

## The Islamic State in Aleppo Countryside Copies the Syrian Regime's Policy

### Introduction

With the dawn of Wednesday 13 August, IS attacked many points controlled by the armed opposition in the northern countryside of Aleppo, most notably: the strategic towns of A'khtareen and Turkman Bareh as they located on the crossroad near Bab As-Salama border crossing. IS attacked heavily opposition points which was a surprise after it was rumored that they are going to attack Kueres airport that is under the regime's control.

IS called its battle: Atha'ar lel Afeefat (the revenge to the virgins) to enthruses its fighters. The name was based on a promoted story about raping "the wives and girls" of its Muhajereen (foreign) fighters in these villages of the northern countryside of Aleppo when the armed opposition managed to kick the IS out from Idlib countryside, Aleppo city, and most of Aleppo countryside towns after intense clashes earlier this year. It is worth noting that these allegations were denied by prominent religious leaders within IS (such as Abdullah Al-Mhiesni). Also, no confirmed news has come to SNHR's attention about any such violations.

The main reason, maybe, behind the "revenge attitude" of IS is to invade the northern countryside of Aleppo in order to avenge its military leader whom was known as "Hajji Bakr" after he was killed in Tal Refa'at in the northern countryside of Aleppo at the end of January during the wide clashes that resulted in the withdrawal of IS earlier this year.

The Islamic state managed on Wednesday to take over ten towns of the northern countryside of Aleppo: (A'akhtareen, Turkman Bareh, Al-Masoodeya, Al-Gooz, Al-Azeezyea, Al-Hameedya, Doayebeaq, Arshaf, Dabeq, and Ehteemlat). Besides the killing of 42 rebels either during clashes or field-executions; many among them were beheaded and deformed, including leaders and judges of the Islamic Front.

IS forces was able to sneak into Turkman Bareh on Wednesday morning and killed more than 20 rebels of Soqoor As-Sham (The Falcons of Levant), affiliated to the armed opposition forces, before they had to retreat. This was followed by another sneaking of two groups affiliated to IS, were stationed in the armed opposition-controlled areas as sleeping cells, from Dabeq and Ehteemlat to A'akhtareen from the western side on Arshaf road which put the armed opposition forces under siege in Akhtarien town. In conjunction, IS fighters advanced from Ghaytoun village, which is controlled by the Syrian regime, to Al-Ghouz village and killed about six rebels before they had to withdraw. While 16 rebels were killed in Akhtarien town before they managed to end the siege and retreat to the West.

As usual, IS stayed true to its bloody behavior as it beheaded and hung heads for everyone to see (especially in Turkman Bareh village). Additionally, IS fighters looted and seized rebels' houses and arrested any rebel fighters it found. Usually, most of who were arrested will be executed and beheaded.

Due to the previous threats by IS to against these villages considering that its residents have raped the wives and daughters of Al-Muhajrien, many of these villages residents have fled to Aleppo city. The Turkish borders, and the nearest camps out of fear of any retaliatory actions like what IS did in the areas it controls, most recently in Ash-Sh'ietat where retaliatory action and horrible mass executions have been perpetrated.

Islamic State's expansion in Aleppo countryside and the most prominent violations Judging from the massacres and violation of the Syrian regime that we have been documenting since 2011, SNHR believes that IS is following the same polity adopted by the Syrian regime as the Islamic State follow the same three steps that

### **the Syrian regime used to do before perpetrating a massacre:**

**1st: Intense shelling against the town**

**2nd: Raiding the town**

**3rd: Executing, arresting, and looting**

In Turkman Bareh town, IS started arresting most of the adult men in the town after it shelled and raided the town. The arrests were mostly in the northern and eastern neighborhoods of the town "the residential areas of Othman family", where no less than 50 peo-

ple were arrested of these tow neighborhoods alone, in addition to no less than 60 other people from the different neighborhoods of the town. IS arrested mainly the youths who have brothers or relatives working the armed opposition. Also, some men from displaced families who came to the town from Homs governorate and Idlib countryside "Ma'aret An-No'man area" were arrested.

After the end of the arresting campaign, some fighters of IS forced a man after masking him to take them to the house of some men that IS was pursuing. This man firstly guided them to Abd Ar-Razak Al-Eebo (Abo Ayyob), leader of As-Salajeka brigade who was centering in the Ar-Ra'ie border town before the Syrian regime took it over months ago. IS fighters searched the house barbarically and broke the furniture before asking the people who were in the house to evacuate immediately because it became "Ghanima" including the furniture. They also threatened the house to blow the house if she doesn't leave it immediately for one of Muhajrien.

