



Syria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 5 July 2013

Information on events taking place in Da'ar or Darey region in April 2011 and August 2011. History of Darey's main public space in front of Omari Mosque in relation to the revolution. Name of Governor of Darey and when he was appointed.

An Amnesty International report refers to events in the town of Dera'a (Daraa) in March 2011 as follows:

“At least seven people are reported to have been killed in a night-time raid on the ‘Omari mosque in the southern town of Dera’a, where scores of protesters were staging a sit-in. The lethal attack came as security forces rounded up scores of students, activists, journalists and intellectuals around the country following a week of protests, amid similar demonstrations across the Middle East and North Africa. Dera’a is now under curfew with government announcements telling residents they will be shot if they leave their houses.” (Amnesty International (23 March 2011) *Protesters killed in Syria mosque attack amid wave of detentions*)

An International Crisis Group report, in a section titled “A Legacy of Neglect”, states:

“A critical turning point occurred on 18 March 2011. That day, in both the Mediterranean coastal city of Banyas and the southern city of Deraa, crowds took to the streets to express local grievances. Residents of Banyas, a town renowned for its Sunni conservative outlook, took aim at regime measures that discriminated against female employees of the education ministry wearing a niqab (fullface veil). In Deraa, resentment focused on a number of officials who were seen as particularly incompetent, brutal or corrupt. Protesters simultaneously aired various other complaints suggesting that dissatisfaction ran much deeper.” (International Crisis Group (6 July 2011) *Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VI): The Syrian People's Slow Motion Revolution*, p.11)

A Human Rights Watch report, in a section titled “Crimes against Humanity and Other Violations in Daraa”, states:

“On March 18, following the Friday prayer, several thousand protesters marched from al-Omari Mosque in Daraa calling for the release of the children and greater political freedom, and accusing government officials of corruption. According to multiple witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, security forces at first attempted to beat the protesters back with stones and batons. Later riot police were deployed with water cannons and teargas, and finally members of political security branch of the mukhabarat or security services showed up and opened fire on demonstrators using live ammunition. At least four protesters were killed that first day, and several

dozen injured. The release of the children—bruised and bloodied after what they described as severe torture in detention—fanned the flames of popular anger. Protests continued, every day growing bigger, joined by people from towns and villages outside Daraa city.” (Human Rights Watch (1 June 2011) *“We’ve Never Seen Such Horror”: Crimes against Humanity by Syrian Security Force*, p.14)

In a section titled “Killings during two protests on April 8, 2011” this report states:

“According to Ahmed, security forces set up a roadblock near the bridge to prevent the protesters from crossing to the other part of the city. He said there were about 50 soldiers in front of them, several thousand mukhabarat agents, both in uniforms and in civilian clothes, behind and around them, and snipers on the roofs of nearby buildings. Around 1:30 or 2:00 p.m. the protesters reached the road leading to the bridge and walked toward the roadblock. Ahmed said the army told them to stop, but they did not obey and continued moving, and at that point security forces opened live fire. Ahmed, who was also filming the events, said that they fired straight into the crowd with Kalashnikovs, and snipers opened fire at the same time. He said he personally saw about 35 people who immediately fell, hit by bullets. At that time he did not know whether they were injured or killed, but later that day he saw the bodies of about 20 killed protesters as well as dozens of wounded in al-Omari mosque.” (ibid, p.22)

See also section titled “Killings during the siege of Daraa and neighboring villages and April 29 protest” which states:

“At around 4:30 a.m. on April 25, Syrian security forces launched a large-scale military operation in Daraa. Multiple witnesses who were in Daraa at the time described to Human Rights Watch how the security forces moved into the city using military vehicles, including numerous tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs), under the cover of heavy gun fire that lasted unabated for about 16 hours. Security forces occupied all neighborhoods in Daraa, imposed checkpoints, and placed snipers on the roofs of buildings in many parts of the city. They imposed a siege on the city (see below) and prevented any movement of residents in the streets. Security forces opened fire on those who tried to defy the ban on movement and gatherings, or simply left their homes in an effort to get food or medication.” (ibid, p.24)

A Daily Star article states:

“A mass protest calling for sweeping changes in Syria's regime turned bloody Friday, with the government and protesters both claiming to have sustained heavy casualties as the country's three-week uprising entered a dangerous new phase. Human rights activists and witnesses said Syrian security forces opened fire on tens of thousands of protesters in the volatile southern city of Daraa, killing 25 people and wounding hundreds. But state-run TV said 19 policemen and members of the security forces were killed when gunmen opened fire on them.” (Daily Star (9 April 2011) *Syria face-off grows deadlier: Government and activists both claim casualties as Daraa protests turn violent*)

A Chicago Tribune article states:

