

March 17, 2020

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



© The official Facebook page of the Afrin Police Command

Verifying Turkey's Enlist of Syrian fighters in Libya

Verifying Turkey's Enlist of Syrian fighters in Libya

The Turkish government lured Hundreds of Syrians; fighters, civilians and children, to fight as mercenaries alongside al-Sarraj government against Hifter forces

Introduction:

In this extensive report, Syrians for Truth and Justice/ STJ presents evidence supported by witnesses' direct statements on Turkey's recruitment of Syrians to fight in Libya alongside the Government of National Accord, under the leadership of Fayeze al-Sarraj, against the Libyan National Army, headed by the Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter.

Syrian news networks started publishing news about sending opposition Syrian fighters (as mercenaries) to Libya in December 2019, the matter which was entirely denied by the Syrian opposition. As on December 25, 2019, for example, the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian National Army (affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government, operates under the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces) issued a statement in which it categorically denied sending any forces or military formations to Libya, stating: "Our priority in the National Army is to protect our Syrian people"¹.

The National Army's spokesman, Yousif Hammoud, refuted this news again in statements he gave exclusively to *Enab Baladi* website on December 25, 2019, saying that the news circulated an offer made by Turkey to send Syrian opposition fighters to Libya is incorrect, and there was no discussions with the Turkish side about that.²

After news of sending Syrian fighters to Libya swept the social media and news sites, a group of Syrians, which members identified themselves as revolutionaries, politicians and academics, issued a statement, on December 27, 2019, deploring strongly how the Syrian fighters agree to be deployed outside Syria, when they are supposed to hold their arms in Idlib against the Russians, Iranians and regime forces.³

In a phone call with *Enab Baladi*, on December 28, 2019, Ibrahim Bilrajab, the junta leader in the Government of National Accord in the Libyan city of Misrata, denied the arrival of Syrian fighters to Libya saying: "today, Saturday, December 28, I confirm that there's no Syrian fighters in our ranks"⁴

In turn, the [media office of the head of the Presidency Council](#) in the Government of National Accord, confirmed that the circulated [videos](#) which allegedly show Syrian fighters in Libya are [filmed](#) in Syria's Idlib.⁵ On January 12, 2020, the Facebook page of [Sabratat Operation Room](#)

¹ "The Ministry of Defense in the "Interim Government" Comments on Sending Fighters to Libya", Brocar Press, December 25, 2019 (last visit: March 10, 2020) <https://brocarpress.com/وزارة-الدفاع-في-المؤقتة-تعلق-على-إرسال-الوحدات-المتطوعة-إلى-ليبيا>

² "The "National Army" Denies Sending Fighters to Libya", Enab Baladi, December 25, 2019 (last visit: March 10, 2020) <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/351485>

³ "Syrian intellectuals and Activists Sign a Petition on Sending Syrian Fighters to Libya", ANA Press, December 29, 2019 (last visit: March 10, 2020) www.anapress.net/ar/articles/-/متفقون-311676569305783/تقارير-مكتوبة-و-نشطاء-سوريون-يوقعون-عريضة-بشأن-إرسال-مقاتلين-سوريين-إلى-ليبيا

⁴ "The Leader of a Military Council in the Government of National Accord Denies the Arrival of Syrian Fighters to Libya", *Enab Baladi*, December 28, 2019. (last visit: March 10, 2020) <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/351979>

⁵ A post published on the official Facebook page of the Government of National Accord, December 29, 2019, (last visit: March 11, 2020) <https://www.facebook.com/LibyanGovernment/photos/a.509963192457125/2641007302686026/?type=3&theater> .

affiliated with the Libyan National Army forces headed by Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter, published a 14 minutes and 42 sec long [video](#) on a person who was captured in the town of [Sabratalah](#) in [Libya](#) by illegal migration squad. The detainee shown in the video confessing his affiliation with the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat) in the Syrian National Army of the Syrian Interim Government operating under National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, and said that he entered Libya on January 8, 2020, coming from Turkey with other Syrian fighters.⁶

On January 2, 2020, the Turkish Parliament ratified a memorandum submitted by the Turkish presidency in order to send Turkish forces to Libya, and to give them a one-year renewable mandate⁷.

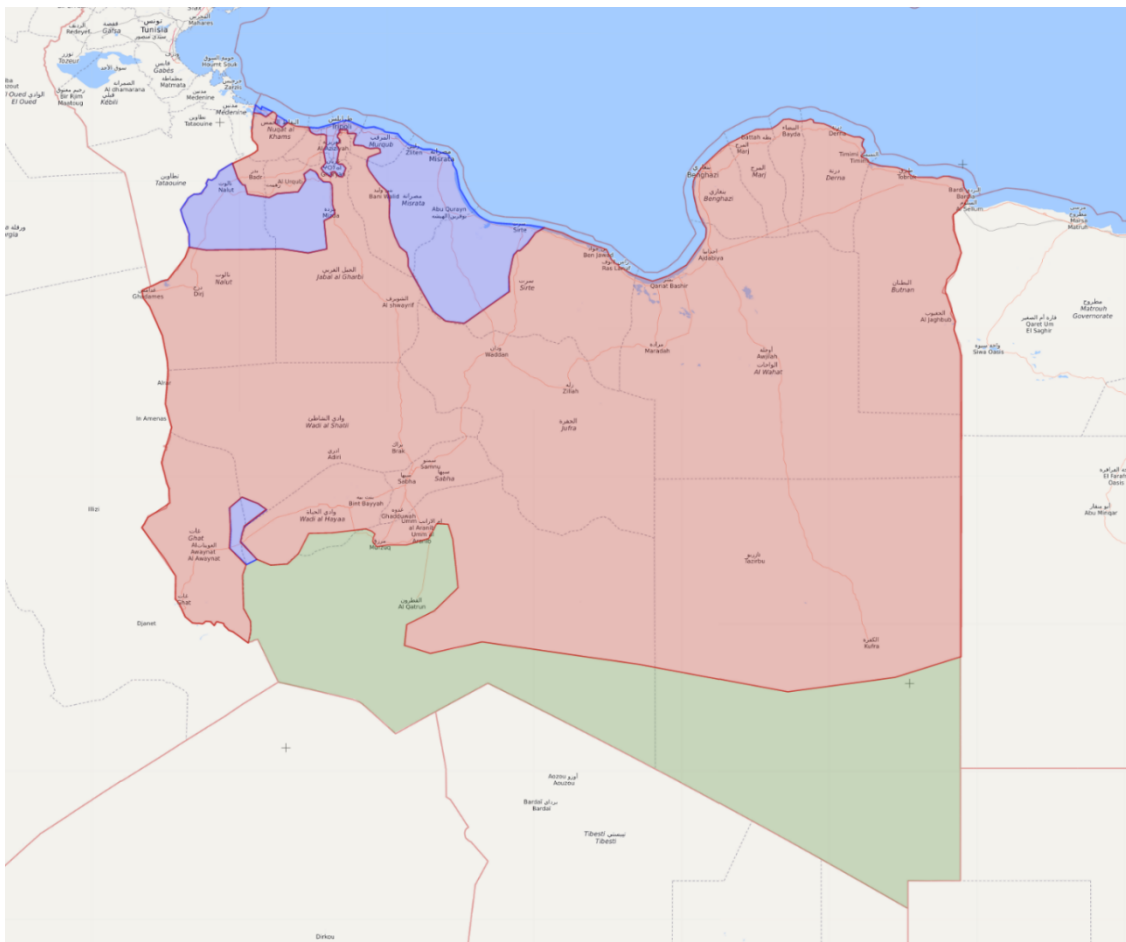


Image (1) who controls what in Libya as of December 24, 2019. The areas in red are under the control of the Libyan National Army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter while those in blue are controlled by the Government of National Accord, under the leadership of Fayez al-Sarraj.

⁶ "Further Details on a Video Showing a Syrian Fighter Captured in Libya", STJ, January 24, 2020, (last visit: March 9, 2020) <https://stj-sy.org/en/further-details-on-a-video-showing-a-syrian-fighter-captured-in-libya/>

⁷ "The Turkish Parliament Approves a Memo to Send Troops to Libya", Anadolu Agency, January 2, 2020, (last visit: March 10, 2020) <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/الدول-العربية/البرلمان-التركي-يصادق-على-مذكرة-إرسال-قوات-إلى-ليبيا-1690405/>

The methodology of the report:

STJ has tracked and followed up the news of sending Syrian fighters to Libya, since it started to get out on media, collecting and analyzing dozens of written, video and photographic materials circulated on Syrian, Turkish and international media outlets.

For the purpose of this report, STJ met reliable and well-informed sources-in person or online-including three civilians, two of whom have administrative positions in the National Army, while the third works in the civil registry, run by Turkey in northern Syria. Among those met were also five fighters; three of whom are currently in Libya, and the two others rejected offers to go there.

In addition, STJ met families of two fighters who have been recently killed in Libya and a family of another fighter who is present there. A civilian-he works as a barber- who witnessed the preparation of children to fight in Libya has also been interviewed.

Each of these interviews was conducted in a number of sessions through WhatsApp or a phone call, between January 10, 2020, except for two conducted physically in the town of Marea in northern rural Aleppo; the first with a barber, on January 16, 2020, and the second with a combatant on February 10, 2020.

1. How the Syrian fighters are enlisted in Libya?

According to information and witnesses' statements collected by STJ, among those recruited were military personnel, fighters in the National Army and even civilians who had never carried a weapon before. Former combatants have also been offered to fight in Libya.

It must be mentioned that children under the age of 18 are still be recruited as of the date of this report.

A. Recruitment methods:

STJ field researchers in the areas of "Euphrates Shield", "Olive Branch" and "Peace Spring", which are under Turkey's control, reported recruitment incidents by the National Army, and concluded from their talks to locals and witnesses that:

- Fighters of the National Army choose voluntarily to go to Libya, by registering their names in a list prepared by military officers in charge and wait the approval to start procedures of his transfer to Libya. H. Khairia was the most well-known among those military officers; he is based in the town of Marea.

- With regard to civilians, who did not engage in the conflict in Syria as militants, and wish to go to fight in Libya, one should first join one of the National Army's armed groups within the areas of the "Euphrates Shield", "Olive Branch" or "Peace Spring", and then submit to fight in Libya like other fighters.
- Regarding recruitment of children, STJ field researcher in the "Euphrates Shield" area confirmed that enlisting children carry the consent of their families; for money. New identification cards issued for those children with fake names and dates of birth; some were registered in the name of their older brothers.
- Regarding the procedures of registering fighters, an employee in the personal status department of the 1st Corps of the opposition Syrian National Army, said that they offer the fighter a three-month renewable contract, and the only document required for registration is an identification card or an ID regardless of its issuer; whether it is the Syrian government or the current local councils established by the Turkish government. The military IDs issued by the National Army are also acceptable.

The employee (the first witness) added that his work is limited to registering the basic data of the fighter or the civilian who wants to go to Libya. Tests of physical fitness and military experiences are then carried out on those who have never fight before. After that, the admitted ones transferred to the Turkish territory where they signed the contracts and complete the travel procedures.

B. Privileges and salaries:

STJ met six individuals, three of whom are fighters presently in Libya and two of them rejected offers to go there as well as a fighter awaiting approval of his request to go, in addition to an employee in the personal status department of the 1st Corps of the National Army. The interview with the employee was conducted via the Internet on several sessions between January 21, 2020 and February 12, 2020.

The first witness (the employee) said that the inducements provided to the fighters are great, as they are offered a monthly salary ranging between \$2000 to \$3000, depending on the fighter's military specialization; the salaries of those who are experienced in open areas fighting and street war are much higher. In case of the fighter's death, his family given a compensation of at least \$50.000, in addition, his first-degree relatives granted the Turkish citizenship. While, the compensation for the permanent injury is \$35.000 and the amount decreased if it is minor.

The second witness, who is a fighter of the Sultan Murad Division and currently present in Libya, said that he received a salary of \$2000 on February 8, 2020, for a month he spent in Libya, carrying out military missions which he undisclosed.

The third witness, who is also a fighter of the Sultan Murad Division and currently present in Libya, said that he coordinated with a man named H. Khairia to go to Libya, and agreed with him on all financial and administrative matters. He added that H. Khairia is leading them there in Libya, and said that he came to Libya with a batch of fighters, among them recently recruited civilians, and they only had a personal weapon before arriving to Libya, where they were provided with ammunition, equipment and machinery after they were distributed on the axis of engagements.

On the reason for his acceptance to come to Libya, the fighter (the third witness) said:

“Either way, we are mercenaries. The difference is that in Syria we are mercenaries for free, but here we get dollars. We can secure our future after a while. I do not regret what I did.”

