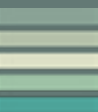




Missed Opportunities

Searching for the Missing While Prosecuting ISIS



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October 2022



The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre

About the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre

The Syria Justice and Accountability Centre (SJAC) strives to prevent impunity, promote redress, and facilitate principled reform. SJAC works to ensure that human rights violations in Syria are comprehensively documented and preserved for use in transitional justice and peace-building. SJAC collects documentation of violations from all available sources, stores it in a secure database, catalogues it according to human rights standards, and analyzes it using legal expertise and big data methodologies. SJAC also supports documenters inside Syria, providing them with resources and technical guidance, and coordinates with other actors working toward similar aims: a Syria defined by justice, respect for human rights, and rule of law.

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Missed Opportunities: Searching for the Missing While Prosecuting ISIS

October 2022, Washington, D.C.

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Cover Image: Black Stadium Prison in Raqqa

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INTRODUCTION

Since the territorial defeat of ISIS in spring 2019, many alleged perpetrators have left Syria either as refugees or foreign fighters returning to Europe and the United States. This has led to the proliferation of criminal trials against ISIS affiliates over the past three years. While these alleged ISIS affiliates represent only a small fraction of those responsible for ISIS crimes in Syria, the ensuing trials have offered an opportunity to pursue accountability for some crimes committed in the Syrian conflict.

At the same time, unfortunately, such trials also represent a missed opportunity to achieve meaningful justice for both Syrian and foreign victims of ISIS. Most significantly, the trials abroad offer little tangible benefit to the thousands of Syrian families who continue to search for loved ones whom ISIS arrested or kidnapped, never to be seen again. Many families of ISIS' victims have yet to recover their loved ones' remains as these alleged perpetrators go on trial.

Investigations into the fate of missing persons and criminal prosecutions against ISIS affiliates are proceeding separately, replicating a mistake made in prior conflicts, such as in the former Yugoslavia. Since it began conducting missing persons [investigations](#) in formerly ISIS-controlled Syria in 2019, SJAC has shared its data with justice mechanisms abroad and proactively notified relevant legal authorities of the identities of perpetrators it has uncovered. Yet prosecutors have repeatedly ignored SJAC's requests for information, and data continues to flow in one direction only.

Evidence currently being uncovered during the prosecution of ISIS affiliates can be invaluable in SJAC's search for missing persons in formerly ISIS controlled Syria. In order to build hypotheses about the fate of individual missing persons, SJAC relies on a wide array of contextual evidence, such as how prisons were administered and how detainees were transferred from one prison to the next. SJAC stores this information in its secure database—as it does with antemortem data and all other information it gathers in its missing persons project—with the intention of sharing it with families searching for their loved ones. Alleged perpetrators currently in detention across Europe often possess information that is crucial to SJAC's investigations, and yet they are not questioned about missing persons. Additionally, witnesses whom prosecutors have called on to support criminal trials often possess valuable information that may not be relevant to the immediate objectives of prosecutors; and yet are never given the

opportunity to divulge this information for the purposes of missing person investigations. The current dynamics are such that evidence is not being shared equitably, perpetrators are not being questioned strategically, and witnesses are not empowered to fully support further justice processes.

In order to better demonstrate how accountability processes could support missing persons investigations, SJAC monitored the U.S. criminal proceedings against Alexandra Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, two of four members of the notorious ISIS 'Beatles.' The quartet of British nationals traveled to Syria to join ISIS and assisted the organization in kidnapping and holding hostage [more than two dozen foreigners](#)—among them four Americans who were eventually executed—between late 2012 and early 2015. During this period, in which ISIS [honed](#) its detention practices, the Beatles were also involved to varying degrees in the arbitrary detention and extra-judicial killing of unknown numbers of Syrians. By attending public sessions of the Beatles proceedings, SJAC's trial monitor was able to collect information on eighteen sites of detention. The trial monitor also connected directly with witnesses and families of the missing to obtain further information about seven of those detention sites in particular, as SJAC describes below. SJAC spent additional time after the proceedings concluded conducting interviews with witnesses from the trial. Throughout the proceedings U.S. prosecutors in the case engaged with SJAC and were sympathetic to its objectives, but unfortunately were unable to share important evidence or arrange a direct interview with convicted Beatles member Alexandra Kotey. This should not discourage further attempts at such collaboration in the future. Ultimately, with support from U.S. legal authorities, SJAC was able to interview Alexandra Kotey.