Then, IS fighters moved to the houses of Abo Azzam As-Shami, one of Jabhat Al-Nusra leaders, the religious figure Abdullah Othman, one of Tawheed Brigade leaders, and General Abd Ar-Razaq Barakat who was with the police affiliated to the Syrian regime and the houses of: Abd Ar-Razzaq Al-Ayyoub, Mahmood Barakat, Mos'ab Othman, Ayman Ayoub, Sa'eed Jameel Al-Halaq, and others especially of Othman family's houses and seized all of these houses and threatened to burn and blow the houses if they were not evacuated immediately before they looted all its contents.

IS warned the residents that anyone has a son or a husband who is working with the armed opposition or the Syrian regime army should evacuate their houses immediately because they will take control of them.

Number of the residents who displaced to Aleppo city told SNHR that they've noticed IS fighters stealing cars and they prohibited the town residents of burying the bodies of the armed opposition rebels, who died in the clashes where they forced them to leave the bodies under the sun until they rot and smell as a warning for all those who were thinking of fighting IS. Also, most of these bodies were beheaded.

After two days, IS fighters buried the bodies on Friday 15 August, 2014, in the yard of the Shariaa Secondary School located in the east of the town, after they beheaded and deformed it. In A'akhtareen the same scenario was repeated; IS arrested tens of men, especially from "Zayno" and "Tamro" families, and no less than 65 families were kicked out of their houses after taking control of it after they accused them of working with the armed opposition. Also, IS took all their cars.

All these families were forced to flee to the west to rebels-held areas.

Number of the families told SNHR that they saw no less than 25 people lying on the ground surrounded by IS fighters who were threatening to execute them if they don't give them the names of who were working with the armed opposition. This went on for nine hours before they detained seven of them and released two.

### **Terrorism in the areas that were previously controlled by the Syrian regime**

IS seized tens of houses, claiming they are owned by people working with the armed opposition factions in the towns of Az-Zayadea and Ar-Rai' and the villages of Al-Ola and Qebtan Al-Janoobyeya. In addition, the Islamic State displaced tens of families from these areas and stole farms, agricultural machines, artesian wells, irrigation projects, and others.

Also, IS rules its controlled villages and towns by unfair rules; as Ar-Rai' town, its affiliated villages east of A'akhtareen (Qebtan, Al-Ola, A'aq, Borhan), Az-Zayadeah town, Tal Betal, and Qa'arkalbeen (all those villages have been under the control of IS since February 2014), are governed by horrible rules. Smoking is absolutely prohibited, women can't leave their houses without a man from her family and she must cover her face completely and wear black clothes specifically.

Many of the residents told SNHR that IS gathers every week those who violate these rules in the field of Ar'Rai town square and in Tal A'ar village and whips them 20-40 whip to be an example for all of us.

### **Attachments**

[Photo](#) of the body of Abdullah Othman, affiliated to Tawheed brigade

[Photos](#) of some armed opposition rebels' bodies before burying "most of them are beheaded"

[Photo](#) of an opposition rebel's body in Turkman Bareh without head



Photo of Mohammad Adnan Sallo

[Another photo](#) of an opposition rebel's body in Turkman Bareh without head

[Photo](#) of Hani Hameesh, an armed opposition rebel, whom was executed in Turkman Bareh after arresting [Photo](#) of Abd Al-Azeez Hussain Haj Abdo from Turkman Bareh, married civilian and has two daughters whom was killed by IS personnel

on Friday 15 August 2014, IS executed Mohammad Adnan Sallo, a rebel affiliated to Kurds Front Brigade, after arresting him during A'akhtareen battles and executing him in A'rai square in front of all the civilians.

## Recommendations

SNHR notes that IS's continuous expansion in Aleppo northern countryside represents a considerable danger as IS is trying to reach the border crossing with Turkey to cut off supplies to Aleppo city and besiege the most populated area controlled by the armed opposition. Also, IS might perpetrate retaliatory massacre given its bloody nature, its history of dealing with local communities in Syria, and the fact that IS is using foreign fighters to execute retaliatory and brutal actions.

Exhausting the armed opposition and local resistance in the villages and towns that the Syrian regime is trying to break into makes the mission of this terrorist faction a lot easier and let him to expand its territory despite the fierce resistance it is facing. IS is supported by large military arsenals that it seized as Ghanima in Iraq and Syria. Also, IS believes in a totalitarian, terrorist, and bloody ideology. SNHR urges the International Community and concerned organization to support any efforts made to stop the expansion of IS and end its massacres and retaliatory actions and to not abandon his responsibility to protect civilians and maintain civil stability.

Also, relief efforts should be supported in Aleppo northern countryside given the increasing and growing humanitarian needs because of the rapid displacement from the IS-held areas where people are losing their homes and jobs after it are being taken over by IS.