STJ also met two fighters, who rejected offers to go to Libya, one of them provided information about the situation of his friends there.

A former fighter in the Free Syrian Army- specialized in firing anti-tank guided missile-, from the Qalamun region, said that he ceased fighting after being displaced to Idlib, where he worked in a restaurant:

“The current leader of the Sultan Murad Division, D. Hajar, came to me, and offered me to go to Libya and work within my specialty as an anti-tank guided missile launcher from the Turkish base there, without involving in any direct military confrontations on the ground, as he promised. He said that I will sign a two-month contract and get a monthly salary of \$2000 and be granted the Turkish citizenship. However, I refused the offer for the simple reason that I had defected from the regime's army in order not to be a mercenary to anyone, and I did not engage with any of the opposition's armed groups for the same reason, so how can I accept such an offer and go to fight in Libya.”

On the other front, a fighter of the Levant Front/al-Jabha al-Shamiya (the fifth witness) is waiting the approval to go to Libya for fight, he said to STJ field researcher in an online interview:

I registered to go to Libya for the simple reason that I has been fighting with the Levant Front for two years, but the salary I get from it is decreasing instead of being increased. It reached only TL.750 which I receive every 40 days. This amount is not enough to support my family, I have thought carefully about the matter, I can return after 3 months with an amount of \$6000. In case I injured there, my family will receive a large compensation and if I killed, I would secure my family's life and future, as they will obtain Turkish citizenship and a big compensation sufficient for them to start a new life.”

The fifth witness noted that he had registered in the town of Marea, through one of his friends who is a member in the Mu'tasim Division and he is still waiting the approval.

In a similar incident, a 20-year-old displaced civilian from eastern rural Hama and residing in Afrin, has recently joined the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as the Amashat), in order to travel to Libya and indeed he did. His mother (the sixth witness), said that she had lost contact with him for a whole month, to be shocked later about the news of his travel to Libya, which was delivered to her by, Abu Siraj, brother of Mohammad al-Jasim (nicknamed Abu Amsha), leader of the Suleiman Shah Brigade. The mother detailed STJ field researcher what happened, saying:

“My son, used to work in a car wash in Afrin. Me with his father and brother are residing the camp of Atimah in northern Idlib, where he used to visit us every week. However, he disappeared for a whole month before sending us a message saying that he is working abroad. I went with my little son to Afrin to look for him, and we were told that he had left to the town of Shaykh Al Hadid/Şiyê. Indeed, we went there, and after a lot of pleading, we were allowed to meet Abu Siraj, brother of Abu Amsha. He told me that my son had gone to Libya and would never be able to return before the expiry of the contract. Abu Siraj gave me \$50 and offered me a free stay in Shaykh Al Hadid.”⁸

2. Who is behind deploying Syrian fighters to Libya?

A. The involvement of the Turkish government:

Official statements issued by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other Turkish officials, in addition to dozens of media reports, confirm Turkey's direct involvement and responsibility in the operations of transporting Syrian fighters to Libya and their use as mercenaries. Statements of fighters and people met by STJ revealed some details about Turkey's involvement. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had confirmed in an [interview](#) with CNN Turk on January 5, 2020, that there are troopers in Libya, not members of the Turkish army (in an implicit reference to the presence of fighters of other nationalities)⁹.

⁸ For more info about the situation of Kurds in Shaykh Al Hadid please read: “Afrin: Shaykh Al Hadid: Intimidation and Economic Tightening”, STJ, February 22, 2020, (last visit: March 12, 2020) <https://stj-sy.org/en/afrin-shaykh-al-hadid-intimidation-and-economic-tightening/>

⁹ Link to the main interview: "Erdoğan'dan Libya açıklaması: Askerlerimiz peyderpey şu anda giriyor". CNN Turk. January 5, 2020. (last visit: March 10, 2020). <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-libya-aciklamasi>.

To hear a video confirming the presence of other non-Turkish military fighters: "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Türk askeri peyderpey Libya'ya gidiyor". January 7, 2020. (Last visit: March 10, 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwHdCTz1hW4>.

The direct quote (Muharip güç olarak orada farklı ekiplerimiz olacak bunlar bizim askerlerimiz içinden değil).

On February 21, 2020, in a [statement](#) to reporters, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan confirmed the presence of “Syrian teams” alongside the Turkish army present in Libya who is carrying out training missions (according to Erdoğan). Erdoğan explained that these “Syrian teams” affiliated to the Syrian National Army of the opposition.¹⁰ In a speech to people in the Turkish city of Izmir, on February 22, 2020, Erdoğan once again confirmed the presence of Syrian National Army fighters in Libya.¹¹

According to a worker in Jarabulus border crossing, the Turkish government contracted a number of companies providing security services, including [Sadat](#) and Abna'a al-Umma. Those companies contracted the Turkish Ministry of Defense and undertook the task of recruiting fighters from / or under the umbrella of the Syrian National Army in direct coordination with the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Interim Government. The companies undertook the task of examining the fighters and preparing their official documents that authorized them to enter and leave Turkey legally to Libya, in addition to regularizing employment contracts of 3 to 6 months for the fighters.

On this, STJ spoke to, an employee (the seventh witness) at the Jarabulus border crossing with Turkey, which is run by the 9th Division¹²-, he told STJ field researcher the information which the nature of his work allowed him to reach, saying:

“Fighters who pass the medical examination and thus been accepted to go Libya, are gathered in Hawar Kilis military crossing and then transferred in special buses into Turkey. There, security companies contracted with the Turkish Ministry of Defense issued the fighters all required official documents starting from the Kimlik.¹³ Then the same companies provide the fighters with contracts of employment for specific services. They follow specific procedures in the registration of fighters that include keeping the fighter’s fingerprint, eyeprint ID and a sample of his DNA, in addition to issuing an identification card for each fighter to use as an ID during his presence in Libya.”

The witness stressed that all these procedures are carried out in direct coordination with the Turkish army and take only 3 to 4 days to be completed, then the fighters transferred to Libya.

STJ tried to dig deeper into the matter, but some details are closed to the first line leaders in the National Army and the joint Turkish Operations Room.

¹⁰ Main source: “Rusya Devlet Başkanı Putin ile İdlib'deki tüm gelişmeleri ele alacağız”. Turkish Presidency website. February 21, 2020. (last visit: March 10, 2020). <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/116749/-rusya-devlet-baskani-putin-ile-idlib-deki-tum-gelismeleri-ele-alacagiz->

¹¹ Source: "Erdoğan, "LİBYA'DA BİR KAÇ TANE ŞEHİDİMİZ VAR" dedi! Sosyal Medyada Büyük Tepki Çekti!" (last visit: March 10, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wleABNh258M>).

¹² The 9th Division / Special Forces belongs to the 143rd Brigade, who is part of the 1st Corps in the Syrian National Army.

¹³ A temporary protection identification document Turkey given to Syrian refugees only.

A fighter in the Levant Front (the eighth witness) told STJ field researcher about the preparation which precedes the travel to Libya, saying:

"I registered with the officer in charge in the Sultan Murad Division, who is called Abu Stef. Five of my friends traveled to Libya in the batch before mine, I was supposed to catch up with them quickly, but I waited to ask them about their situation there. My friends said that they were shocked by the situation there, as it was completely different to how they had been told about it. Initially, the fighters put in a hotel in Turkey until they were issued Turkish IDs; they checked out of Turkey as Turks, not Syrians. Some were transferred by plane and others by ship. My friends told me also that they were shocked to be distributed on frontlines without guides or logistical support; they could not even distinguish who was an enemy and who wasn't or to determine where the shot came from. Also, promises of getting a salary of \$3000 a month, were also fake as they only got \$1200 dollars. On top of that, it is extremely difficult to return the injured to Syria."

He added:

"According to the information we received, 4000 Syrian fighters arrived in Libya, and the Turkish authorities asked the armed groups to send more 10,000 fighters. I canceled the idea of traveling to Libya after I heard about the situation there. I noticed that a large number of the youths who went to Libya are poor and thus prompted by the financial gains, as well as they are not married and have no families here. I think that's what encouraged them to go."

A number of fighters indicated that there is almost certain information that says that the group which recruits/sends/insures 20 to 30 fighters, would be granted an amount of \$12,000 from the Turkish government. This amount is separate from the amounts of the support or the monthly allocations for the group. According to some fighters, the groups are vying to register the largest number of fighters, the matter which has affected the fighters themselves, as it led to prolong the waiting period for the acceptance and thus the travel, and caused a reduction in the monthly salaries that they had been promised.

B. The involvement of armed groups and Syrian actors:

According to statements collected by STJ, and which will be presented successively in this report, the Sultan Murad Division, the Mu'tasim Division and the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), are the groups which mostly responsible for deploying youths and children to Libya. These groups register any person who wishes to go to fight in Libya, whether a civilian or a military, and whether he is a fighter within its ranks or in other groups. Those three groups coordinate the process of transporting fighters from Syria to Turkey through

coordination with security companies operating under the supervision of the Turkish army. These companies later transferred the fighters to Libya.

The first witness, who is an employee in the personal status department of the 1st Corps of the National Army said that the Sultan Murad Division, the Mu'tasim Division and the Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as al-Amshat), are the most to send fighters to Libya. But, however, members of other groups such as the Levant Front, the Glory Corps/Faylaq al-Majd and the Army of Islam/ Jaysh al-Islam had registered also to go to Libya in coordination with the Mu'tasim Division and under its command.



Image (2): emblems of the Syrian armed groups, the top line from the right (the Suleiman Shah Brigade, the Mu'tasim Division, the Sultan Murad Division). The lower line from the right (the Levant Front, the Glory Corps, the Army of Islam).

The first witness confirmed that according to the entries he could reach in the registration offices-knowing there are many registration offices in “Euphrates Shield” and “Olive Branch” areas- the number of fighters who had already left to Turkey as of the end of January 2020 is 250, 200 of whom are from the Suleiman Shah Brigade, including original fighters of the Brigade and people joined it recently in order to go to Libya, and the other 50 are from the Mu'tasim Division. While the total number of fighters, from all armed groups, who registered to go to Libya is over 700.

Fighters of the Suleiman Shah Brigade in Libya are under the direct command of Mohammad al-Jasim (nicknamed Abu Amsha), while those of the Mu'tasim Division are led by Mutasim Abbas, who left to Libya as a military official with a reconnaissance mission, the Sultan Murad Division fighters are under the leadership of Fahim Issa, according to the source.



Image (3) - from right to left (Mu'tasim Abbas and then Muhammad Al-Jasim and Fahim Issa). In addition, defected officers from the Syrian government forces have been granted Turkish citizenship recently, when they went to Libya as military advisors.

The seventh witness who is a worker at Jarabulus border crossing said to STJ:

“According to the information I got, on January 12, 2020, a group of fighters and civilians who wish to go Libya were gathered at the Hawar Kilis crossing. They were about 200 people from the Mu'tasim Division, the Muntasir Billah Brigade, the Sultan Murad Division, the 9th Division, the Northern Democratic Brigade and the Suleiman Shah Brigade. They were transferred from Antakya to Ankara by plane on January 20, 2020, the papers were prepared in Ankara and they went to Libya, but I do not know the exact date of the flight.”

He added:

“Most of the people who went to Libya in this batch are poor or residents of IDP camps. We can say that a civilian recruited for every 5 fighters, i.e. 33 civilians joined the armed groups with the aim to go Libya compared to 167 already fighters. Those civilians were recruited through mediators between them and the groups.”

An overview on the armed groups which lead the recruitment and fighting operations in Libya:

- **The Suleiman Shah Brigade (also known as the Amashat)**

is one of the groups of the 1st Corp in the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army affiliated to the Syrian Interim Government. The Brigade is led by Mohammad Hussein al-Jasim, known as

“Abu Amsha”. Most of its fighters are from the Turkmen nationhood, who reside in Hama. The group is known as al-Amshat in the media.

The group was formed in late 2011 in Hama, under the name the Banner of the Line of Fire Brigade/Lowaa Khat al-Narr, in order to confront the pro-government forces. As, the Brigade participated in several battles, including the one launched to lift the siege on the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo which was led by the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham/HTS (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra). Later, the group moved to rural Aleppo, where it operates in coordination with the Turkish forces.

In early 2016 the Line of Fire Brigade was renamed to Suleiman Shah Brigade, after the grandfather of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire, and then called al-Amshat due to its leader Abu Amsha.

