

The Situation in Daraa after the Government of Syria Took Control of the Province in June 2018

Situation Report(1)

I. Summary

In June 2018, Daraa province fell under the control of the Government of Syria (GoS) which, along with its allies and Russia, had made many threats to invade the province. Like other regions, the residents of Daraa then had no choice but to submit to the so-called "settlement agreement," with Russia guaranteeing that no harm would come to the population. The agreement stated that opposition armed groups had to hand over their heavy and medium-sized weapons and allow the gradual entry of state institutions into their areas of control. The agreement also indicated that civilians would not be made the targets of retaliation by the GoS and its security services and militias, as well as ending the prosecution of Daraa's residents.

The Syrian Civic Platform (SCP) is preparing a series of situation reports that highlight the conditions experienced by the civilian population in Daraa after the GoS took control of the province.

This report attempts to shed light on GoS practices with respect to arrests, forced conscription and mandatory reserve service.

II. Arrests

Although residents in Daraa were given six months to obtain identity papers, institutions of the GoS have demanded they obtain a "Clearance Certificate" from the Criminal Security Branch, to prove they are not on any criminal or terrorists lists. This resulted in the arrest of many young Syrian men for compulsory service in the Syrian army. In addition, a number of Syrians were arrested under the pretext of personal allegations against them and were transferred to notorious security branches, particularly the Military Security Branch. Thirty cases of arrests were documented as a result of a claim by Daraa's chief of the Agriculture Directorate of the kidnapping and killing of his brother in 2013– . All of the thirty detainees were from the town of Sheikh Maskin north of Daraa. As for the well-known opposition figures, they were accused of having ties with ISIS and were arrested accordingly.

By November 14, 2018, the arrest of an estimated 313 people had been documented since the GoS took control of Daraa six months earlier in June. The release of 91 detainees had also been documented as well as two cases in which detainees died in custody due to torture. We note that 106 of the 313 detainees belong to armed opposition groups. In the second week of November, the arrest of civilians and five former fighters were documented as well.

The following are details of the documented arrests, noting that the detainees had the settlement cards¹ distributed by the GoS in Daraa:

- Qasim Mohammed was arrested and taken to the Criminal Security Branch;

¹ Settlement card: A collection of papers signed by a person who aim to reach a settlement with the GoS. The settlement card prohibits the person signatory from participating in demonstrations, or any other activates against the GoS as well as its military institutions. It prohibits as well the use of media against the ruling regime.

- The GoS security services arrested four civilians, including a woman Latifa Awad who was arrested by the Criminal Security Branch in Daraa City;
- Mu'tassem Mahmoud al-Hashish, a civilian, was arrested at a military checkpoint in Daraa;
- Adib Ahmed Al Atta, a civilian, was arrested in Damascus;
- Wael Yousef al-Eid, a civilian, was arrested at one of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate's military checkpoints in the Saham al-Jawlan Road;
- Yasser Ismail Thib Masalama was arrested and taken to the Military Security Branch in Daraa;
- The director of Dael district who previously served as the head a police station in opposition-held areas, was kidnapped;
- Fadi al-Asami was kidnapped in the town of Dael;
- Three dissident soldiers were arrested in Daraa City, although they had received settlement cards clearing them of criminality or terrorism under the Settlement Agreement;
- Five people were arrested in the town of Jassem;
- Two people were arrested and killed in Um al-Ausaj area;
- The arrest of an opposition armed group commander in the town of Rafid;
- Two people were arrested at Jassim Nawi military checkpoint who used to serve as judges in the so-called former Justice House; and
- The arrest of two former Free Syrian Army (FSA) commanders on the basis of personal allegations.

III. Forced conscription & Mandatory Reserve Service

The specter of conscription and mandatory reserve service is still present among the residents of Daraa, as Russian guarantees have not been complied with. For example, the GoS and Russia had promised to resolve the situation of students, who had stopped their education and postponed their mandated military service. However, they reneged on their commitment. The following are cases of forced conscription and mandatory backup service:

- Young men born between 1975 and 2000 were informed of the need to join the military service. In addition, the heads of villages and towns have received written notifications of the names required to conduct their military service. In response, a delegation of dignitaries and actors was formed in the province and a meeting was held with the governor and the chief of the Military Security Branch. During the meeting, the two parties had agreed to support the mandatory military service as a solution to drop the claim for mandatory reserve service. The delegation also went to Damascus for follow-up discussions on the same issue.
- People in Daraa are exerting pressure on the Crisis Committee² and the Russians as well to solve the issue.
- It should be noted that many of the fighters who were part of the FSA and who decided to stay in Daraa have been forcibly recruited into the Syrian army.

² The Crisis Committee in Daraa province was formed nearly four months ago, after Russia and the GoS took control of the province. The Crisis Committee is a negotiating delegation which conduct discussions with the GoS and Russia. It comprises active figures who represent the province, such as lawyers, local leaders and former commanders of the Free Syrian Army.



The GoS has not complied with the terms of the Settlement Agreements it originally approved, and this makes Syrians in Daraa as well as other areas totally uncertain of the GoS and its intentions in the future.

Accordingly, the SCP demands that the Russian government, guarantee the cease-fire agreement in the province of Daraa; abide by its role and ensure the implementation of the terms of the Settlement Agreement, as well as ensuring that violations and reprisals against Syrians are prevented. Furthermore, the SCP calls on the Russian government to intensify its efforts to secure the release all those arrested following the agreement, as well as to stop the forced recruitment of young men and their deployment on the frontlines.