In this brief, SJAC presents an overview of what it learned from the trial and in subsequent witness interviews in order to show how evidence uncovered for accountability purposes can be relevant to missing persons investigations. SJAC also provides guidance on how accountability mechanisms can support investigations in the future while still respecting the constraints on their ability to share sensitive legal data. An annex to this brief includes concrete resources for witnesses and prosecutors. The pursuit of justice for ISIS crimes has just begun, but even at this early stage it is clear that collaboration between all actors involved is necessary for both Syrian and non-Syrian victims to attain comprehensive justice.



Area Surrounding Shaykh Yusuf Prison

PROSECUTING THE BEATLES, UNDERSTANDING THE ISIS DETENTION SYSTEM

Between 2012 and 2015, millions of Americans watched in horror at the kidnapping of U.S. journalists and aid workers who were detained, tortured, and in some cases executed by the Beatles. Four British nationals were together directly responsible for the detention of many of the foreign hostages, including four Americans: James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig, and Kayla Mueller. The group's leader was Mohammad Emwazi ("Jihadi John") who appeared in several videos performing beheadings and is believed to have been killed in an airstrike by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The second member of the group was Aine Davis ("Jihadi Paul") who was serving a seven-and-a-half-year sentence in Turkey before his extradition to the UK this year. The other two Beatles, Alexandra Kotey ("Ringo") and El Shafee Elsheikh ("Jihadi George"), were captured by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in 2018 during the campaign to recapture ISIS-held territory. Kotey and Elsheikh remained in SDF custody until they were extradited to the U.S. and formally charged in October 2020. Kotey pled guilty to all charges in September 2021 and Elsheikh was convicted on four counts of hostage-taking and four counts of conspiracy in April 2022. Both have since received eight concurrent terms of life imprisonment.

While the convictions of Kotey and El Sheikh represent an important step towards justice, the remains of the four American victims have not been identified or returned to their families and countless unnamed detainees who were held by the Beatles or in related detention centers, remain missing. Through monitoring the Beatles proceedings for information on missing persons, SJAC sought not only to pursue a more comprehensive justice for the families participating in the case, but also to ensure that the proceedings can support the quest for justice for a larger number of victims.

By sitting in on the public trial, SJAC's monitor was able to collect information on eighteen separate sites of detention and how they were utilized between March 2013 and June 2014, at the height of ISIS's control. Sites identified were scattered across Aleppo, Idlib, and Raqqa, representing a large section of the group's territory. While some sites seemed to have been used as only temporarily holding centers, such as a bathroom where Nicholas Henin was briefly held, other sites, such as the Aleppo Hospital in Qadi 'Askar, were

established prisons. Overall, SJAC established the location of seven of the sites and determined that they were used for longer periods and/or held multiple prisoners over time. SJAC also collected information on the specific movements of eighteen hostages, ten of whom ultimately survived and eight of whom were killed. Information collected in the trial was supplemented by information from interviews with three of the surviving witnesses, discussions with another organization working on the ISIS Beatles case, and an interview with Alexandra Kotey.

The Location and Operations of Detention Sites

What SJAC Learned: SJAC obtained exact or approximate location and significant information about seven detention facilities in particular. For each site, SJAC was able to obtain a rough timeline for when the site was operational. Some of these sites were used specifically for foreign hostages, but others can be thought of as "general-population" facilities: central prisons or military bases that housed numerous detainees. In these cases, SJAC was able to collect basic information on the identity of detainees, in order to understand which security unit within ISIS may have operated the prison.