In the same year, 2016, the group participated alongside the Turkish forces and other groups of the Syrian National Army in Operation Euphrates Shield launched by Turkey against the “Islamic State” in northern rural Aleppo. Later in 2018, it participated alongside the Turks in Operation Olive Branch, which aimed to control the Kurdish-majority region of Afrin, and in November 2019, it also fights alongside the Turkish army in Operation Peace Spring.

On several occasions, the leader, Abu Amsha, showed loyalty to Turkey and its Army, as he appeared in a video faulting demonstrators in Idlib for burning the Turkish flag; he said: “the Turkish flag reflects our history, and the history of our ancestral warriors and the names of our martyrs who buried in Turkey when we fought colonialism together, the Turkish flag represented the blood of Arab and Turkish martyrs, especially the Syrians.

The group organized a military training course-in the town of Shaykh Al Hadid-, from which a batch of youths were graduated as fighters in April 2019, and the batch held the name of “Ertugrul's Gradsons”. The graduation ceremony was decorated with Turkish flags and Ottoman music was played in and it was attended by members of the Turkish-backed National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

Like other groups of the National Army, the Suleiman Shah Brigade committed systematic violations in the Afrin region against the indigenous population, as it contributed to the housing of displaced families in the homes of the indigenous people who fled hostilities during Operation Olive Branch, and also participated in the arrests made against dozens of citizens to extort money from them. Besides, it seized the olive harvest in the town of Shaykh Al Hadid.

Abu Amsha, the group's leader, was accused by a young woman called Israa Khalil, of raping her repeatedly at gunpoint and threatening to kill her and her family if she told anyone about that. However, Abu Amsha was not subjected to any independent judicial investigation into these accusations. Further, STJ documented 22 arrests made by the Suleiman Shah Brigade during the second half of 2019 across the Afrin region.

- **The Mu'tasim Division:** is currently affiliated with the 2nd Corps of the Syrian National Army. Initially, it was formed with US support, under the name of al-Tawhid Brigade/

Liwa al-Tawhid, in July 2012. However, in August 2015 was restructured with support from Turkey and it is now led by Mu'tasim Abbas.

[Mustafa Sejari](#) is also considered one of the most prominent faces of the group, as he is the director of its Political Bureau. The group is mainly active in northern rural Aleppo, specifically the Euphrates Shield region, and has fought alongside Turkey in Operation Euphrates Shield, Operation Olive Branch and Operation Peace Spring. Its main headquarters is in the town of Marea in northern rural Aleppo, and it has nearly a thousand fighters.

- **The Sultan Murad Division:** is part of the 2nd Corps of the Syrian National Army. The Brigade was established in October 2012 and expanded in March 2013 to include a number of Turkmen teams and brigades: the Mohammad Al-Fateh brigade, the Martyr Zaki Turkmani Brigade and Ashbal Akida Brigade, with Turkish support. In December 2015 it was joined by other brigades, namely; the Turkmen Martyrs Brigade, the First Brigade Infantry Force, the Second Brigade Infantry Force, the Special Tasks Brigade, and the Yarmouk Brigade. In 2017 the Sultan Murad Division joined the ranks of the opposition Syrian National Army.

The Division is led by three people: the general official: Youssef Al-Saleh, the field commander, Fahim Issa, and the military official, Colonel Ahmed Othman. Alongside Turkey, the division fought in "Operation Euphrates Shield", "Operation Olive Branch" and "Operation Peace Spring".

C. The ways used by Turkey to transport fighters to Libya:

From Syria to Turkey by road:

According to information and statements provided by fighters present in Libya, fighters transported from Syria to Libya through two routes, the first -as explained by a number of fighters- they gathered at the Hawar Kilis military crossing and from there they transported by buses to inside Turkish territory. In Turkey they deposited in camps in the Kilis region until their documents are completed, and then they are airlifted from Gaziantep International Airport to one of the airports in Istanbul.

The second route- according to a worker at the Jarabulus Border Crossing- is from Syria to Antakya by road and from Antakya to Ankara by air and then to Libya on Afriqiyah Airways; STJ has not yet been able to collect additional information and other statements from fighters who followed this path.



Image (4) a satellite image illustrates the location of Hawar Kilis military crossing, where the fighters gathers to be transferred to Istanbul.

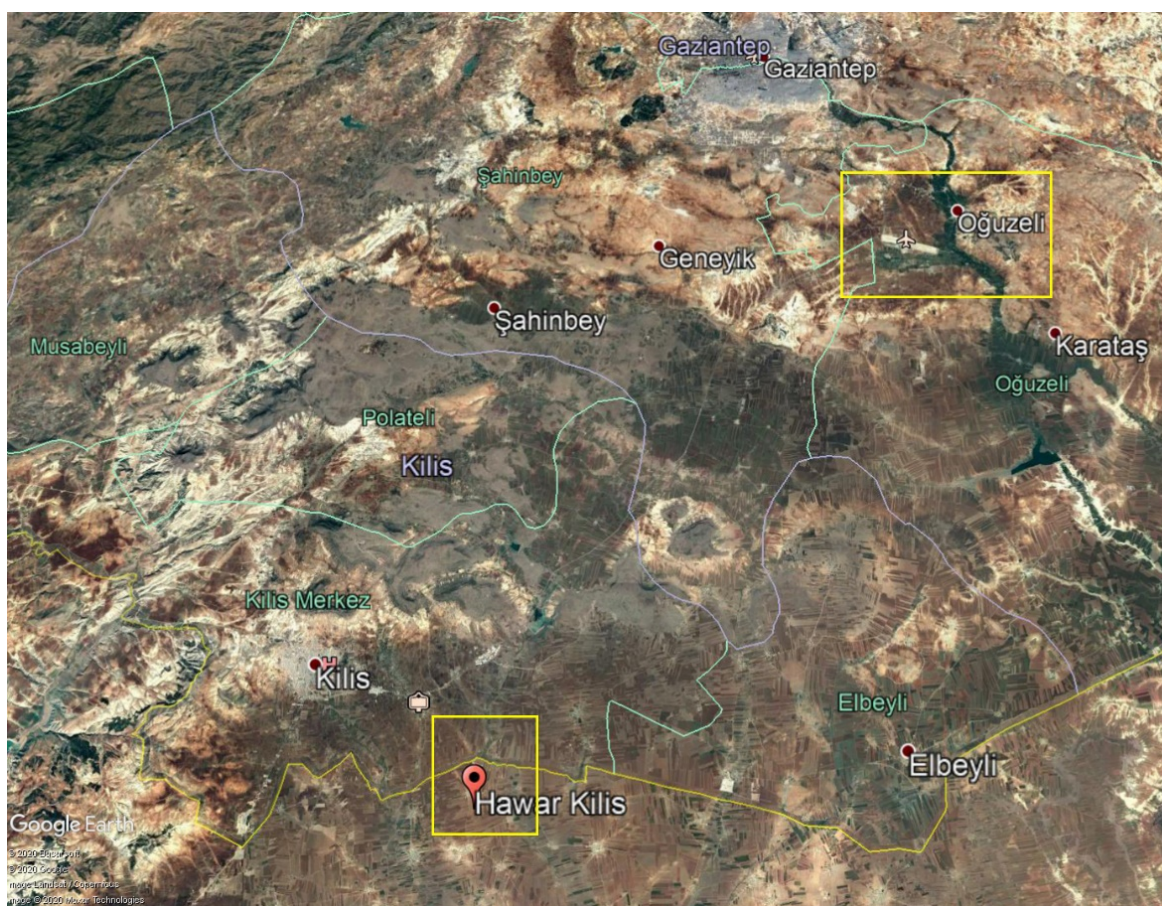


Image (5) a satellite image illustrates the location of Gaziantep Oğuzeli International Airport (the upper yellow square) and the location of the Hawar Kilis military crossing, at which the Syrian fighters gathered before being transported into Turkey, (the yellow square at the bottom).

Air transportation inside Turkey and from there to Libya:

According to information and statements made by fighters currently in Libya and employees at the border crossings managed by the opposition Syrian National Army, the transfer of fighters from Turkey to Libya is carried out using Libyan and/or African civil aircraft, which take off from Turkish airports in Istanbul. One of the witnesses talked about planes flown the fighters from Ankara to Libya, but we haven't got any information or statement supporting this say.

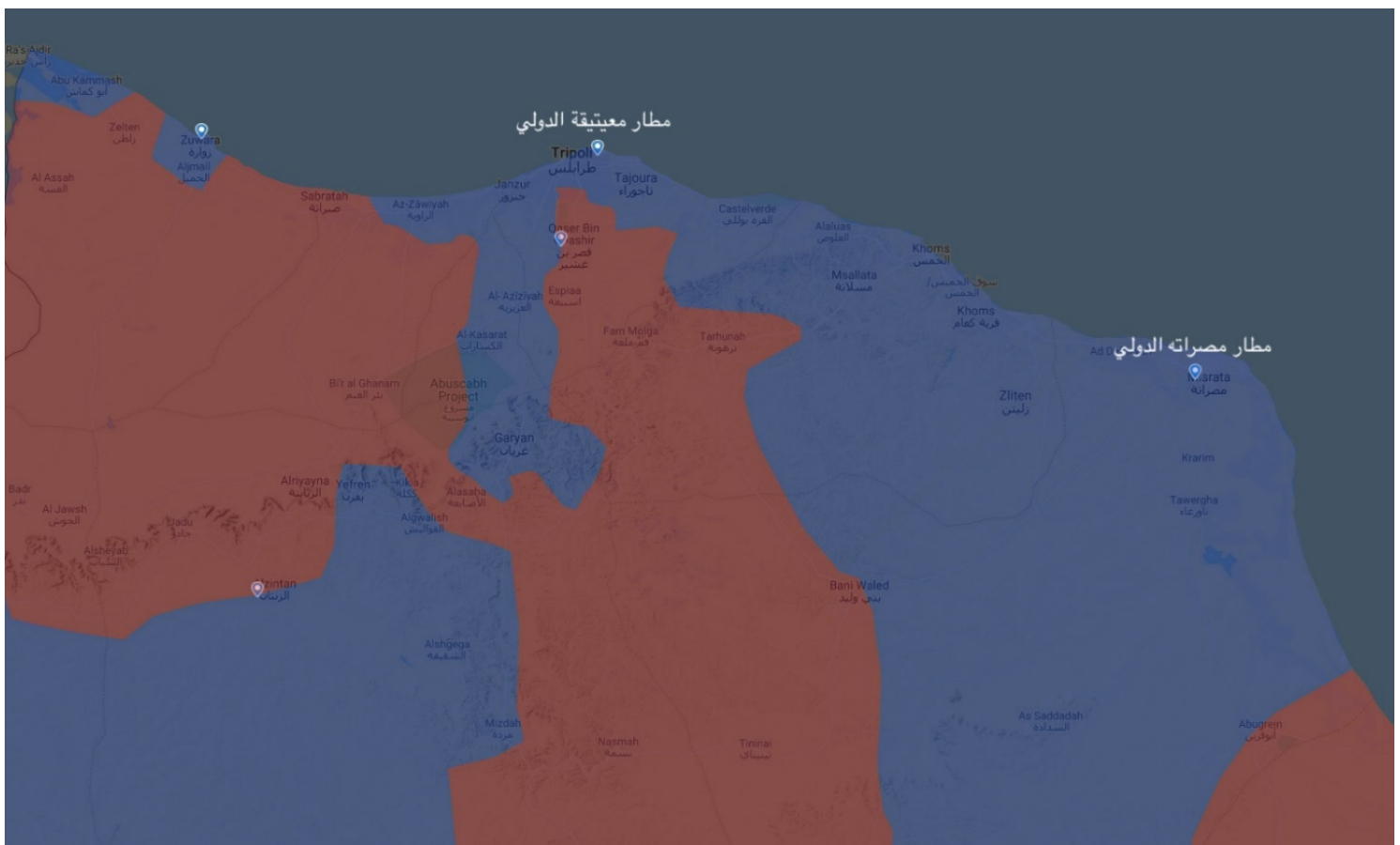


Image (6) the geographic locations of Misrata and Mitiga International Airports in Libya. Areas in blue are under the control of the Government of National Accord, under the leadership of Fayeza al-Sarraj, while those in red are controlled by the Libyan National Army, headed by the Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter.

These two airports are the destinations of the planes carrying fighters coming from Turkey, as reported to STJ.

STJ's digital forensic expert, tracked some of the published photos of fighters who were transported inside Turkish territory by Turkish planes to an airport in Istanbul and was able to determine the type of military aircraft that are used to transport the Syrian fighters, which confirms the involvement of the Turkish government and the Turkish army in these recruitments.

