



Raqqa Governorate Recent Events

Press Release

Violations Documentation Center in Syria - VDC
August 2015

Turkey: The Turkish-Syrian Borders, August 2015

Joint Forces made up of the People's Protections Units (YPG), the Euphrates Volcano Joint Operations Room and other military factions have continued to prevent civilians from returning to their villages following their military campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), said the [Violations Documentation Centre in Syria \(VDC\)](#) in a [special report](#). The [report claims that](#) these forces have arrested dozens of civilians under various pretexts, the most cited was collaborating with and/or joining ISIS. Dozens of other civilians were also detained without being made aware of the reason for their arrest. Most of the detainees were taken to Bawabah Prison in the city of Tell Abiad. News sources also reported that the prison's detainees were being transferred to Ayn Arab/Kobani city for interrogation, although the VDC was not able to verify the claim from other independent sources.

[The report is based on over 24 interviews](#) conducted by VDC researchers with Syrians who were displaced either from the different cities, towns and villages in the eastern, western and south-eastern countryside of Tell Abiad, or from Tell Abiad city, and sought refuge in the Turkish city of Akçakale in Urfa. Over 15 activists met with dozens of Syrians fleeing to Turkey following the events in Tell Abiad city and interviewed them inside refugee camps, places of residence, hospitals, medical units, at the border crossing (Tell Abiad Crossing¹) and in Akçakale city. They have provided the VDC with detailed information about the refugees, the first hours of their mass displacement and the causes of that displacement as they were told.

The [report also](#) notes that the fighting between the Euphrates Volcano Joint Operations Room and ISIS on one hand, and the airstrikes by the US-led international coalition – which preceded the deployment of these forces – on the other hand were the main reasons for most of the displacements in the eastern suburbs, the Salouk area and the city of Tell Abiad. Thousands Syrian Arabs fled their villages² prior to the arrival of these forces, with numbers of displaced people amounting to over 23,000.. However, it appears that inciting media campaigns preceded the battles, playing a direct role in increasing the number of displaced persons. These campaigns were run by people affiliated with the YPG who were responsible for publishing “wanted lists” in addition to issuing threats to residents of certain villages. Members of ISIS also engaged in inciting campaigns, warning residents of an advancing ‘infidel’ force determined to slaughter and rape. Some sources also reported to the VDC that the Kurdish units displaced a number of people from several cities and villages, mostly in early July 2015. However, the VDC could not contact any resident in these villages, nor meet with any witness. Therefore, the VDC will release another summary report once verified witnesses are available.

1- Syria refers to the point as Tell Abiad Border Crossing, while Turkey calls it Akçakale Border Crossing

2- The term and shape of a “village” in the countryside of Tell Abiad is different from that in other Syrian governorates, as some villages contain no more than five houses. Due to reasons related to the administrative corruption that was widespread before the revolution regarding the Syrian government's structure, each group of houses had to be named a village in order for electricity and water to be delivered to them. This led to the existence of dozens of villages, each of which consist of only a small number of houses.



Violations Documentation
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