Why it Matters: The location of detention centers is at the core of SJAC's missing persons investigations. By understanding the location and administration of these facilities, SJAC can make hypotheses about where particular detainees may have been held. For example, a civilian accused of violating ISIS religious law may have been taken to a prison administered by the Hisba morality police, whereas a captured Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighter would most likely have been held in a prison run by the Security Office. Information about the period in which each site was operational helps SJAC understand where individuals may have been held based upon when they were disappeared. Many of the identified sites were in territory that is currently outside of SDF control, where it is harder for SJAC's documenters to operate. As a result, the trial was an important source of information on detention

centers in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. The map below highlights the seven most significant detention facilities that SJAC identified by observing the Beatles proceedings and conducting additional interviews. Profiles of the sites and an explanation of how hostages moved in and out of them over time can be found in the appendix to this brief. Most of these facilities held all of the foreign hostages at certain points, although several only held a small group of them. The facilities are numbered according to the approximate chronological order that hostages are believed to have been taken to them.

It should be noted that this map and timeline is tentative, given the minor discrepancies SJAC has observed between witness accounts regarding the location and profile of the facilities. These discrepancies may be attributed to the fact that ISIS moved hostages back and forth between the same facilities on multiple occasions, the different nicknames used for some facilities, and the amount of time that has elapsed since the events in question. SJAC is continuing to document these facilities to account for discrepancies and further its understanding of the ISIS detention apparatus. A fully interactive version of the map is [available here](#), and an annex at the end of this report features profiles of the facilities.

Patterns of Detainee Transfer

What SJAC Learned: SJAC was able to collect data on how eighteen of the foreign hostages travelled through the seven sites over time, illuminating how ISIS was transferring prisoners between these facilities. Along with this more granular information about transfers, it became clear that, over the course of 2013 and 2014, the Beatles generally moved the hostages from west to east as armed opposition groups pushed ISIS out of Idlib and Aleppo governorates and into its strongholds in eastern Syria. While this pattern itself is not new, the trial provided specific dates for these movements, with most of this movement occurring in late 2013 and early 2014.

Why it Matters: Understanding and predicting the transfer of detainees is central to the ability of SJAC to understand the ultimate whereabouts of individual missing persons. Through the trial, SJAC learned specific pieces of information on transfers (such as pairs of detention centers that transferred detainees back and forth) that will be important to tracking the fates of other individuals held in those facilities. It also identified larger trends, such as the dates at which ISIS moved detainees eastward, which could assist in



Beatles Prisons: 1. Armanaz Prison (March-July 2013); 2. Kafr Takharim Camp (April 2013); 3. Aleppo Hospital (June-August 2013); 4. Shaykh al-Najjar Security Prison (August-November 2013); 5. Kafr Jum Prison (November 2013-January 2014); 6. Mansura Prison (January 2014); 7. Akirshi Security Prison (February-June 2013);

[Click here to access an interactive map of these sites](#)

predicting the movements of detainees held in nearby centers that were taken back from ISIS control in late 2013 and early 2014.

The Location of Executions and Gravesites

What SJAC Learned: Through trial testimony and subsequent witness interviews, SJAC learned of the execution of at least fourteen individuals that had not previously been reported, as well as the approximate burial location of six individuals. Trial testimony also confirmed some broad patterns in ISIS execution and burial practices that SJAC was already aware of, including that execution and burials often occurred at some distance from detention centers (e.g., as far as a mile away, in the case of the 'Akirshi Security Prison where foreign hostages were held in spring 2014).

SJAC learned about additional burial patterns after the trial through its interview with Alexandra Kotey. In Raqqa governorate, for example, non-Muslim victims of ISIS executions were often buried south of Raqqa City in the desert region beyond the right bank of the Euphrates. By contrast, as work by the Syrian Missing Persons and Forensic Team (SMFT) has confirmed, Muslim victims and ISIS members were more typically buried inside Raqqa City itself. Perhaps most significantly, SJAC confirmed in follow-up interviews that ISIS often relied on medical personnel from the local communities where it exercised control to dispose of the bodies of those whom it executed.

Why it Matters: Locating the remains of executed detainees and returning them to their families is at the center of missing persons investigations. The information collected during the Beatles proceedings provided evidence regarding the possible resting sites for both foreign and Syrian hostages known to be executed, the sites of graves that may hold those whose fates remain unknown, and potential key witnesses from local Syrian communities where ISIS operated.