The Libyan newspaper "LyWitness" posted a [tweet](#) on January 30, 2019, saying that it had obtained an exclusive photo of Syrian fighters at the Turkish Gaziantep airport before they moved to Libya. The picture showed a group of youths meters away from an A400 military aircraft.



Image (7) a [tweet](#) posted by the "LyWitness" newspaper on January 30, 2019.

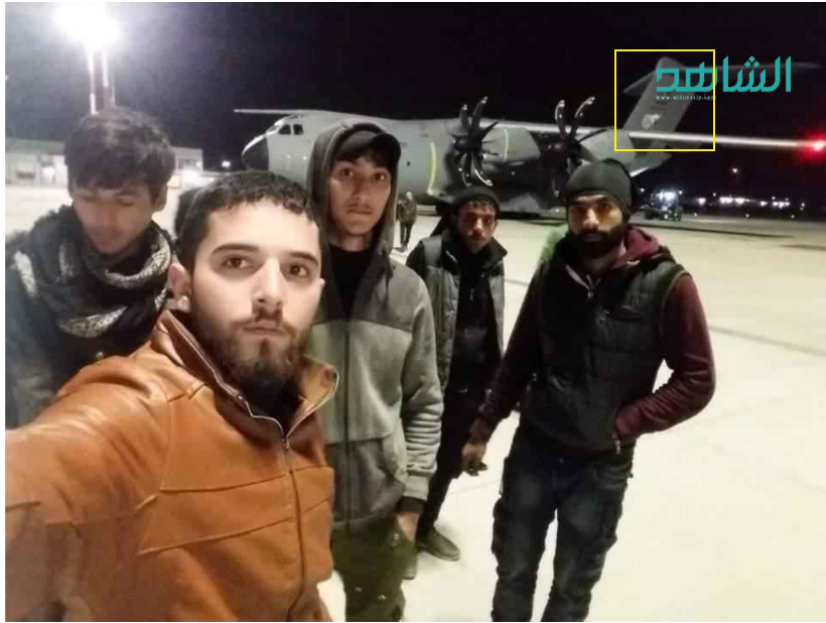


Image (8): the same tweet by the “LyWitness” newspaper shows a group of youths in front of an A400 Turkish military aircraft. According to the source, this photo is taken at Gaziantep airport (STJ marks the Turkish flag on the plane’s tail with a yellow square).

In order to verify the use of this type of aircraft by the Turkish Air Force, STJ conducted an open source research and obtained many photos and [videos](#) confirming that the Turkish Armed Forces have this type of aircraft, including the one in the following image:



Image (9) a screenshot from a [video](#) published on the Internet Turkish forces confirm the use of the A-400 military aircraft. The same logo appears on the planes’ tails in both photos.

Besides, in August 2018, satellite imagery showed that there are a number of A400 military aircraft at [Kayseri](#) Erkilet Airport.



Image (10) a Google Earth image showing the A400 military aircraft at Kayseri Erkilet Airport on August 18, 2018.

Apart from this, on December 29, 2014, FlightGlobal website published a news about Turkey's receiving another batch of A400M military aircraft, adding that it landed in the Kayseri Erkilet Airport.¹⁴

STJ can say for certain that the images in the [tweet](#) posted by the "LyWitness" newspaper were taken in Gaziantep International Airport on January 24, 2019. In addition to the statements obtained on the dates of flights, STJ's digital forensic expert tracked flight information from [Gaziantep](#) Airport to Istanbul on December 24 and 25, 2019, and collected information related to flights that departed from the two airports Kayseri and Gaziantep. The results clearly showed the movement of A400 military flights between Kayseri, Gaziantep and Istanbul on those dates.

This information is consistent with that mentioned in a report published by the Guardian newspaper, on January 15, 2020, which said that two batches of fighters of the opposition Syrian National Army accessed into the Turkish territory from the Hawar Kilis border crossing; the first (included 300 fighters) was on December 24, 2019, and the second on 29th of the same month.¹⁵ But STJ has verified that the batch that flew from Gaziantep Airport on December 24, 2019, is not the same mentioned in the Guardian's report, because fighters

¹⁴ "Turkish air force receives second A400M". flightglobal. Dec 29, 2014. (Last visit: March 12, 2020). <https://www.flightglobal.com/turkish-air-force-receives-second-a400m/115512.article>.

¹⁵ "Exclusive: 2,000 Syrian fighters deployed to Libya to support government", The Guardian, January 15, 2020. (last visit: March 13, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/15/exclusive-2000-syrian-troops-deployed-to-libya-to-support-regime>.

who arrive in Turkish territory need between 3 to 4 days to complete the checks and extract the required documents. Thus, STJ believes that the batch that the Guardian spoke about, had left Turkish territory on December 28, 2019, as information was captured about flights to Istanbul on that date.

Note that flights from Gaziantep to Istanbul were frequent in late December 2019, and early January 2020.

Due to its focus on civilian aircraft, Flightradar24 does not always pick up and record military aircraft.



Image (11) on December 24, 2019, Flightradar24 captured information of a flight took off from Kayseri International Airport which has this A400 military aircraft. The image shows the plane heading towards Gaziantep (the timing on the image 17:57 indicates the actual time of the plane's location after it took off from Kayseri airport).

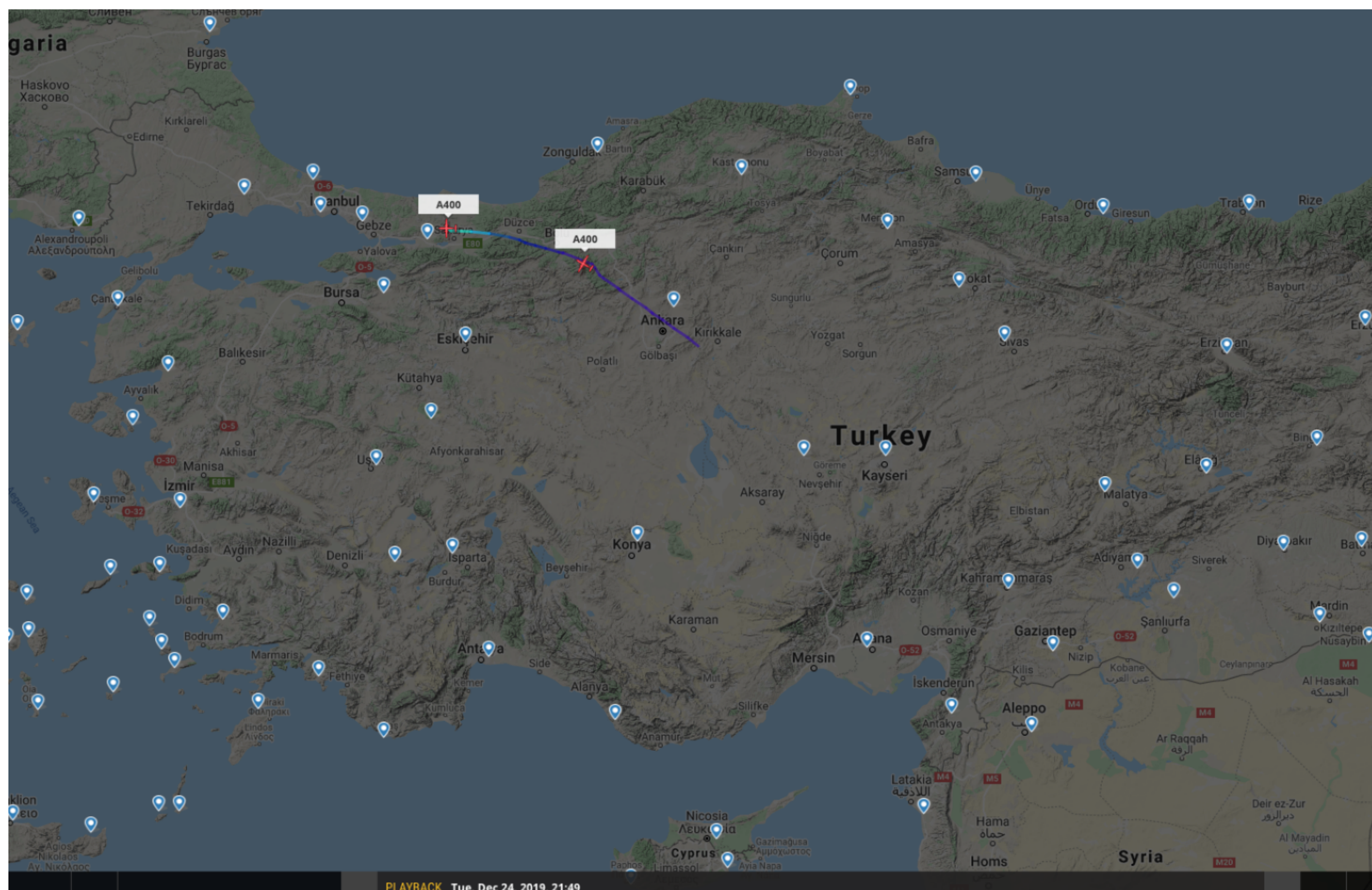


Image (12) also on December 24, 2019 at 21:49 GMT (a few hours after the flight of Kayseri/Gaziantep), Flightradar24 managed to capture the information of this plane that landed in Istanbul. STJ believe that this plane, which took off from Gaziantep airport is the same one came from its base in Kayseri and then headed to Istanbul carrying dozens of Syrian fighters traveling to Libya.

The reasons that made STJ believe it is the same plane:

1. Obtaining direct statements from fighters who reported flights on December 24 and 25, 2019, from Turkey's Istanbul to Libya. Hussam Shabaki, a member of the Sultan Murad Division, currently present in Libya, confirmed that he flew to Libya with other fighters by a plane that took off from one of Istanbul's airports on December 24, 2019. They were transferred to Tripoli where they were divided into groups, each of which has a Turkish or Libyan head. (See page x x for more information on Shabaki's presence in Libya.)
2. The arrival of commercial flights to Libyan airports on the morning of December 25, 2019 (see image 20).

The frequent flights from the Kayseri air base towards

3. Gaziantep Airport in the following days during December 2019 and January 2020.

Two hours later, between 3:34am and 4:04am local Istanbul time, four commercial aircraft belonging to different Libyan airlines took off from Istanbul. Three of these, belonging to Libyan Airlines, Libyan Wings and Afriqiyah Airlines, landed in Tripoli while the fourth landed in Misrata, also controlled by the GNA. (the times listed on the flights before are in UTC - Turkey is 3 hours ahead).

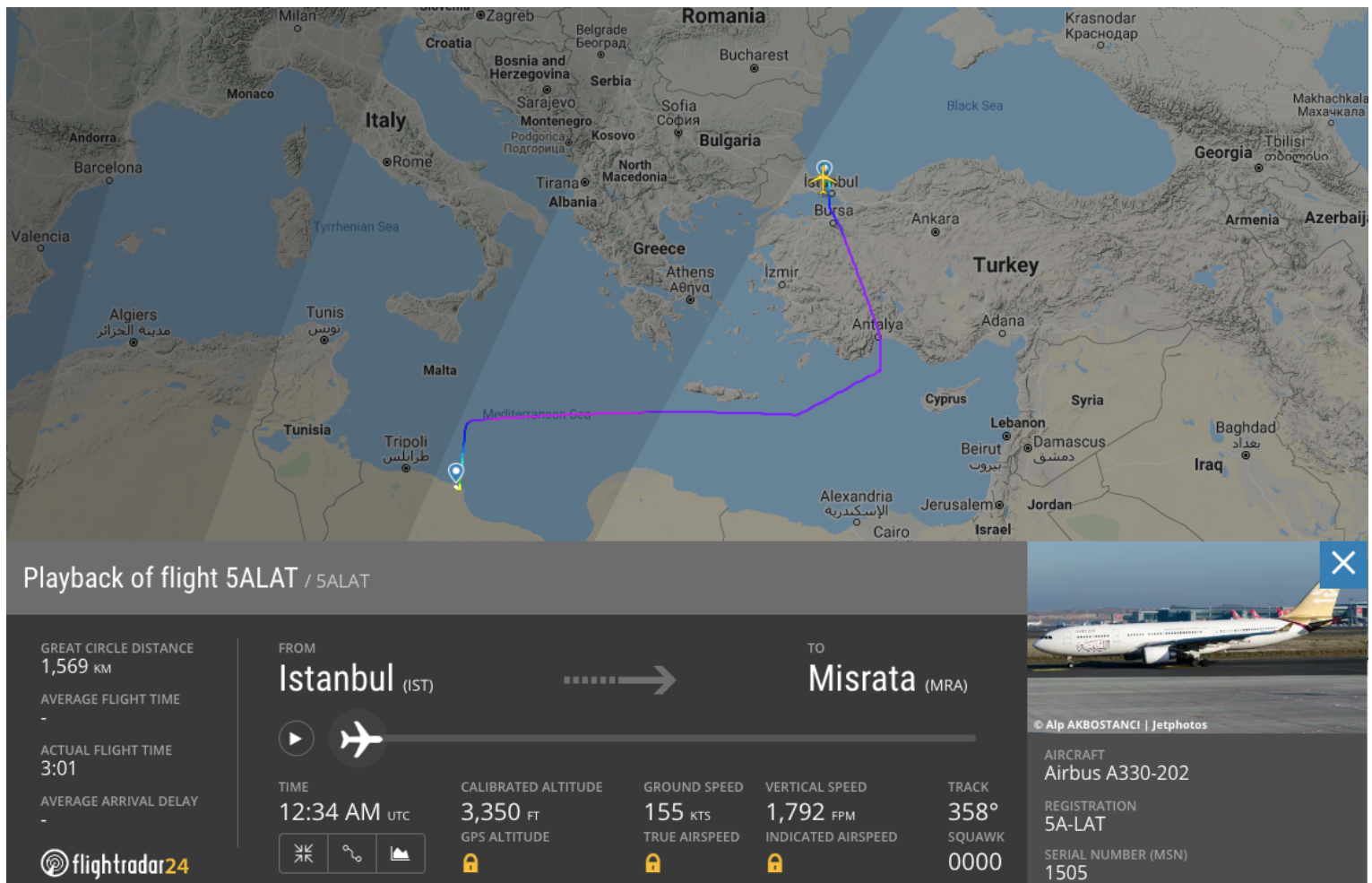


Image (13) taken from Flightradar24 shows the information of the flight took off from Istanbul on December 25, 2019 at 12:34 GMT, that is 03:34 AM, Istanbul local time (bound for Libya).