“Syrians on Saturday mourned the 37 people killed a day earlier in clashes with security forces, only to face fresh rounds of gunfire and at least one more death, human rights activists and witnesses said. In Daraa, the southern city that has served as the focal point for more than three weeks of protests, Internet and phone connections were severed, but reports emerged that residents marched in honor of those killed there Friday and chanted, 'The people want to topple the regime.' Security forces fired shots to disperse the crowd; one person was killed and several others were transported to a hospital in critical condition, witnesses said.” (Chicago Tribune (10 April 2010) *As protesting Syrians mourn 37, another is added to toll; Security forces open fire in Daraa, killing 1, as crowd honors slain demonstrators*)

A Jerusalem Post refers to a protest near the Omari mosque as follows:

“Syrian security forces opened fire on mourners near a mosque in the flashpoint city of Deraa after a mass funeral for pro-democracy protesters, two witnesses said on Saturday. The clash came a day after at least 37 people were killed nationwide, Syrian rights groups said, in the largest and deadliest rallies since the unrest began three weeks ago. Security forces used live ammunition and tear gas on Saturday to disperse thousands of people chanting freedom slogans after assembling near the old Omari mosque in the old quarter of the city.” (Jerusalem Post (10 April 2011) *37 dead in Syria's 'largest' rallies yet. Protesters to Assad: Use your army to reclaim Golan, not to attack us*)

See also Syrian Arab News Agency report which states:

“Hundreds of people on Saturday demonstrated in front of al-Omari Mosque, Daraa, 101 km from Damascus, chanting calls for freedom and lifting the emergency law. SANA correspondent in Daraa said that about two thousand people came from villages of Inkhel, Da'el and Nimr and joined the protesters outside al-Omari Mosque for about an hour and then dispersed.” (Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) (17 April 2011) *Demonstration Outside al-Omari Mosque, Calls for Freedom, Lifting Emergency Law*)

An AlArabiya.net article states:

“Syrian army troops backed by tanks and three helicopters on Saturday took a prominent mosque that had been controlled by residents in Daraa, killing at least four people in and near the religious sanctuary, a witness said. The Omari mosque, located in Daraa's Roman-era old town, had served as a gathering place for Syrians protesting against the authoritarian regime of President Bashar al-Assad.” (AlArabiya.net (29 April 2011) *Syrian troops take Daraa mosque, killings of protesters continue in Assad crackdown*)

A Deutsche Welle article states:

“Syrian troops have stormed the city of Daraa, where anti-regime protests began last month. Four European countries, including Germany, have called on the UN Security Council to condemn the violence and urge restraint. Thousands of Syrian troops backed by tanks entered the southern city of Daraa early Monday, firing indiscriminately and leaving bodies lying in the streets, activists said. The army entered the town overnight in an apparent

crackdown against the ongoing anti-government protests which began a month ago. International and Arab journalists are banned from reporting in Syria, so there was no way to obtain independent confirmation of the figures - although activists say at least 18 people were killed on Monday." (Deutsche Welle (25 April 2011) *'Bodies in the streets' as Syrian tanks storm Daraa*)

An Amnesty International report states:

"Amnesty International has received the names of 23 people who are reported to have died in today's attack on Dera'a by the Syrian army, but the total number of dead is feared to be much higher. Many of the dead are said to have been killed by shelling. Government snipers are also reported to have been deployed and to have targeted those trying to assist wounded people lying in the streets, according to Amnesty International's sources. Some dead bodies were left lying in the streets near the 'Omari mosque and elsewhere as people were prevented from collecting them." (Amnesty International (25 April 2011) *Syrian military assault against protesters must end*)

A Christian Science Monitor article states:

"Cracks may be emerging in Syria's military as more soldiers appear to be taking a stand against firing on protesters six weeks into the popular uprising against President Bashar al-Assad. Syrian security forces launched an offensive against several flashpoint towns at dawn today, closing the border with Jordan and using tanks and live ammunition to clear streets and arrest suspected protesters, according to opposition activists and eyewitnesses. But Syrian military units reportedly clashed with each other in Deraa when soldiers refused to open fire." (Christian Science Monitor (25 April 2011) *Syria's military shows signs of division amid crackdown*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

"The activists in Daraa, reached by telephone, said a 3,000-strong military force swarmed into the town in the early hours of Monday, with tanks taking up positions in the town centre and snipers deploying on rooftops. They said they were not able to get an accurate assessment of casualties as the snipers made it impossible to reach the dead and wounded." (Agence France Presse (25 April 2011) *Bodies on streets as Syrian troops sweep Daraa*)

An Irish Independent article states:

"The city at the heart of Syria's month-long uprising ran low on food, water and medicine yesterday as the army sent in more tanks and reinforcements as part of a widening crackdown against opponents of President Bashar Assad. Gunfire and sporadic explosions were heard in Daraa, two days after the military rolled in -- backed by tanks and snipers. The army also deployed tanks around the Damascus suburb of Douma and the coastal city of Baniyas, the site of large demonstrations recently. 'We have no electricity, no water, no telephones and no bread,' resident Abdullah Abazeid said from Daraa, where the uprising began more than five weeks ago. 'The situation is terrible.'" (Irish Independent (28 April 2011) *Situation 'terrible' in rebel Syrian city of Daraa*)

A Guardian UK report states:

“Syrian security forces have stormed a mosque in the opposition stronghold of Deraa after heavy shelling of the city's old quarter, according to residents. One said snipers had taken up positions on the roof of the Omari mosque and that government forces appeared to be back in control for the first time since attacking the city earlier in the week. Tanks were reported to have moved into the area. Troops and heavy armoured vehicles first swept into Deraa on Monday. The city, in the south of the country, has become a focal point of the six-week uprising against President Bashar al-Assad. 'Since dawn, we've been hearing a heavy exchange of gunfire that is echoing across the city and you do not know what's happening,' Abu Tareq, a local man, told Reuters by phone. 'I saw more than 15 tanks that had entered from the Damascus highway heading in the direction of the old city.'” (Guardian UK (30 April 2011) *Syrian forces storm Deraa mosque*)

A Voice of America News report states:

“Witnesses say authorities in Syria have arrested hundreds of people - many of them in the flashpoint city of Daraa - as troops backed armored vehicles roam the streets trying to crush protests against President Bashar al-Assad. Residents in Daraa say Syrian security forces are detaining all males 15 and older in that southern city - the center of the six-week uprising. They say troops have systematically cut off neighborhoods while making sweeping arrests. Prominent lawyers and activists also are reported being targeted in Daraa.” (Voice of America News (30 April 2011) *Syrian Troops Arrest Hundreds in Daraa*)

A Washington Post article states:

“In a grim conclusion to the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, government security forces killed at least seven protesters across Syria on Tuesday, activists said, as the United States announced new sanctions against top Syrian officials. Security was heavy as thousands of people poured out of mosques to stage anti-government rallies after early morning prayers at the start of Eid al-Fitr, the three-day-long celebration that marks the end of Ramadan. The deaths occurred in the southwestern province of Daraa, where the protests began nearly six months ago, and in the restive central city of Homs, according to the Local Coordination Committees, an activist network.” (Washington Post (31 August 2011) *Assad's forces kill at least 7*)

An Amnesty International report, in a section titled “Dera’a Governorate”, states:

“The south-western governorate of Dera’a has been at the forefront of popular protest and the authorities’ brutal crackdown in response. Amnesty International has the names of around 350 people from the governorate who had died during or in connection with the protests as of 14 August, about a fifth of the total for the whole country. Twenty-eight of the 88 deaths in custody recorded by Amnesty International during the same period are reported to have taken place in and around the city of Dera’a, 21 of them of people arrested on 29 April. The critical situation in Dera’a developed following the detention of a group of boys who had put political graffiti on a school wall and for whose release local people peacefully demonstrated. The first killings of protesters in Dera’a took place on 18 March, setting off a cycle of demonstrations, shootings and funerals. The Syrian authorities tightened

their grip on the city and by 25 April the armed forces were surrounding it and electricity supplies were reportedly cut, as were telephone lines and access to the internet.” (Amnesty International (31 August 2011) *Amnesty International (31 August 2011) Deadly Detention: Deaths in Custody Amid Popular Protest in Syria*, p.14)

An Agence France Presse report on the appointment of a new governor in Daraa states:

“A new governor has been appointed to the southern town of Daraa, the unexpected hub of a protest movement that erupted in Syria March 15, the official SANA news agency reported Monday. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad appointed Mohammad Khaled al-Hannus as governor of Daraa, an agricultural town near the border with Jordan, where dozens have been killed in more than two weeks of anti-regime demonstrations. He replaces the much reviled Faysal Kalthum, sacked on March 23 at the height of anti-regime demonstrations that left dozens dead and the governor's residence in flames.” (Agence France Presse (4 April 2011) *Syria protest town gets new governor: report*)

See also Voice of America News report which states:

“Syria on Monday appointed a new governor in Daraa, a deadly flashpoint for recent protests against the government. The appointment came as a prison fire killed at least eight prisoners and injured 17 in the port city of Latakia, which has also seen repeated demonstrations. President Bashar al-Assad named Mohammad Khaled al-Hannus to administer affairs in Daraa after the previous governor, Faysal Kalthum, was fired last month amid the protests” (Voice of America News (3 April 2011) *Syria Appoints New Governor for Daraa Region*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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