Area Surrounding Kafr Takharim Camp



Area Surrounding Shaykh al-Najjar Security Prison

HOW ACCOUNTABILITY ACTORS CAN SUPPORT INVESTIGATIONS

Monitoring the Beatles proceedings and conducting additional witness interviews was an effective way for SJAC to collect valuable evidence. However, human rights organizations cannot reasonably monitor every ISIS trial globally. This is why accountability actors—including prosecutors, police and other investigators, and mechanisms such as the IIIM—should take an active role in ensuring that relevant information is being identified and shared with SJAC.

Identifying Relevant Cases

Accountability actors should inform SJAC when they are pursuing a criminal investigation that may be relevant for the search for those missing in formerly ISIS-controlled Syria. This would include criminal investigations of any alleged ISIS affiliate with any connection to a detention facility or one of the branches of the ISIS security apparatus that administered such sites (i.e., the Hisba, the Islamic Police, or the Security Office). Even if an alleged ISIS perpetrator was not officially connected to a detention facility (e.g., in the capacity of an interrogator), they may have knowledge of a person who was detained against their will—including for example, a woman who was enslaved in a private home. Finally, those who were affiliated with the court system and may have knowledge of ISIS judicial decisions regarding arrests, prison transfers, or executions, are also valuable. The suggestions below

are just some examples of how authorities can provide support when investigating or prosecuting relevant cases.

NOTE: While SJAC welcomes criminal prosecutions for crimes of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance that were committed by parties to the conflict other than ISIS, including Syrian government forces, it does not currently have the capacity to pursue investigations into the fate of the missing associated with these cases. Other Syrian organizations, such as the Association for the Detained and Missing in Sednaya Prison, may be better suited to collaborate with prosecutors on such cases.

Sharing Evidence with SJAC

In the course of a criminal investigation, investigators often directly collect evidence relevant to missing persons investigations. For example, during the Elsheikh trial, prosecutors presented an approximate map of relevant detention locations. Such information presented in the trial can be shared, but in some cases information that was collected but never utilized in a trial, may also be relevant for missing persons cases. By flagging such evidence and sharing it with relevant organizations, prosecutors can ensure that this evidence still supports justice processes.

The IIIM and Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Search for the Missing

The UN IIIM has made steps towards supporting this type of data sharing by tagging data that may be relevant to missing persons investigations. However, to date, the mechanism is only willing to share data with international organizations. While such an approach may have made sense in prior contexts, in the case of Syria, most international organizations do not have access to the country, and hence are not leading current investigations. In fact, in many countries around the world, for example, in Argentina and across Latin America, missing persons investigations are led not by international organizations but rather by local CSOs, particularly in contexts where the state is implicated in the crime of disappearance.

In some cases, data held by the IIIM may not be available to share with local CSOs because of agreements made with the entity that provided the data. Where possible, the IIIM should seek to amend its internal policies and data agreements to allow for the sharing of missing persons evidence with organizations investigating the fates of the missing who meet basic standards regarding the ability to keep data secure and private. In some cases, the IIIM could choose to share data on less sensitive matters, such as detention centers or transfer patterns, while choosing not to share any data with personal information, largely erasing any concern regarding data security.

Connecting Witnesses with SJAC

Criminal trials often identify witnesses—including survivors of ISIS detention—who hold valuable evidence on missing persons which may not be relevant to criminal investigations. When working with witnesses, authorities should inform them that they have the opportunity to support missing persons investigations in addition to criminal trials. Authorities may share the fact sheet in Annex 3 with witnesses directly, allowing them to decide if they are interested in arranging an interview with SJAC.

Provide Access to the Accused

In many cases, perpetrators themselves have the most valuable information regarding missing persons, and particularly the locations of detention centers and clandestine grave sites. If the accused are willing to cooperate, legal authorities can allow SJAC to question them directly after the conclusion of a trial. Alternatively, legal authorities can integrate questions relevant to missing persons investigations into their own questioning and then provide SJAC with answers and associated data. A resource to guide such questioning can be found in Annex 2.