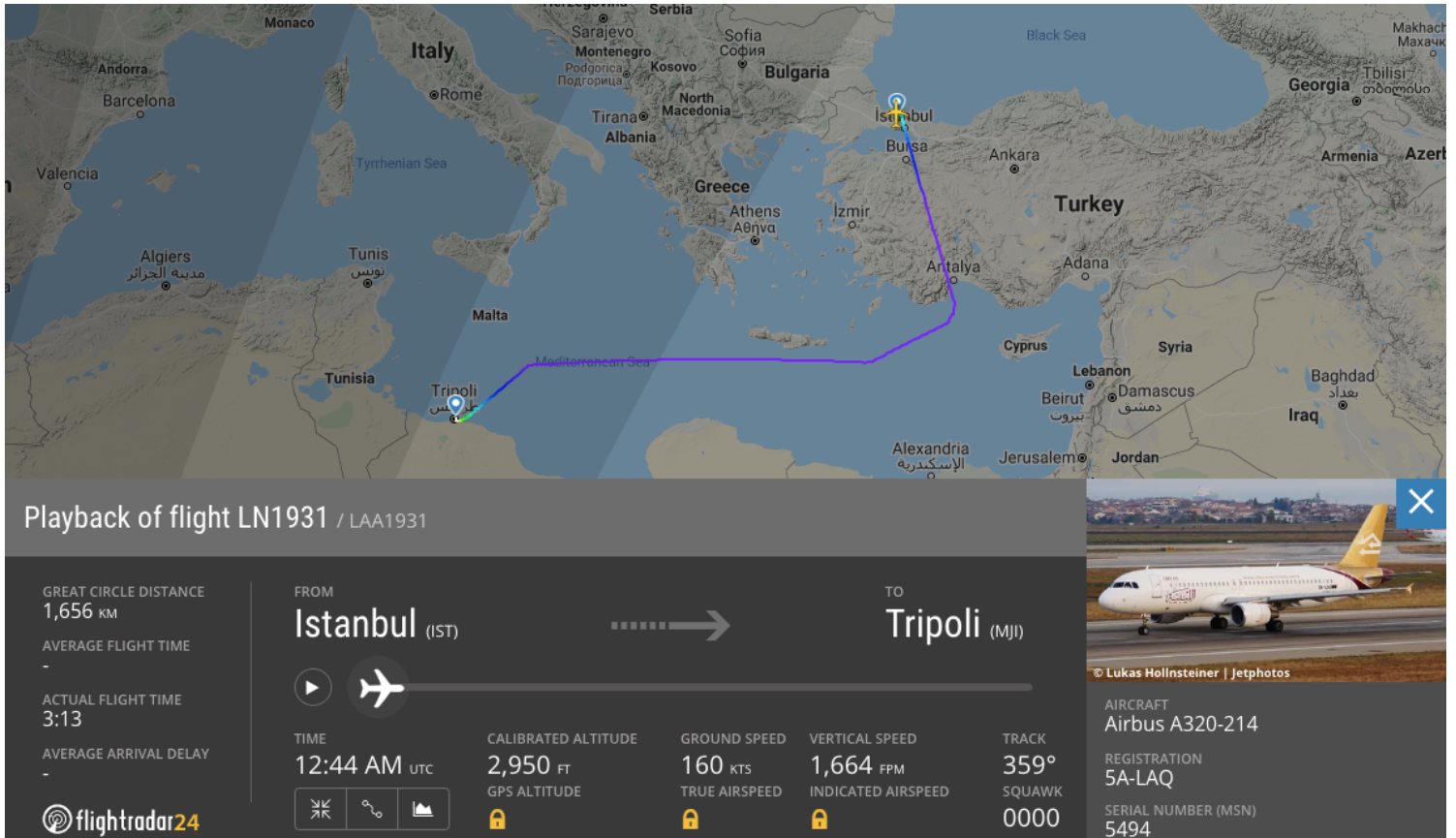


Image (14) taken from Flightradar24 shows the information of the second flight took off from Istanbul on December 25, 2019 at 12:44 GMT, that is 03:44 AM, Istanbul local time (bound for Libya).

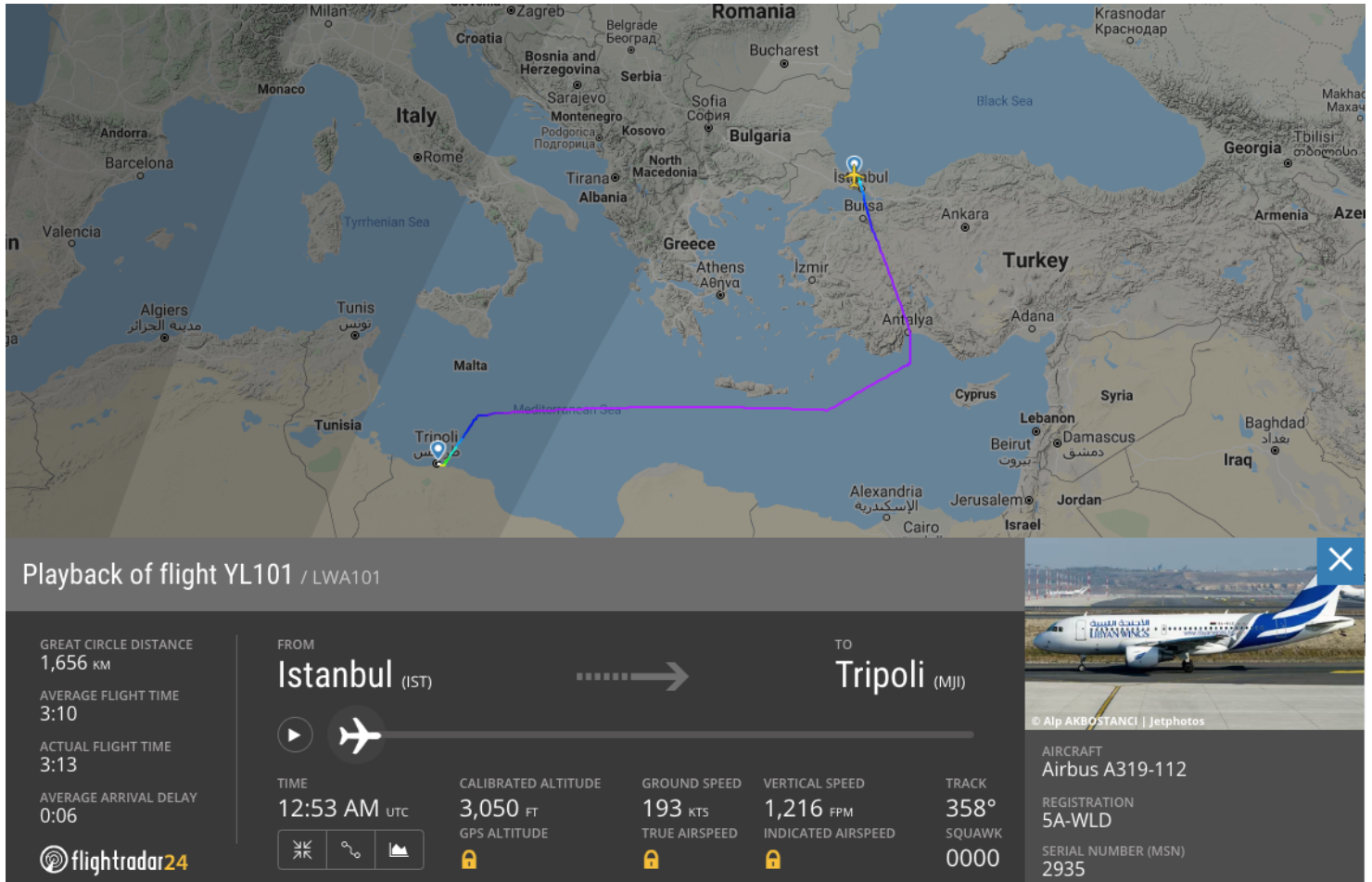


Image (15) taken from Flightradar24 shows the information of the third flight took off from Istanbul on December 25, 2019 at 12:53 GMT, that is 03:53 AM, Istanbul local time (bound for Libya).

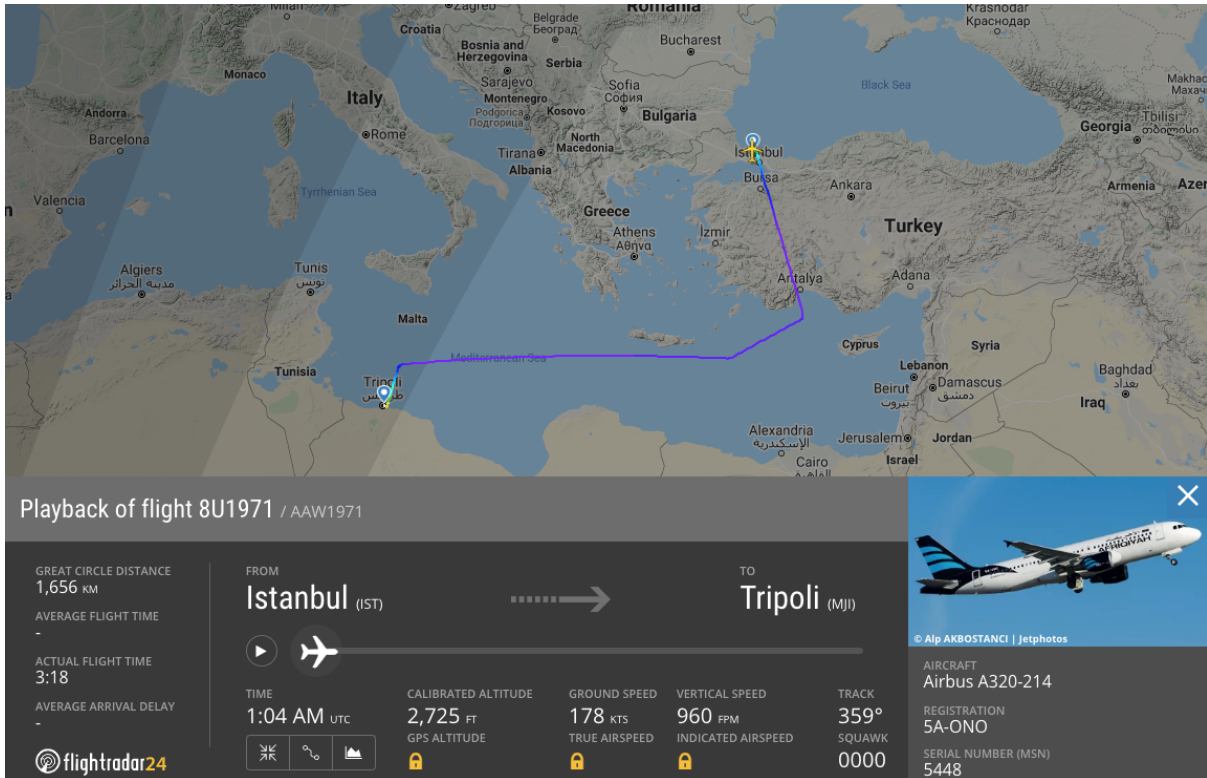


Image (16) taken from Flightradar24 shows the information of the fourth flight took off from Istanbul on December 25, 2019 at 01:04 GMT, that is 04:04 AM, Istanbul local time (bound for Libya).

