



Report on Khateeb Branch- State Security

The Testimony of the Detainee:

Yaser Abd Al-Samad Hussen Karmi

Violation Documentation Centre

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www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/ar/details/detainees/37690





Introduction:

The designation of "State Security Branch or Department of State Security" is a non-official name for "General Intelligence Administration", for the latter would arrest citizens and activists, and transfer them to the previously "State Security Court", thus the designation of the "State Security" has been associated with the "General Intelligence Administration", it even substituted it for a lot of citizens.

Practically, the so-called "General Intelligence Administration" runs many other branches in Damascus Governorate itself, with other subsidiary branches in each governorate called "Security of State Branch". As for the branches in Damascus, **VDC** could – through a dissident officer who refused to reveal any details about his identity but that he used to be a former officer - to know the names of the following branches:

1 – Branch of Investigation, known as Branch **285**

2 – The External Branch, known as Branch **279**

3 - Raid Branch, known as Branch **295**, also known as: "Security of State School Branch" for its headquarter is located within the School of State Security in Njha District in Damascus Suburbs.

4 - Khaeeb Branch, which is named after its geographical location in Al-Khateeb Quarter, Baghdad Street near the Syrian Red Crescent Organization in Damascus. It is known as Branch **251**. Its most accurate name is "Interior Branch"

5 - Arbra'een Branch, or "Anti-Terrorism Branch", administratively lower than Khateeb Branch and is located in Al Jesr Al Abyad in downtown Damascus, at the following coordinates:
33°31'29.72"N 36°17'23.25"E

6 – Director Branch, known as called Branch **111**

7 - Information Branch, known as called Branch **255**

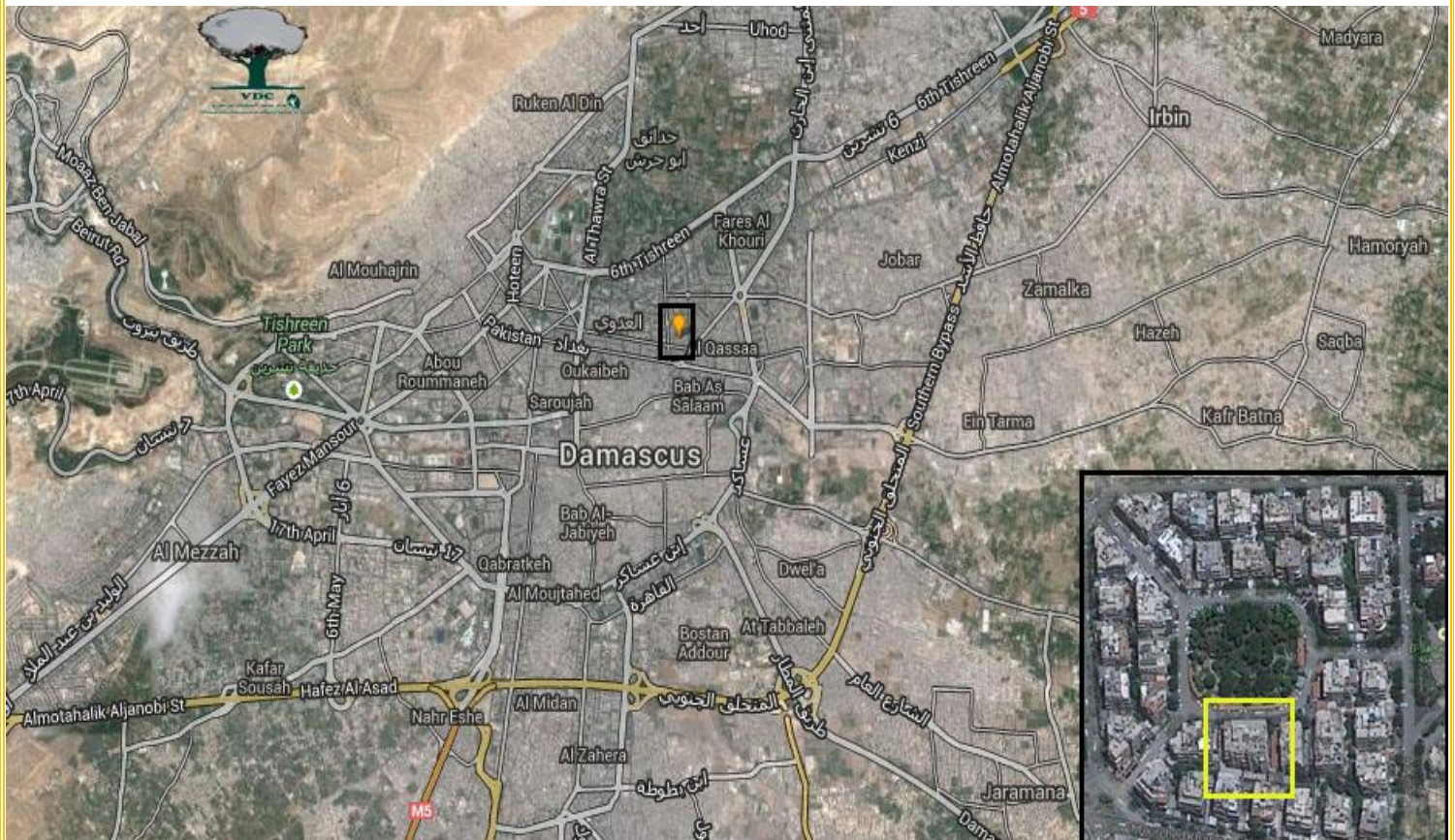
8 - Engineering Branch, known as called Branch **280**

