



لعدالة تحويلية بقيادة نسائية
For women-led transformative
justice

PRESS RELEASE

Huquqyat's Investigation into the Events of *Ali Al-Wahsh*

On January 5, 2023, Huquqyat held a public webinar to update the public and impacted communities on the investigation's progress and raise awareness about the incidents that unfolded at the Ali Al-Wahsh checkpoint in January 2014.

Initiated in June 2020 with the guidance and support of CJA, investigators Mariana Karkoutly and Leila Sibai embarked on the Ali Al-Wahsh investigation. Originally part of a broader inquiry into violations against civilians during the siege of South Damascus, the investigation was opened based on accounts from interviewees about the scale and gravity of events in January 2014 at the checkpoint.

Witnesses were only able to capture limited information of the events due to the reported confiscation of personal belongings, including phones, at the checkpoint. Nonetheless, the investigators were able to interview individuals present at or near the checkpoint who would be able to provide crucial firsthand accounts of the incident. The investigation team also interviewed affected families and those turned away at the checkpoint.

The investigation focused on events on January 5, 2014, around a checkpoint or crossing known to residents as Ali al-Wahash. Besieged residents in South Damascus converged on the site upon hearing rumors that the crossing would be opened to civilians hoping to leave.

Interviewees claimed that armed forces believed to be affiliated with pro-government militias were present at the checkpoint. Interviewees also described those in control as having confiscated IDs and belongings from those in the crowd and separating men from women, children, and the elderly. Some interviewees described arbitrary detentions and transporting of men away from the area. The whereabouts of some men who disappeared at or near the checkpoint remain unknown.

The investigation remains ongoing. With the support of the Syrian Archive, Huquqyat intends to continue to pursue information that may lead to legal accountability for those responsible. For updates on the investigation, follow Huquqyat at www.huquqyat.org and @huquqyat.

About Huquqyat

'Huquqyat' means 'women legal practitioners' in Arabic. It is a membership-based organisation of self-identifying women lawyers and legal practitioners who aim to work towards a women-led transformative justice for Syria. The organisation aims to diversify and strengthen justice mechanisms in the Syrian context through promoting women lawyers and legal practitioners to take active part in and to lead investigations and accountability proceedings and it envisions a



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transformative justice framework for Syria that is developed and implemented through the equal representation and participation of Syrian women lawyers and legal practitioners.

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