Area Surrounding Kafr Jum Prison



Area Surrounding Mansura Prison

CONCLUSION

The prosecution of the Beatles represents an important but limited step towards justice for the victims of ISIS crimes. The remains of the four American hostages who were killed by ISIS have not been identified or returned to their families. Moreover, countless unnamed Syrian detainees who were held alongside them in the same detention centers used by the Beatles remain missing. Their families continue to search for them, often with little support from authorities while enduring the emotional and material hardship of their absence.

By monitoring the Beatles proceedings for information on missing persons, SJAC sought not only to pursue a more comprehensive justice for the families participating in the case but also to ensure that the proceedings supports the quest for justice for a larger number of victims. Doing so generated important leads that will guide its investigations into the fate of

the missing. Given the discrepancies that emerged between accounts from the proceedings and subsequent interviews, there should be closer collaboration between SJAC and legal authorities to seek clarity on these points. Indeed, the search for the missing in general cannot succeed without sustained cooperation between legal authorities, SJAC, and witnesses, as this brief has demonstrated. The support that SJAC received from U.S. legal authorities in gaining access to an ISIS affiliate—while working closely with witnesses from the Beatles trials—exemplifies this kind of reciprocity and the investigatory gains. The ongoing prosecutions of alleged ISIS affiliates in Europe are a valuable opportunity to extend collaboration further.¹

The following annexes to this report provide further guidance as to how this could proceed concretely.

¹ For a list of ongoing prosecutions of alleged ISIS affiliates in Europe, see Annex I in Syria Justice and Accountability Centre, [The State of Justice in Syria 2022](#) (Washington, DC: Syria Justice and Accountability Centre, 2022).



Area Surrounding 'Akirshi Security Prison

ANNEXES

Annex 1: What Data is Relevant for Missing Persons Investigations?

SJAC encourages accountability actors to share information that may be relevant to missing persons cases. However, it may not be immediately obvious what types of information is of interest to SJAC. The below is an overview of information that can be important for SJAC:

- The names of individuals who are believed to be missing, were seen in detention centers, or have been executed.
- The transfer of detainees between different ISIS detention facilities, whether it be information on a specific transfer or knowledge of how transfers were administered.
- The location of any detention facility, i.e., a location where ISIS held individuals against their will (including ISIS defectors, combatants from armed opposition groups, or civilians); this includes both formal prisons administered by one of the ISIS security apparatus branches and ad-hoc clandestine prisons installed in private homes.
- The administration of any detention facilities or the internal workings of relevant authorities, including the three main branches of the ISIS security apparatus (Hisba, Islamic Police, and Security Office).

Annex 2: Questions for Alleged Perpetrators

The following is a brief overview of the types of questions that a criminal investigator can ask an alleged perpetrator in order to collect information relevant to the search for missing persons:

Mechanisms for kidnapping, detention, and execution:

Do you know how arrests were conducted? What entities or individuals issued arrest warrants or conducted arrests? Where did such arrests generally take place? (e.g., at checkpoints, home raids, on patrol, etc.)

What happened to detainees after their arrest? How were they judged? Did they face trial, and if so, where? Where were they detained while awaiting trial? Please indicate the sequence of events.

Are you aware of any specific detention facilities? This can include permanent facilities like Hisba centers or private homes that housed kidnapped individuals on a short-term basis. Can you share their location or point them out on a map? Who were the individuals or entities responsible for managing such facilities? Did they fall under specific branch of the ISIS security apparatus, such as the Hisba, Islamic Police, Security Office, or Military Police?

Were the names of detained individuals or the locations of grave sites recorded? If so, how was such data stored (online, on hard drives, physical papers, etc.)? Do you know where these records are currently?

Do you know of any detainees at this site who were executed? Can you describe any particular incidents of executions, including the location and identity of the victims? Who were the individuals or entities responsible for executions?

Mass graves and burial practices:

What individuals or entities were responsible for digging graves? Do you know the specific identity and current location of any of these individuals?