9 - Patrols Branch, known as Branch **290**

10- Espionage Branch, known as Branch **300**

Branches outside Damascus Governorate:

- 1 - State Security Branch in Homs, known as Branch 318
- 2 - State Security Branch in Hama, known as Branch 320
- 3 - State Security Branch Aleppo, known as Branch 322
- 4 - State Security Branch in Deir al-Zor, known as Branch 327
- 5 - State Security Branch Qamishli, known as Branch 330





VDC in Syria took the testimony of the activist **Yaser Abdul Samad Hussein Karmi**, 34 years old, a former detainee who had been arrested by the branch in question, who was born in Kopanjh "Ein Al Arab" in Aleppo Governorate, and who is a resident in Damascus Governorate. He was arrested on 12.31.2012 in an ambush set by the security forces in Al Sabe' Bahrat Square downtown Damascus, after one of his friends Anas Abdul Hakim al-Husseini, had been arrested and charged with attempted assassination of the President and the Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem.

The Link of the televised interview with the Syrian accused Y.Husseini:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWVTufyAlec&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFxfAApibU&feature=youtu.be>

Yaser Says:

On 31 - 12 – 2012, my friend Anas called me and asked me to come for an important reason to the Sabe' Bahrat Square midtown Damascus, specifically at the Central Bank. When I arrived to the place, security agents arrested me and put me in a military jeep, then I knew when they talked that they were taking me to "Arba'een Branch" in Jesr Al Abyad. On our way there, they were shocking me by **electrical sticks** coupled with a barrage of insults, and when I got to the Branch, a lieutenant that spoke a coastal dialect investigated me, bet me more than thirty times by an electric cable on my feet, knocked me down, and then bet me, trampling directly on the head, then ordered me taken out of the office.

Then they took me to al-Khateeb Branch in Baghdad Street, a subsidiary of the State Security, and put me in a 5 * 3 meters dormitory that had the number (29) and that had between 130-150 detainees. I spent that night there, and in the early morning they roll-called my name and took me back to Arba'een Branch to start a preliminary investigation. As soon as I arrived, the officers there started battering me, which was the most brutal way of torturing in the Branch, where two members or more hit the detainee strongly all over the body, especially on the face and the head. then they shocked me with high voltage electricity, **220** volts, on my thighs, shoulders and sensitive organs "**genitals**" for four repeated times, then they brought a cable- a car wheel cut in a certain way with a width of about **10** cm- to hit me on my back and feet. They kept asking me to admit that I cooperated with foreign intelligence and that I attempted to assassinate the President and the Foreign Minister.

This process of beating and torturing was repeated for five days; I was being tortured in the morning for four or five hours and then took back to al-Khateeb Branch to spend the nights there.



After the fifth day, my case was completely transferred to Khateeb Branch itself, then another round of investigation began and it was one of the cruelest regarding the torture and beating I was subjected to. That lasted for **12** continuous days. Among the most painful ways of torture was about putting the head of the detainee on the ground and start kicking him on the nose and mouth till he bleed, then two officers alternately beat him with their hands on the face and the head. they asked me to "kneeling down" about five hours continuously, and asked me also to admit the same charges that were brought against me in Arba'een Branch.