On other dates in which it was reported that SNA fighters had been transported to Istanbul the website has more complete data of similar late night A400 flights, demonstrating that they depart from Gaziantep. An example of this is the night of 28/29 December in which two A400 flew from Gaziantep to Istanbul airport.

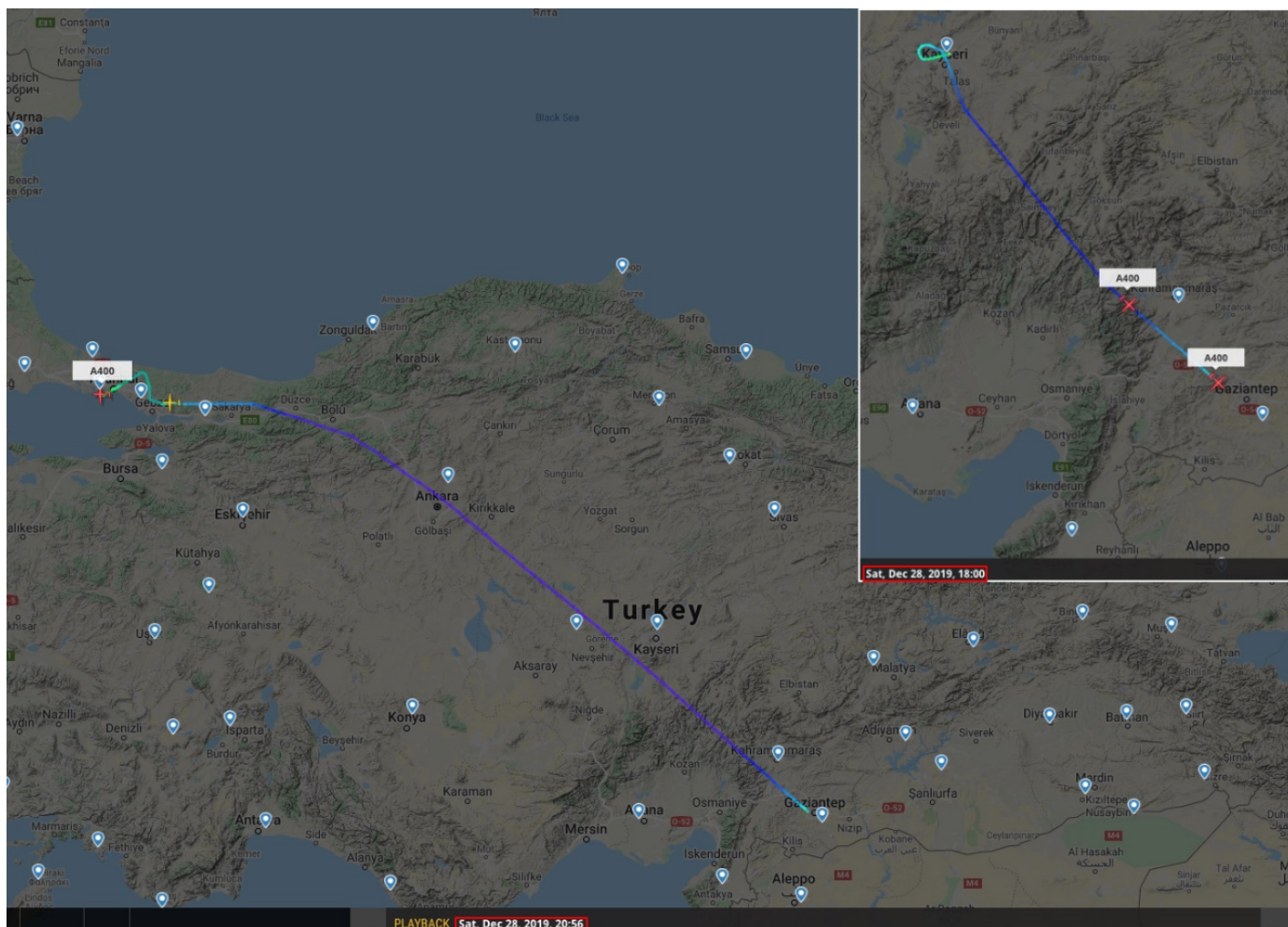


Image (17) the upper right image shows two A400 planes taking off from the Kayseri air base towards Gaziantep Airport on December 28, 2019. The first flight took off at 17:32 and landed at 18:42. The second flight took off at 17:35 and landed at 18:11. (GMT).

The second picture (the big one) shows the departure of two A400 planes from Gaziantep Airport towards Istanbul on December 28, 2019 the first took off at 19:33 and landed at 21:04. The second one took off at 19:43 and landed at 21:14. (GMT).

Records of these flights support the information in the Guardian newspaper report about the arrival of another batch of Syrian fighters (350 fighters) in Libya on December 29, 2019¹⁶.

¹⁶ “Exclusive: 2,000 Syrian fighters deployed to Libya to support government”. The Guardian. January 15, 2020. Last visit: March 13, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/15/exclusive-2000-syrian-troops-deployed-to-libya-to-support-regime>.

جدول مواعيد وصول الرحلات الدولية والداخلية القادمة لمطار مصراتة الدولي
ليوم الثلاثاء 24 - 12 - 2019 م

ت	الشركة الناقلية	رقم الرحلة	الوجهة	التوقيت	ملاحظات
1	الخطوط الليبية	LN301	تونس	12:40	
2	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U491	تونس	14:35	
3	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U975	إسطنبول	16:00	
4	الأجنحة اللبية	YL103	إسطنبول	17:10	
5	الأجنحة اللبية	YL831	تونس	22:10	

ملاحظة // المحضون قبل موعد الرحلة بثلاث ساعات
قفل منصة قبول الركاب (الكاونتر) قبل ساعة من موعد الرحلة .
تجميع وإعداد // كمال نوبير

Image (18) information of two commercial flights of Afriqiyah Airways and Libyan Wings took off from Istanbul on December 24, 2019 and landed on Misrata International Airport.

Credit: official Facebook page of [Mitiga International Airport](https://www.facebook.com/MitigaInternationalAirport).

Arrivals
جدول مواعيد وصول الرحلات الدولية والداخلية القادمة لمطار معيتقة الدولي
ليوم الثلاثاء الموافق 24 / 12 / 2019

ت	الشركة الناقلية	رقم الرحلة	قادمة من	التوقيت	ملاحظات
1	الأجنحة الليبية	YL101	إسطنبول	5:55	صباح الثلاثاء
2	طيران العراق	UZ116	إسطنبول	7:00	" "
3	الأجنحة الليبية	YL801	تونس	11:30	
4	الأجنحة الليبية	YL811	تونس	15:40	
5	الخطوط الليبية	LN203	الإسكندرية	17:00	موقوفة
6	الخطوط الليبية	LN303	تونس	17:20	
7	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U451	تونس	18:50	
8	الأجنحة الليبية	YL821	تونس	20:20	
9	طيران العراق	UZ144	تونس	21:10	
10	الخطوط الليبية	LN305	تونس	22:45	
11	الأجنحة الليبية	YL101	إسطنبول	5:55	صباح الأربعاء

<https://www.facebook.com/MitigaAirport>
إعداد / كمال نوبير
هذا ما لدينا نستودعكم الله الذي لا تضيع ودائعه
تصبحون على خير
حفظ الله ليبيا

Image (19) the flight schedule of [Mitiga International Airport](https://www.facebook.com/MitigaInternationalAirport) on December 24, 2019, showing the arrival of three flights from Istanbul to Mitiga Airport, and this consistent with the statements made by the fighters met by STJ.

Arrivals

جدول مواعيد وصول الرحلات الدولية والداخلية القادمة لطار معيتقة الدولي
ليوم الأربعاء 25 - 12 - 2019 م

ت	الشركة الناقلة	رقم الرحلة	قادمة من	التوقيت	ملاحظات
1	الأجنحة الليبية	YL101	إسطنبول	6:00	
2	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U211	تمننت	11:00	
3	الأجنحة الليبية	YL801	تونس	11:30	
4	الخطوط الليبية	LN303	تونس	12:35	
5	طيران البراق	UZ144	تونس	14:50	
6	الأجنحة الليبية	YL811	تونس	15:50	
7	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U971	إسطنبول	16:00	
8	الخطوط الليبية	LN311	صفاقس	16:30	
9	الخطوط الليبية	LN333	المنستير	16:45	
10	الخطوط الليبية	LN211	الإسكندرية	17:00	موقوفة
11	الخطوط الليبية	LN193	إسطنبول	17:30	
12	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U441	صفاقس	19:30	
13	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U437	الإسكندرية	20:00	موقوفة
14	الأجنحة الليبية	YL821	تونس	20:30	
15	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U455	تونس	20:50	
16	الخطوط الليبية	LN305	تونس	21:35	
17	الأجنحة الليبية	YL101	إسطنبول	6:00	صباح الخميس
18	طيران البراق	UZ116	إسطنبول	7:00	“ “

<https://www.facebook.com/MitigaAirport>
هذا ما لدينا نستودعكم الله الذي لا تضيع ودائعه

إعداد / كمال نويسر وتصحبون على خير
حفظ الله ليبيا

Image (20) the flight schedule of [Mitiga International Airport](#) on December 25, 2019, showing the arrival of four flights from Istanbul to Mitiga Airport, and this consistent with the statements made by the fighters met by STJ.

جدول مواعيد وصول الرحلات الدولية والداخلية القادمة لطار مصراتة الدولي
ليوم الأربعاء 25 - 12 - 2019 م

ت	الشركة الناقلة	رقم الرحلة	الوجهة	التوقيت	ملاحظات
1	الخطوط الأفريقية	8U493	صفاقس	15:30	
2	الأجنحة الليبية	YL103	إسطنبول	17:10	
3	الأجنحة الليبية	YL831	تونس	22:10	

ملاحظة // المحضون قبل موعد الرحلة ثلاث ساعات
قبل منصة قبول الركاب (الكاونتر) قبل ساعة من موعد الرحلة .
تجميع وإعداد // كمال نويسر

Image (21) the flight schedule of [Mitiga International Airport](#) on December 25, 2019, showing the arrival of four flights from Istanbul to Misrata Airport, and this consistent with the statements made by the fighters met by STJ.

Additional information supporting evidence of using commercial aviation in the transportation of Syrian fighters between Istanbul and Libya:

Fighters also posted a footage and pictures of them, on January 13, 2020, on civilian planes belonging to Libyan Airlines and Afriqiyah Airways. STJ was able to identify the identities of three of the fighters appeared in those published photos, who were reportedly killed during the fighting. However, a brother of one of them, whose name is Burhan Bashir al-Mahmoud Jadallah, assured STJ that the three fighters are alive and are still fighting in Libya, and added that the news of their killing was fabricated by a man who is at odds with them. (It is important to note that the video was circulated in Syrian channels on Telegram, including @Ehtematnews and @Alkabosnews.



Image (22) a screenshot from the aforementioned footage shows Mahmoud Jarallah (in the yellow square), and Abdul Razzak al-Mahmoud (in the green square) in the first seat and Issam Jarallah (in the red square) in the second seat. The photo was published on January 13, 2020.

For further verification, STJ searched in open sources for the internal structure of aircraft operating between Istanbul and Libya and found that the structure of the plane in the published video coincides with the structure and internal design of Libyan Airlines planes.



Image (23) an aircraft of the Libyan Airlines from inside. The seats and the structure are the same appears in the previous image which shows Syrian fighters on board from Turkey to Libya. Credit: [theafricanaviationtribune website](#).

Another video shared on Syrian social media on 18 January reportedly showed SNA fighters on a Libyan commercial airline, flying from Istanbul to Tripoli.



Image (24) a screenshot from a footage published on January 18, 2020 shows the transfer of Syrian fighters on the Afriqiyah Airways, from Istanbul Airport to Mitiga International Airport in Libya. (STJ keeps a copy of the footage in its archive)

Again, STJ tried to compare the design/internal structure of the plane in the footage published on January 18, 2020, and after research in open sources, it was found that the plane belonged to Afriqiyah Airways.