Are you aware of the locations of any unmarked grave sites? How were the locations for grave sites selected? Did the specific identities or affiliations of detainees affect where they were buried? If so, how?

Identifying detainees:

Did you ever have personal contact with detainees? Do you know the names of any of the detainees that you interacted with? Where were they last detained and when did you last see them? Do you know what happened to them?

Annex 3: Information for Witnesses

SJAC is actively seeking information about those who were kidnapped by ISIS in Syria as well as evidence on the ISIS detention system at large. If you survived ISIS detention or possess evidence regarding ISIS detention or killings, please contact us so we can discuss whether the documentation in your possession could support investigations.

What will happen if you contact SJAC?

One of SJAC's documenters will arrange an interview to discuss your experience. You can choose to speak to a man or woman, and conduct an interview in Arabic, Kurdish, or English. Reaching out to SJAC does not mean that you are agreeing to conduct an interview, and you can stop an interview at any time if you change your mind.

What type of information is SJAC collecting?

During an interview, one of SJAC's documenters will ask you about your experiences during detention, including the nature of your arrest, any trials or other

criminal proceedings, and the location and types of detention facilities where you were held. We will also ask about other detainees who you saw while detained. We recognize discussing these memories may be upsetting, and an interviewee can choose to pause or halt an interview at any time, as well as split an interview up over multiple sessions as needed. Justice mechanisms abroad who are relying on these witnesses for testimony should provide psycho-social support to individuals.

How will this information be used?

SJAC and its partner the Syrian Missing Persons and Forensic Team are actively collecting information on missing persons in order to establish the fates of those still missing due to ISIS detention in Northeast Syria. Ultimately, SJAC hopes to use information collected in order to identify the fates of individual missing persons and, when the person is deceased, locate their remains and return them to their loved ones.

If you are interested in supporting SJAC's project, you can reach out through email (info@syriaaccountability.org) or via our [Facebook page](#).



Area Surrounding Aleppo Hospital

Appendix: Mapping the Beatles Prisons

[Click to access an interactive map of the following sites](#)

1. Armanaz Prison: March-July 2013

In March 2013, soon after the Beatles and other ISIS affiliates began to abduct foreigners as hostages, at least four such hostages were first held at a site that witnesses referred to at Elsheikh's trial as "The Box." Through interviews with witnesses, SJAC identified it as being near the town of Armanaz in Idlib governorate. This site does not appear to have been a major ISIS detention facility, reportedly being comprised of just a single makeshift cell in one single high-ceilinged room. The Beatles carried out interrogation and torture at this site specifically, whereas other ISIS affiliates were likely responsible for initial management of foreign hostages who were kidnapped in other areas of northern Syria at this time.

2. Kafr Takharim Camp: April 2013

Between at least April and October 2013, in the context of military campaigns against Syrian opposition armed groups, ISIS operated a military camp from a mountaintop near the town of Kafr Takharim in Idlib governorate. SJAC learned of the location of this facility through its interview of Alexandra Kotey, and believes that it was to this location that at least one foreign hostage may have been transferred in April 2013—before being taken back to Armanaz Prison shortly thereafter. While at Kafr Takharim, the hostage encountered a Syrian detainee. This location is important because it held both armed combatants and civilian detainees. SJAC learned through follow-up interviews that certain missing Syrians whom SJAC has tracked from the Shaykh al-Najjar Security Prison were allegedly executed at Kafr Takharim and buried nearby; these were not the only executions that are believed to have occurred at this facility.

3. Aleppo Hospital: June-August 2013

Between June and August 2013, foreign hostages who had been kidnapped in different locations in Northwest Syria began to arrive at a medical facility in Aleppo City that ISIS had converted into a prison. By the end of the summer, nine foreign hostages were being held here. At the trial of Elsheikh witnesses referred to it only as "the Hospital;" SJAC confirmed in follow-up interviews that the prison was housed specifically inside the National Hospital complex in the Qadi 'Askar neighborhood. Although the foreign hostages were held separately in a basement of the hospital, the prison itself was a general detention facility that housed detainees who had initially been held for a variety of reasons. It held not just high-profile "security detainees" like FSA captives and journalists, but also civilian activists and individuals who may have initially been arrested by ISIS religious or criminal police before being transferred to the hospital for further interrogation.

