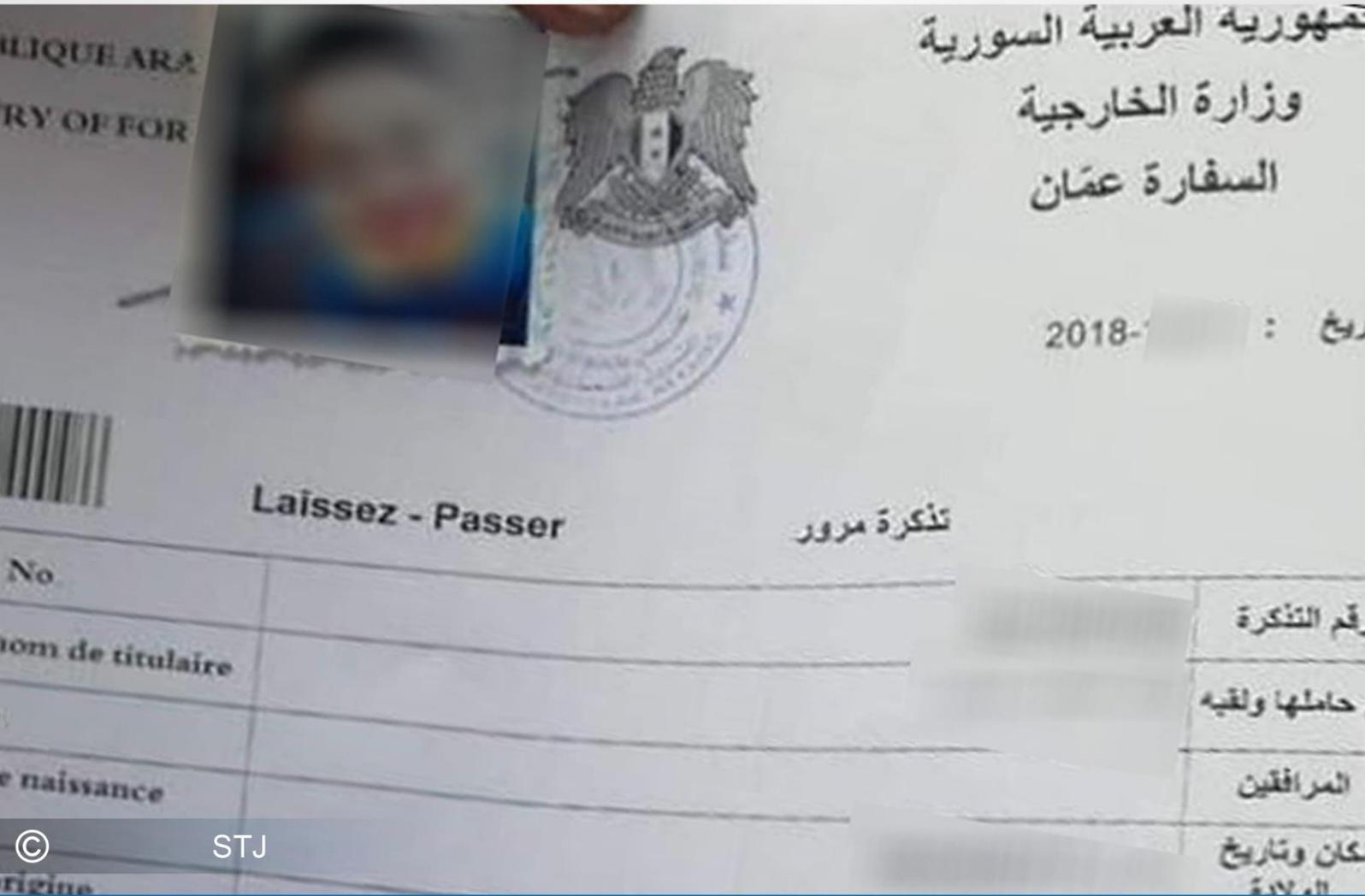


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سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  
Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



## Syrian Authorities Force Syrian Refugees Returning from Jordan to Daraa by Land to Refer to Political Security Branch

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The Syrian authorities are forcing refugees returning from Jordan to Daraa province by land through the Nassib/Jaber border crossing to refer to the security services in the province. The returnees are also blackmailed, as they are coerced to pay money as a bribe in return for allowing them to admit the luggage they brought with them from Jordan, according to testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ.

According to STJ's field researcher in Daraa province, the people who migrated from the province are surging to the Nassib/Jaber border crossing on a daily basis, especially those residing in the Zaatari refugee camp, who are told to refer to the Political Security Branch at a later date, for they are given appointments, some of which are a month from the return's date, given the overcrowding. On October 15, 2018, Syrian media outlets announced the return of more than 3000 Syrian refugees from Jordan since the reopening of the Nassib border crossing.