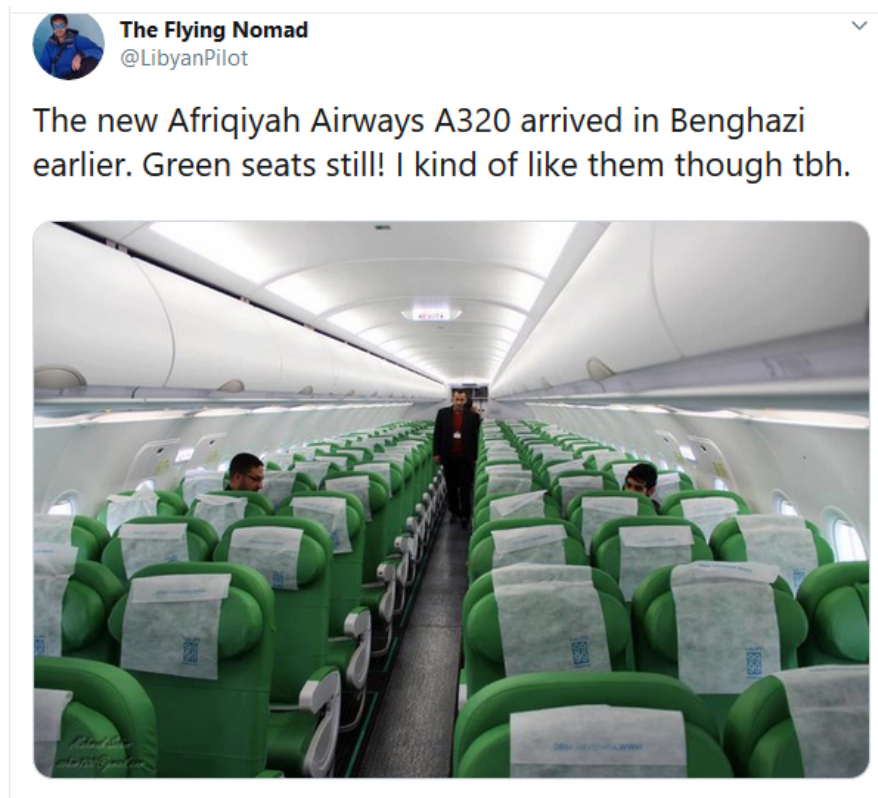


Image (25) a photo [tweet](#) shows the structure and seats of an aircraft of the Afriqiyah Airways, which match those of the plane appeared in the footage shows Syrian fighters.

Transporting fighters from Turkey to Libya by sea:

STJ obtained information on transporting fighters by sea from only one witness (the eighth witness), a member of the Levant Front, who stated:

“On January 7, 2020, a ship carrying Syrian fighters left Turkey towards Libya. The ship got into an accident which caused the drowning of 35 fighters. Those who survived, fought in battles against Hifter; some of them were killed and others injured and were not transferred to Syria for treatment.”

However, STJ’s digital forensic expert wasn’t been able to track the incident or to find clues about it.

It should be noted that Turkey has taken strict measures and imposed sanctions on fighters who leak any videos or photos while they are in Libya, after the spread of four footages in which Syrian fighters appeared in the city of Tripoli, the last of which show a fighter talking about receiving an amount of money in US dollars and Libyan dinars for his one-month fighting in Libya.

Syrian children recruited to fight in Libya:

Witnesses met by STJ personally or via Internet, confirmed that there are currently child combatants in Libya who have been recruited by factions of the National Army. In addition, there are children recruited but still in Syria waiting the completion of the procedures to be transported to Libya.

It is worth noting that the children are issued forged identity documents with fake information about their date and place of birth, and accordingly be registered at the personal status records of the National Army.

Regarding the matter of the children who had been already recruited and sent to Libya and the preparations to transfer a new batch of newly recruited children, STJ field researcher talked via the Internet with a fighter present in Libya and spoke personally with a civilian from Marea city(the ninth witness) who witnessed the preparation of a number of children to be taken to Libya.

The ninth witness said:

"During January 2020 - I cannot remember the exact date - a commander in the Mu'tasim Division came to my shop with 3 children, one of the them said that he was a displaced from al-Ghouta, in Damascus, while the other two children said that they were from the city of Aleppo. They were between 15 and 16 years of age, but they did not reveal their names. In the context of my conversation with them they told me that they would go to Libya with the approval of their families. They were very happy that they would receive a monthly salary of \$3000 dollars, according to what the leader promised. I asked one of them, do you know how to use weapons? He replied that he would learn all of this in the military camp where he would be with other peers. The camp was set by the Mu'tasim Division, and each group it trained consists of 25 children, according to what one of the children said."

He added:

"The commander prevented anyone from entering the shop, gave the children cigarettes and started talking to them about the financial return they would get, telling them that things will be fine, as going to Libya is easy and they will be able to contact

their families and return here after 3 months with a big amount of money. He told the children that they can keep the full amount for themselves as in Libya they will not have to buy anything or spend any lira, since they will be provided cigarettes food and housing.”

The third witness, who is a fighter in the Sultan Murad Division and currently present in the city of Tripoli in Libya, reported the presence of child combatants in Libya as part of his group, he said:

“There are at least five children in my group, it is very clear that they are physically children. Likely, they came here through the armed groups which recruited them” .

STJ is trying to know more details about those children like their real names and how and when they got to Libya, as it is trying to reconnect with the fighter (the third witness) as he was disconnected for being participated in a military action.

Regarding the verification of the authenticity of the documents provided by the fighters in order to register their names, especially the identification cards granted by the local councils, which are supervised directly by the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, STJ talked to a former employee (the tenth witness) at the personal status department of the town of Marea, who used to working on issuing identification cards but he resigned at the end of November 2019, she said:

“When I was working in the civil registry/ personal status, we used to issue identification cards based on an identification document that a person would obtain from the mayor of the neighborhood, or based on the identity issued by the Syrian government. In Marea we used to do some investigations about the correctness of the information provided by the person, but in other cities and towns that wasn't done. It is very easy to obtain any false identity for a small amount of money, especially in the city of Azaz, and it is very easy to change the real data of the person such as his/her place and date of birth. I have witnessed several cases of age fraud of both boys and girls in order to get married or to join a military group, as most of the young applicants are trying to register themselves at ages older than their real ones.”

STJ has prepared a detailed report on Turkey's issuance of identification cards. The report explained how easy it can be to forge the data in these cards, as well as the risks and negative consequences of issuing them¹⁷.

The tenth witness contacted a number of her friends who are still working in the civil registry and verified that there were no changes to the procedures followed in the issuance

¹⁷ “Syria: Turkish Identification Cards Obliterate Identity of Natives and Displaced populations Alike”, STJ, October 21, 2019, (last visit: February 26, 2020) <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-turkish-identification-cards-obliterate-identity-of-natives-and-displaced-populations-alike/>

of identification cards, thus STJ is sure about the possibility of forgery of official documents and the recruitment of children under this cover.

Based on the statement provided by the tenth witness, it can be said that the National Army can use these false IDs as evidence of not recruiting children or the absence of records of child fighters in its ranks, especially since the National Army has not announced any measures to verify the data provided by the person wishing to join it.

Hostilities in Libya with the presence of Syrian fighters:

A number of Syrian fighters in Libya published videos and pictures of them, documenting their presence in several areas in and around the city of Tripoli, in addition to clips documenting their control over an area after clashes with the forces of Hifter.

A number of videos and photographs have been published reportedly showing SNA fighters in Libya. Through geolocation we are able to confirm these images featured below were taken in various locations around Tripoli.

The first two videos showing Syrian fighters in Libya were published on 28 December. These were filmed within 150 meters from each other (32.806398, 13.228440, 32.805194, 13.228778), within the vicinity of a place known as 'Takbali Camp,' on the southern outskirts of Tripoli. These were located by Twitter users [@il_kanguru](#) and [@S_Corsto](#) soon after being published.



Image (26)



Image (27).



Image (28).



Image (29)

Other videos from January reportedly show the housing SNA fighters in Libya have been given.



Image (30).



Image (31)

On 19 January, a member of the Sultan Murad Division from Rastan named Hussam 'Abu Assad' Shabaki shared [two photos on Facebook](#) of himself at the port of Tripoli. This location within the port was confirmed by Twitter user [@il_kanguru](#) who matched the images to an exact location (32.896954, 13.196118).

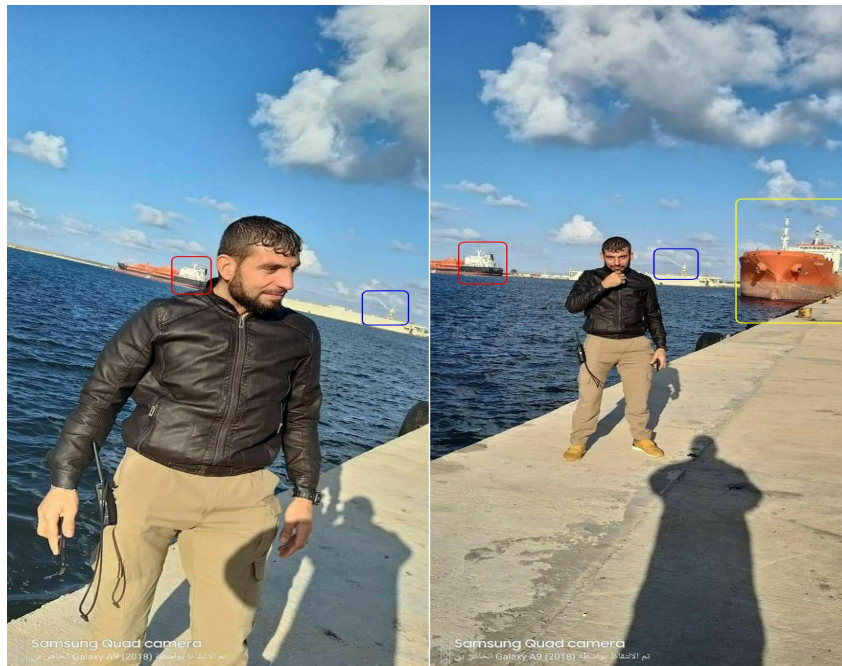


Image (32)

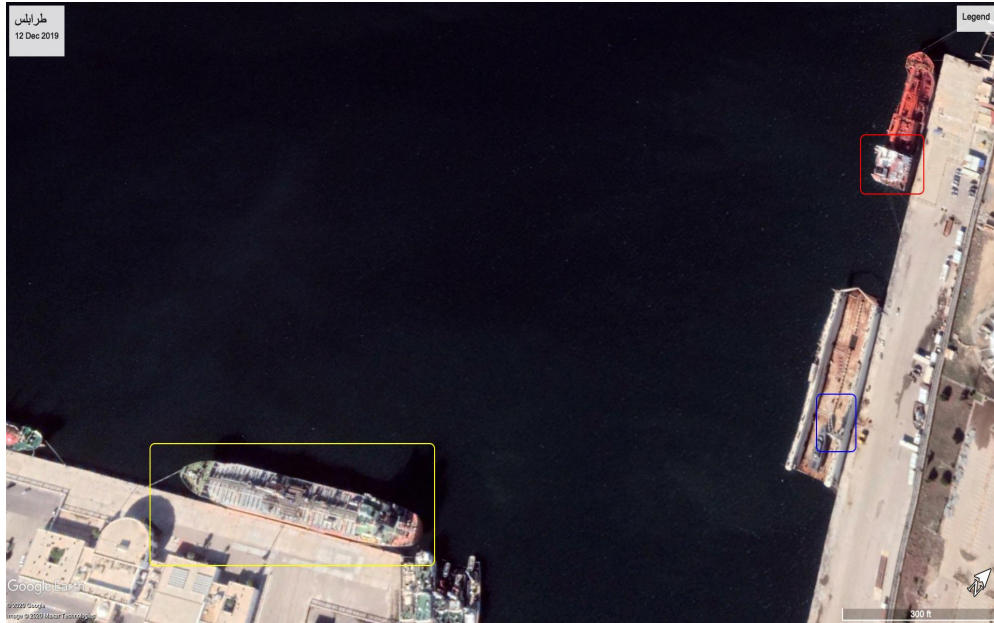


Image (33)

Telegram channel 'Ehtemlat News,' frequently reporting on events taking place in northern Syria, published two videos on 25 January showing two SNA fighters driving down a wide street. One of these was geolocated by [@il kanguru](#) to an intersection on Gharyan road in southwestern Tripoli (32.831624, 13.130195), near the Abu Salim area. The other one was filmed 2.5km further south on the same road (32.810114, 13.119676).



Image (34).