Twelve days on, I was put in the same dormitory (**29**) where the number of detainees reached more than **150**, most of which were arbitrarily arrested, a situation that usually happens when storming a particular neighborhood.

As for food, there were two meals a day, served in very small amounts that consist of half cooked rice and a little bit of lentil soup, or a few boiled potatoes.....

The dormitory contains a small bath "toilet" only to take a piss, as bathing was strictly prohibited. During the four months I spent there, neither I nor all the other detainees could take a bath , and we only used one water tap when we used the toilet, drank or washed our underarms as we weren't allowed to take a shower. Consequently, diseases spread significantly between detainees, particularly skin infections and ulcers. Another strange disease got widespread among them; it was a large tumor that appeared mainly on feet and hands, when the area infected got swollen is a very scary way and when blood and pus came out of it constantly, it was especially in the last three months, where all the detainees clothing were taken away and they were left almost naked except from their underwear, which led to an increase in diseases among all the detainees because of involuntary physical friction due to space limitations.

Khateeb Branch witnesses daily cases of deaths, the majority of which are due to the severe torture inflicted upon the detainees that usually takes place during the first days of detention, as they follow the same routine with all the detainees, for when any new detainee arrives, they start investigating him by beating him severely by a number of members all over his body. Most of the detainees cannot bear this severity, and thus enter a state of rave, or as it is called in the detention "disconnection".

The detainee then dies after four or five days as it is prohibited to approach or help any detainee. Khateeb Branch also witnesses a lot of gangrene cases, and the doctor comes only once a month to apply a little bit of antiseptics on wounds that require immediate treatment or surgeries..... Many death cases were witnessed of people from Al Zabadani in Damascus Suburbs, as they were detained at random. One of them was the father of three girls who could not bear severe psychological pressure and thus he died.



There was a special dormitory for women in the Branch of al-Khateeb that had the number (28), and that contains about 50 to 60 women detainees, whose screams we could usually hear as a result of torture which they were subjected to, especially during the investigation that follows the arrest immediately.

Four months later, I was transferred with 24 other detainees to the General Intelligence Department. when we arrived at noon, they gathered us in one room and poured water on us and then began whipping us by cables for several hours ... The next day they started a new round of investigating all the (24) detainees as we were being treated as if we were new prisoners. The investigation in the General Intelligence Department was similar to a large extent to that of Khateeb, yet more brutal, even though I have not come across any death case during the month I spent there.

Among the harshest and cruelest torture method at all was when they took out the hands of a detainee from the top window of the cell door, tied them together by a very hard plastic bond, then they hit him with batons on his palms till they swell and became bloody blue, or when they put the head of a detainee out from the window at the bottom of the door, through which food is usually served to the prisoner, and kicked it and bet it on the head and nose till his face is covered with blood. Also among the worst torturing methods is beating the detainees with a piece of an automobile wheel that is about 10 cm wide and which produces a shot-like sound when beating someone with.

Also among the torturing methods is ordering the detainee to stand for very long hours that could sometimes be up to eight continuous hours, or even asking him to sit on his knees for long hours as well, which sometimes led some detainees to faint.

Dinner mostly consisted of a little boiled potatoes and a quarter or half a loaf of bread, on, which the prison guards sometimes tread under their boots before serving it cell to the detainees who had to eat it without any objection, while lunch wasn't served on a daily basis, for the detainees were deprived of it most of the time.

Diseases were widely spread, especially skin infections, as the case was in Al Khateeb Branch. Moreover, most of the detainees were suffering from inflammatory skin ulcers all over their bodies.



After about a month in the General Intelligence Department, specifically **on 25.05.2013**, I was transferred to the Political Security Department - Political Security Division - Mazza region, where they questioned me again quickly, and then they told me that I was going to be released on account of a Presidential Amnesty following the intervention of an international organization for the release of a number of detainees. At about twelve o'clock midnight on that day, I was released and allowed to return home.

One "funny" thing that happened to me while I was detained, specifically at Al Khateeb Branch is that I saw the questioning of two children who are no more than fifteen years old, from the city of Harasta, Damascus Suburbs, and they were being asked to admit that they were of the armed organizations. They indeed admitted it, as the first one acknowledged that he blew up a tank when he targeted it by a mortar he was holding on his shoulder, while the second admitted the charge of "filler", the one who fills up weapons of the armed groups!!

The Interviewer: Bassam Al Ahmad

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