**STJ's field researcher met a number of the returnees, who described the details and the procedures of the process. The returnees were surprised by the border employees' request of their need to refer to the Political Security Branch in Daraa and by being prevented from admitting their luggage on the allegation of violating laws and regulations, where they were blackmailed to pay varying sums of money without getting a receipt in return for allowing them to bring in their luggage under what they called customs duty.**

Refusing to reveal his name for security considerations, one of the refugees, who returned to the town of Nahtah in November 2018, accompanied by his wife and son and leaving the other three in the Zaatari refugee camp for fear of security prosecution, since they are defectors from the regular forces, said the following:

**"In 2012, my family and I sought refuge in Jordan, resorting to smugglers after the security campaign of the Syrian regime intensified in Daraa province. After the reopening of the Nassib border crossing, I decided to return to my town. The followed procedures were going to the Syrian Embassy in Amman to obtain a passage document to Syria and paying a fee of 18 Jordanian dinars for each family member. We were ordered to notify the Commissariat for Refugees in the Zaatari camp of our decision. The camp's authority allowed us to take the luggage and electric devices distributed on us during the years of refuge. It takes a week to obtain the passage document from the Syrian Embassy. After getting it, we headed to the Syrian borders. There, the Syrian security elements prevented us from admitting our luggage and the electric devices on the pretext of violating laws and regulations. One of the elements told me: 'pay the customs duty', namely a bribe. There were not any receipts or fixed fees to pay. After an argument, I paid them 50,000 Syrian pounds. I, then, entered the Passports and Migration Office and gave them the passage**

document. The employee, there, gave me a paper, on which my full name-Daraa Political [Security Branch] was scribbled, as to refer to the Political Security Branch with my family as soon as possible. He called it a routine procedure.”

The witness added:

“Two days later, my family and I went to the headquarters of the Political Security Branch in Daraa city. Fear controlled us, as we stayed for an hour at the waiting hall. It appeared that we had to wait due to the massive number of refugees there. Upon entering the investigation room, a detective, who is a security element, was sitting. He told us: ‘Welcome! No need to be scared, it is a normal issue. We have to know everything since you left until the return, and the reasons why you migrated.’ The questions were directed to my wife and me. The investigation continued for about three hours. All our answers were in support of the Syrian regime while attributing the whole tragedy of migration to the Syrian opposition, which we called ‘terrorist groups’, concerned with having a spotless account, which the detective wrote while we spoke. The questions were overall, covering the moment we left the town, the roads we took, the persons who helped us reach the Jordanian camps, the reasons for my sons' defection, what did we do for a living in Jordan and if we had a connection to any armed group in Syria. One of the questions was if I had any of my relatives departed towards Syria’s north after the Syrian regime’s forces controlled Daraa province. In the end, we signed several papers, which the detective wrote while we talked.”

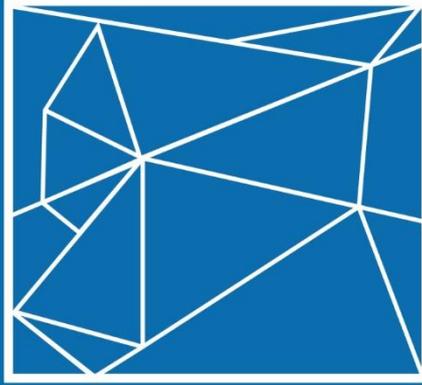
STJ’s field researcher interviewed another witness from the city of Jasim, who also refused to reveal his name for security considerations. He explained the method he followed to return from Jordan in November 2018. **He stressed that he paid a bribe of 35,000 Syrian pounds to the Syrian Border Guard for admitting his luggage**, and he was also asked to refer to the Political Security Branch in the city of Daraa. He added:

“The Syrian Air Intelligence Directorate arrested one of my sons three months ago for an unknown reason, knowing that he underwent a regularization of status with the regime’s forces. During my residence in the Zaatari camp, the Jordanian security forces summoned me for investigation four times, on the pretext that my son belongs to a terrorist group in Syria and that the Syrian security services have arrested him based on this. After I returned to Syria through the Nassib border crossing, I was notified of the necessity to refer to the Political Security Branch in Daraa. When I went there, I was questioned about everything concerning my residence in Jordan. The investigation lasted for about an hour and fifty minutes. I asked the detective about the reasons for my son’s arrest, he told me that these were security procedures and that he will be released later without giving further information.”

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## About Syrians for Truth and Justice:

**STJ** is an independent, nongovernmental organization whose members include Syrian human rights defenders, advocates and academics of different backgrounds and nationalities.

The initiative strives for SYRIA, where all Syrian citizens (females and males) have dignity, equality, justice and equal human rights.

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