Image (35).



Image (36).



Image (37).

D. Syrians dead in Libya:

Regarding the repatriation of bodies of fighters who fell in the battles, STJ field researcher cited witnesses saying that the bodies are transported by plane to Turkey and overland to Syrian territory at the Hawar Kilis crossing, where bodies of the deceased handed over to the military group they affiliated with, which in turn hand them over to their families. The family bury the dead son and establish a consolation council for him; some families, however, refrain from establishing a condolence council to avoid being criticized by people, because their son was killed outside the country and he is considered a mercenary.

official and regular papers for their transit from Syria to Libya and thus returning to Syria, whether alive or dead, is easy, and this is done through the same security company that initially issued them papers.

One of the individuals met by STJ researcher said that there are fighters who were displaced from southern Syria, and do not have families or relatives in the areas outside the control of the Syrian government, and a number of these were buried in Libya due to the absence of anyone who would receive the body and bury it.

STJ field researcher also spoke to the family of a fighter who fall in Libya. The family received financial compensation and is working to end the procedures of obtaining the Turkish citizenship.

A brother of the fighter who was killed in Libya (the eleventh witness) said:

“My brother left Turkey from Istanbul airport on December 25, 2019, we talked to him only three times in a month and a half, he sent us \$3000 in the first month and said that this was his monthly salary. We did not receive his salary for the second month as he was killed in the battles there and we did not know the exact date of his death, but we heard that it was about a month and a half after his arrival in Libya. we received his body and buried him in our current place of residence in the village of Sharran in Afrin area. We got a financial compensation of TL.60.000, and my father is following the procedures for obtaining citizenship for us, my father, my mother, my sister, my brother and me.”

The eleventh witness indicated that his brother was a fighter of the Sultan Murad Division. He added that his family was not subjected to any pressure to conceal the truth of what happened, on the contrary, it announced the news of its son's death in Libya and set up a funeral council in the village of Sharran.

Also, STJ field researcher spoke to a relative of a young man who hails from the city of Ras al-Ayn, and was recently sent to Libya and was killed there (the twelfth witness) , he said:

“Ahmed al-Salem, 18, was a fighter in the Syrian National Army and he was killed during confrontations with Hifter forces, near Libya's Tripoli, in January 2020. His body has been handed over to his family in the village of Hameed, which administratively a part of the city of Ras al-Ayn.”

The witness added:

“Ahmed has been living with several members of his family in Turkey since 2013, but in 2019 he became close to the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army and had friendly relations with gunmen in that army, who managed to persuade him to join the Sultan Murad Division. That coincided with the start of Operation Peace Spring, in which Ahmed participated as a fighter, and then he returned to live again in the city of Ras al-Ayn after being taken by the Syrian National Army. However, in December 2019, Turkey sent him to Libya with hundreds of fighters of the Syrian National Army in order to fight alongside the Government of National Accord, under the leadership of Fayez al-Sarraj in Libya against the forces led by Field Marshal Hifter. He had told his family that Turkey would give him a good salary for going to fight in Libya, but he was soon killed there in early 2020 near Tripoli, and he had been hit by more than one bullet in his body, but we did not know who killed him, although we are likely to kill him at the hands of Hifter forces. A Turkish plane transported his body along with the bodies of other soldiers killed in Libya, to the

state of Urfa, from which his body was transferred to the Turkish city of Gilan Pinar, adjacent to Ras al-Ayn, where the family received the body of her son and buried him in his hometown of the village of Hamid, and the Sultan Murad Division had told the family of Ahmed not to say that he was killed in Libya, but to say that he was died in a battle with the Syrian regime forces in Idlib" .

Appendix:

1. The statement issued by the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian National Army denying the send of fighters to Libya.

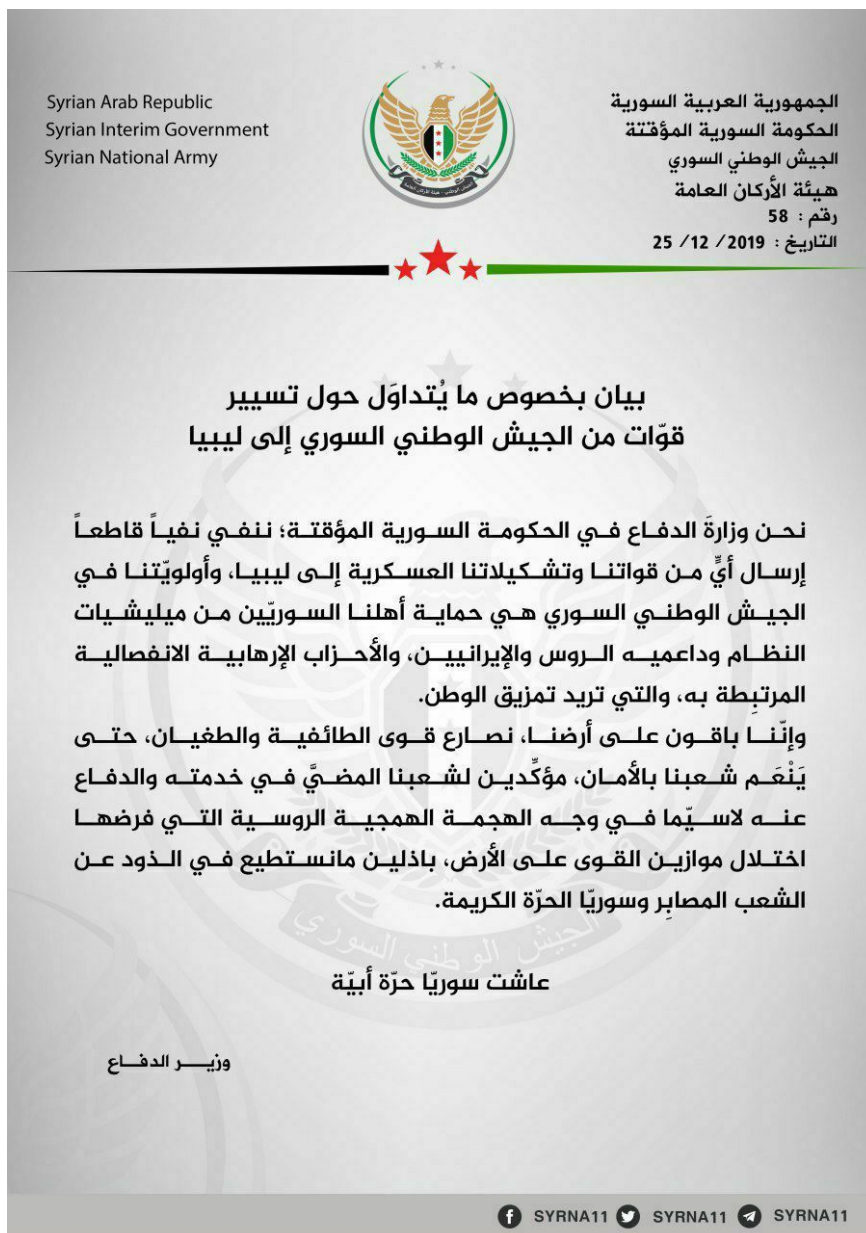


Image (38)

2. A statement by Syrians rejecting the send of Syrian fighters to Libya

بيان إلى الرأي العام حول إرسال مقاتلين سوريين إلى ليبيا

بيان إلى الرأي العام السوري والعربي والدولي
حول إرسال مقاتلين سوريين إلى ليبيا

تناقلت مصادر إعلامية متعددة، خبراً مفاده تجنيد بعض السوريين من قبل الحكومة التركية للذهاب والقتال في ليبيا تحت قيادة ضباط أتراك وسوريين، وفي حال صحت هذه الأنباء، فإننا بصفتنا ثائرين وسياسيين وأكاديميين سوريين، نستنكر وبشدة إقدام أي سوري على الموافقة على القتال خارج سورية، أيا كانت الذريعة والمغريات والضغوط التي قد تمارس ضده، فالسوريون ثاروا من أجل حريتهم وكرامتهم وبناء نظامهم الوطني الديمقراطي، وحملوا السلاح دفاعاً عن حقهم بالحياة وحقهم بالحرية في مواجهة نظام مجرم ارتكب بحقهم كل أنواع جرائم الحرب واستعان في ذلك بمرتزقة من كل أصقاع الدنيا، ولم يحمل السوريون السلاح ليتحولوا إلى مرتزقة يقاتلون في حروب الآخرين خارج أرضهم وخارج ثوابت ثورتهم، كما نحجي جميع الفصائل الثورية السورية والمقاتلين الأحرار السوريين، الذين يرفضون الموافقة على الذهاب إلى أي مكان خارج سورية مصرين على أن معركتهم الوحيدة هي المعركة ضد النظام المجرم وميليشيات المرتزقة التي استعان بها، بقوى التطرف والإرهاب. إننا ندين وبشدة إقدام أي كان وتحت أي مسمى أو ذريعة على الموافقة بالذهاب إلى ليبيا للقتال هناك، فالشعب الليبي الشقيق وحده من يقرر مصيره ويخوض معركته.

كما نهيئ بكل من حمل السلاح من السوريين دفاعاً عن حريته أن يتوجه إلى أدب ليخوض معركة الدفاع عنها وعن حياة المدنيين فيها في ظل العدوان غير المسبوق عليها من ميليشيا بشار الأسد وحلفائه من الروس والإيرانيين.

إن رفضنا لهذه الخطوة تابع من رفضنا الثابت والمبدئي لتجنيد المرتزقة الذين يحاربون في حروب الآخرين. وهو رفض لوجود الميليشيات والمرتزقة من لبنان والعراق وإيران وأفغانستان وروسيا على أرضنا، فكما رفضنا هؤلاء المجرمين فإننا لا يمكن بحال من الأحوال أن نسكت عن خطوة إرسال مقاتلين سوريين إلى خارج سورية أيا كان عددهم، فهؤلاء لا يمثلون ثورتنا السورية المجيدة ثورة الحق والعدل والحرية والكرامة، بل إنهم يمثلون كل ما ثار السوريين ضده، ونهيب بالجميع عدم الانجرار وراء صراعات إقليمية لا تaque لنا بها ولا جمل.

إن تمسكنا بقيم ثورتنا السورية وحق السوريين في الدفاع عن أرضهم وحريتهم، يلبي علينا التمسك وبنفس الدرجة بحق الليبيين في ثورتهم وبناء نظامهم الديمقراطي وبحق كل شعوب الأرض في تقرير مصيرهم بعيداً عن التدخلات الأجنبية أيا كانت ذرائعها ومبرراتها.

عاشت سورية حرة أبية
2019\12\27

الموقعون:
برهان غليون
رياض الترك
جورج صبرة
عبد الباسط سيدا
اللواء محمد الحاج علي
فداء حوراني
عالية منصور
سمير تشار
عبد الحكيم قطيفان
فارس الحلو
محمد صبرا
منهل باريس
عبد الناصر العايد
أديب إحسان الشيشكلي
فضل الشقفة
غالية قباني
عمر إدلبي
سهير الأتاسي
المعتصم السيوفي
خالد الناصر
محمد قنطار
أسعد عشي
عبد الرحمن الحاج
رديف مصطفى

Image (39)

3. The denial statement of the Government of National Accord



Like Follow Share ...

Government of National Accord حكومة الوفاق الوطني
December 29, 2019 · 🌐

بنفي المكتب الاعلامي لرئيس المجلس الرئاسي صحة التسجيلات المعربة التي يتم تداولها في بعض صفحات التواصل الاجتماعي الممولة لمجرم الحرب حنقر وداعمه، والتي تظهر بعض المقتلين السوريين في أحد المعسكرات، وترغم على انهم في ليبيا، حيث تم التثبت من قبل القوات الاخبارية المعطية والدولية وتؤكد بأن هذه التسجيلات التقطت في مدينة إدلب السورية.
وتؤكد حكومة الوفاق الوطني ملاحقتها القضائية لكل من يساهم في نشر هذه الأكلاب وغيرها من القراءات ، والتي تعد محاولة بالسة لتثويه ما يحققه الجيش الليبي والقوات المسلحة من انتصارات على المعتدى.

STATE OF LIBYA
دولة ليبيا
حكومة الوفاق الوطني
GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL ACCORD

Home
Posts
Videos
Photos
About
Community
Create a Page

👍👎👍 2K 758 Comments 115 Shares

Image (40)

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

-
- 🌐 www.stj-sy.org
 - 📘 [syriaSTJ](#)
 - 🐦 [@STJ_SYRIA_ENG](#)
 - 📷 [Syrians for Truth & Justice](#)
 - ✉ editor@stj-sy.org