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SYRIA

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR MISSING KURDISH STUDENT

Fidaa Mohammad Qassem, an 18-year-old English student from Kobani, a town in north-east Syria, went missing under mysterious circumstances. On April 6, 2023, after her English class, Fidaa didn't return home. Kobani, known for its Kurdish-majority population, is under the governance of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). Fidaa was forcibly conscripted to the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), an all-female military group associated with AANES. Two weeks after Fidaa's disappearance, YPJ members allegedly visited her family claiming she had joined the military force by choice. However, her family raised concerns, pointing out the lack of communication with Fidaa, which contradicts both local customs and international standards.

Write to the Commander-in-Chief of the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), urging her to:

- I urge you to reveal the whereabouts of Fidaa and ensure that she has regular channel of communication with her family.

Send an email to:

General Newroz Ahmed

Email: Ypj_Womensdefend@protonmail.com

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/YPJDefense>

Write to the Syrian Embassy:

Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic

46 Cartier Street

Ottawa, ON K2P 1J3

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In North-East Syria, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) oversees the region's governance and security. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a blend of Kurdish and Arab fighters under the leadership of the People's Protection Units (YPG), form the backbone of AANES's military might. Within this framework, the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) stand out as a significant all-female contingent.

On the eve of her 18th birthday, Fidaa Mohammad Qassem's routine journey back from English lessons in Kobani took a mysterious turn. She vanished without a trace, leaving her family and community in distress. Despite initial silence, subsequent revelations surfaced that Fidaa might have been conscripted into the YPJ, fueling controversy and concern.

Nearly three weeks post-disappearance, YPJ representatives claimed that Fidaa had willingly joined their ranks, a statement that raised eyebrows given their prior surveillance of her activities. This claim,

however, clashed with the family's inability to verify her status or communicate with her, a situation at odds with the norms for conscripts.

The incident highlights the legal landscape in AANES-controlled areas, where military service laws exhibit a gendered distinction: voluntary enlistment for women and mandatory conscription for men aged 18 to 40. Fidaa's case, therefore, not only questions the application of these laws but also underscores the need for transparency and adherence to legal and human rights standards in the region.

Please send your appeals until March 25, 2024. If there's the need for further action after that date, the UA will be duly updated.