4. Shaykh al-Najjar Security Prison: August-November 2013

This facility was operated around the same time as the Hospital in Aleppo and the trial suggested that it was somewhere in Aleppo City. At least nine of the hostages were taken here from the Hospital in August 2013, and by November, ISIS had brought five more foreign hostages to the group. Although the trial itself revealed little about what the witnesses alternately called "the Factory" and "the Dungeon," SJAC learned in subsequent interviews that it was an important detention facility in the Shaykh al-Najjar industrial suburb of Aleppo. The prison was installed underground beneath a woodshop near a water heater factory in Shaykh al-Najjar and comprised of a series of cells. It held not just foreign hostages but also opposition fighters, ISIS defectors, high-profile journalists, and local civilians with business connections that ISIS sought to leverage. Torture was routine at this site, as was the case in other ISIS detentions facilities, and executions of certain detainees reportedly occurred nearby.

5. Kafr Jum Prison November 2013-January 2014

This facility in the area of Rif al-Muhandisin near Kafr Jum, on the border of Aleppo and Idlib governorates, may have been where the Beatles moved the foreign hostages in November 2013. At the Elsheikh trial witnesses described a villa about an hour and a half by car “into the mountains” from Aleppo City, referring to it alternately as “the Mansion” and “the Five-Star Hotel.” There was already at least one foreign hostage being kept here when the large group of hostages arrived. In subsequent interviews, including with Alexenda Kotey, SJAC identified the Kafr Jum site as a facility that was used exclusively to hold foreign hostages on a temporary basis, as opposed to operating as a general-population prison. At the beginning of 2014, under increasing military threat by opposition armed groups, ISIS briefly moved foreign hostages away from this site and toward makeshift prisons that were in more secure territory (specifically to a site they identified only as “The Office”), adding three new foreign hostages along the way. Witnesses at the trial recalled hearing the approaching sound of armed clashes while being held at the Mansion in late 2013, testimony which aligns with battlefield dynamics around Kafr Jum during the same period.

6. Mansura Prison: January 2014

In late 2013 and early 2014, ISIS conducted a mass relocation of its members and detainees out of Northwest Syria, eventually moving to areas in the Northeast. Trial testimony revealed that the foreign hostages were transferred to Raqqa governorate during this period and likely as part of the large ISIS convoy that was then leaving Aleppo governorate. The exact route that the convoy took is unclear, but it is known that in January 2014 the hostages stopped briefly at a facility which witnesses identified only as “the Office.”

The next and more significant stopping point, also in January, was a villa which survivors termed “Riverside” due to its location on the right bank of the Euphrates. Subsequent interviews that SJAC conducted confirmed the site to have been between Raqqa City and the town of Mansura. Witness interviews suggest that the villa was used to house foreign hostages in particular, and in trial testimony witnesses also recalled seeing at least one grave site outside their prison at Riverside.

7. ‘Akirshi Security Prison: February-June 2014

The trial revealed that most of the foreign hostages were taken to what they described as the “Desert Prison” in Raqqa governorate between February and June 2014. Some hostages stayed here for several months before gaining release in exchange for ransom. Other hostages continued to be held at this site for several months more before being transferred to points elsewhere in Raqqa. In follow-up interviews SJAC confirmed the prison to be located southeast of Raqqa City at the ‘Akirshi oil facility, which ISIS primarily used as a military training camp. It is likely that the last foreign hostages who remained at the ‘Akirshi Security Prison were transferred elsewhere shortly before Global Coalition conducted airstrikes on the location in early July 2014. Witnesses at the Elsheikh trial reported that one execution allegedly took place during their time at

‘Akirshi, although there were discrepancies regarding the nationality of the individual who was executed. Subsequent interviews that SJAC conducted indicated that the individual was buried close to the facility. The detention and execution of other ISIS detainees continued after the foreign hostages were taken away, with media outlets reporting that ISIS conducted field executions of its own members at ‘Akirshi.

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