian Government:

The new Syrian government—whether it is the caretaker government led by Muhammad Al-Bashir or the transitional government—must fulfill its legal obligations toward the residents of areas currently occupied by Turkey. It must also take concrete steps to end the Turkish occupation of Syrian territories, particularly those highlighted in this report.

In addition, the government should demand that Turkey halt its support for SNA factions that have been involved in serious human rights violations within the areas under their control.

A national judicial system must be established to ensure accountability and bring violators to justice, putting an end to the culture of impunity that has prevailed for years.

Furthermore, the government should actively work to guarantee the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of all IDPs to their original homes. This must be done while respecting their rights to reclaim their property and to receive fair compensation, in accordance with the basic principles of the right to remedy and reparation.

2. United Nations, European Union, and United States:

The United Nations institutions, as well as the European Union and the United States, should recognize the Turkish presence in Syrian territories as an occupation. They must exert pressure on the Turkish government to fulfill its responsibilities as an occupying power in the areas it controls—particularly those highlighted in this report. These

responsibilities are outlined in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which concerns the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

The **United States** should urge Turkey to adhere to its obligations under the agreement between the two parties. This agreement permitted the entry into the areas of Ras Al-Ain (Sere Kaniye) and Tel Abyad. Special attention should be given to Article 7 of that agreement, which mandates the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

The **international community**, including both states and international bodies, should collaborate with organizations that are documenting violations committed by Turkey and the factions it supports—specifically the SNA. These organizations should receive the necessary support to continue their work. Furthermore, the international community should assist in identifying and placing those responsible for violations—whether individuals or entities—on financial and banking sanctions lists.

The **United Nations** should pressure Turkey to halt the violations in the areas it occupies. It must also compel Turkish-affiliated military factions to cease their abuses against civilians and their property. In addition, the UN should work to create conditions that enable the safe and dignified return of IDPs to their original homes. This includes guaranteeing the restoration of seized property and compensation for the harm inflicted upon them.

The **United Nations** should also officially recognize the camps housing those displaced by the "Peace Spring" operation. It must provide support to these camps through its specialized agencies, to help mitigate the negative impact of violations committed by Turkey and the SNA factions.

The **UN** should continue documenting ongoing violations in Syria—especially in Turkish-occupied areas. Meanwhile, the **International Commission on Missing Persons** should intensify efforts to work with all military forces and current authorities. Their focus must be on

determining the fate of missing persons and those subjected to enforced disappearance.

The **European Union and the United States**—as well as any country where Syrians reside and where the principle of universal jurisdiction is applied—should maintain support for the pursuit of justice. This support is critical regardless of where the crimes occurred. It is particularly important given the uncertainty surrounding the future of Syria's new government after the fall of al-Assad regime, and the direction it will take on legal and judicial issues, especially regarding justice and accountability.

3. All Parties to the Conflict (Military Forces):

All military forces present in or near the areas targeted in this report must fully comply with international humanitarian law. This includes the prohibition of using landmines during armed conflicts. These forces must also provide complete and accurate maps indicating the locations where landmines have been planted. Doing so is essential to facilitate the safe removal of these explosive devices. Such measures are critical to ensuring the safety of civilians and enabling their safe, voluntary, and dignified return to their original homes.

4. Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES):

Support must be provided to IDPs from areas under Turkish occupation who are currently living in regions controlled by the AANES. Efforts should focus on improving their living conditions and the quality of services available to them, especially within displacement camps. It is also important to create employment opportunities that can help these individuals integrate into the host communities. Facilitation should be granted to organizations working on documenting violations and providing support to victims.

The **Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)**, as the political wing of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), and following the establishment of an official office in Damascus, must prioritize the safe return of all IDPs

from areas under Turkish occupation. It should also ensure the full restoration of their rights.

The **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** must comply with international humanitarian law, especially regarding the protection of civilian property. They should also disclose the fate of missing and forcibly disappeared persons.

The AANES has expressed a willingness to cooperate with the International Commission on Missing Persons. It has taken steps such as opening offices in several areas to allow families to report cases of missing persons³⁶.

5. Local and International Civil Society Organizations:

They should work to mobilize and advocate for the rights of victims. They also should urge the current government and other relevant authorities to provide the necessary support.

It is essential to raise awareness among victims about their fundamental rights, and emphasize the importance of continuing to demand those rights. Additionally, it is crucial to cooperate with organizations working in the field of documentation, especially those that provide essential support services such as psychological, medical, and legal care.

Furthermore, it is important to document the violations committed in Syria in general, with a particular focus on the areas occupied by Turkey. Later, they should submit these documented violations to international human rights bodies, and publish periodic reports on this issue. Moreover, they should organize ongoing events and activities

³⁶ <https://kar-derve.com/?p=5385>

to shed light on these violations, and raise awareness about them among both the international and local communities.

About PÊL – Civil Waves Organization

PEL – Civil Waves is a Syrian non-governmental and non-profit organization founded in 2013. It works to promote the roles of women, youth, and forcibly displaced persons in the regions where it operates.

PEL operates in a society rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. The organization believes that protecting and managing this diversity, while ensuring the fair inclusion of all communities, is essential for achieving sustainable peace. To support this goal, PEL engages citizens from all backgrounds and at all levels, without bias or discrimination. PEL believes that strengthening community dialogue is crucial. This includes dialogue among various individuals and population groups, as well as between communities and local governance structures. Such dialogue is key to reducing tensions and building a more just future.

The organization also recognizes the environmental challenges caused by decades of harmful policies and the ongoing conflict in Syria since 2011. In response, PEL works to raise awareness about environmental protection, expand green spaces, and monitor environmental issues. It highlights the connection between environmental degradation and

social cohesion, while also developing practical solutions and alternatives.

PEL places particular focus on victims of forced displacement. It works to strengthen the response to violations of housing, land, and property (HLP) rights in Syria. The organization is committed to empowering affected individuals to organize themselves and advocate for their rights. PEL also believes that systematic and comprehensive documentation of HLP violations is essential. Such documentation is a key step toward ensuring the dignified return of forcibly displaced persons and IDPs to their original homes. For this reason, PEL collects and preserves the testimonies and personal stories of victims. It also supports advocacy efforts and legal follow-up actions related to these violations.