

## Is the killer of the archbishops kidnapped in Syria in Istanbul?

We still don't know the whereabouts of the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate Metropolitan of Aleppo Pavlus Yazici and the Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo Yuhanna Ibrahim that were abducted in Syria on April 22, 2013. After a serious investigation, Researcher Erkan Metin has stunning claims about the kidnapping of the archbishops. According to Metin, the archbishops were most likely kidnapped by a group of 70 people affiliated with Northern Director of the Islamic State of Iraq and Damascus (ISIS) and most likely these archbishops were killed.



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“I don't understand why Turkish Republic is hiding the arrest of Magomed Abdurrahmanov who is allegedly beheaded three people and killed the two kidnapped Archbishops.”

We still don't know the whereabouts of the Antioch Orthodox Patriarchate Metropolitan of Aleppo Pavlus Yazici and the Syriac Orthodox Metropolitan of Aleppo Yuhanna Ibrahim that were abducted in Syria on April 22, 2013. There is no any reliable information regarding the fate of these archbishops since they were kidnapped. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept saying that diplomatic efforts were made regarding the kidnapping of the archbishops. The images that show the two archbishops were killed have been refuted and the claims that the killers were caught in Konya were also refuted by the officials.

Researcher Erkan Metin has stunning claims about the kidnapping of the archbishops following his research about the kidnapping. According to Metin, following the kidnapping, there has been speculative information. Metin also indicated that he researched the kidnapping from the sources that anyone could have access. According to Metin, the two archbishops have been kidnapped by a group of 70 people affiliated with the Northern Director of the Islamic State of Iraq and Damascus (ISIS) and most likely they have been killed. The claim is extremely shocking: Ebu Banat, who is known to be the leader of the group that kidnapped the archbishops as well as committed many brutal murders, is still in Maltepe Prison in Istanbul.

### **What are the dark secrets on the kidnapping of the archbishops?**

The kidnapping took place exactly in the middle of where the chaos is. In this sense, every aspect of the incident is difficult to determine. For Syriacs, the kidnapping of their archbishop who is likely to be the next Patriarch, is a historic event. However, Syriacs do not even know what to think after all the false and speculative information is around. They can only pray for the safe return of their archbishop. At this point, everybody wants to know and learn the truth. However, it is not possible to get to the truth when there are some parties with differing interests in the incident.

### **What was the reason you needed to research the issue?**

Archbishop Ibrahim was a major name in mediation of many controversial incidents during the Syrian civil war. It was almost certain that he was going to be the next Syriac Patriarch. However, the Syriac society faced with a flood of lies and false news after the kidnapping incident. Nobody knew the truth. As a Syriac, I was curious to understand what actually happened and I started to research about the subject for months.

### **We know that the drivers were killed during the kidnapping of the archbishops. What else do we know about the kidnapping?**

On April 22, Archbishop Ibrahim met Archbishop Yazici, who was returning to Syria from Turkey, at the Syrian Turkish border gate Bab-El-Hawa. There were the driver Fathallah and Fuad Eliya in their car. On the way to Aleppo, they were able to smoothly cross a Free Syrian Army check point which was located about 20 km from the border. A short time later, a car with armed men started to follow them and then cut their way. Eight armed men took the driver and Fuad Eliya out of the car and instead two armed men got into their car and kidnapped the archbishops. The body of the driver was found by a rebel in an area of nearby factories.



### **Who killed the driver?**

I am guessing that while the driver was trying to escape, he was killed by the sniper belong to the Syrian army who stationed in an old military building because the snipers in that area were shooting anyone they could see. However, Fuad Eliya survives but I couldn't learn how he was able to survive. According to an article published by Lebanon's As-Safir newspaper, Witness Eliya indicated that the kidnappers were individuals dressed like Chechens and they did not speak Arabic. We could not hear from the archbishops anymore.

### **Who is Fouad Eliya who survived the incident? What is he doing right now?**

Fouad Eliya is the only survivor who witnessed the kidnapping. He has a friendship with Archbishop Ibrahim. Eliya was one of key figures of the Communist Party in Syria. He was imprisoned by the regime for a long time. He has political ties with the rebels which I could not fully understand. I am guessing that Archbishop Ibrahim was taking him alongside for this reason. Currently, Eliya inexplicably prefers to remain silent. Now, I don't know where he is and what he does.

### **Who is the group that kidnapped the archbishops?**

When we look at the Fouad Eliya's statements reflected in the media and the dominant forces in the region where the kidnapping took place, we see that the group involved in the kidnapping was the one which has Caucasian origin. This group was Mucahir and Ensar army under the command of Ebu Omer Sisani who is affiliated with Iraq and Damascus Islamic State of North Director (ISIS). This organization is basically a jihadist organization which is the Caucasus Emirate's Syria branch. There are also small groups connected to this organization. I think that the kidnapping was conducted by one of these small groups which is a group of 70 people under the command of a person named Ebu el-Banat. This group occupied a village called Meshed Ruhin in Aleppo area in April and declared sharia in this village. According to an article published at a pro Free Syrian Army source named "all4syria.com", prior to the kidnapping, an investigation about the group had already been started. In a video image that I was able to access, it could clearly be seen that Ebu Banat had beheaded three people in a village square prior to April 19<sup>th</sup>. The international community learned about Ebu Banat from this video image of the beheadings. Ebu Banat had the most active days during the kidnapping. According to another article of the same source, along with some other rebel activities, this group had also involved with kidnapping of the two archbishops. In addition, in according to the two sentences in an article called "Russian traces in Syria" which was published at Caucasus Emirate's unofficial site known as kavkazcenter.com, Ebu Banat was the one who kidnapped the archbishops.

### **What type of connections does the group of kidnappers have with other rebel groups?**

The group of kidnappers has an allegiance to a group called "Muhacir and Ensar army" which is affiliated with ISIS. According to the information recently emerged, Muhacir and Ensar army commander, Omer Sisani was an ex-Georgian military officer. I was able to access to some information that would confirm that the leader of the most feared group in Syria, Sisani was the same person known as Ebu Omer el-Kuwaiti who is the mastermind and the financier of the current ISIS northern area commander, Ebu Banat's group. In addition, according to two separate

articles published in Russian media, Samil Izmailov who is also known as Abu Halif is the joint leader of this group.

### **What is the current status of the group?**

Sisani still continues his rebellious activities. However, Ebu Banat's group is disbanded. This group probably came into armed conflict with the Free Syrian Army at the end of June in 2013 and then it is disbanded in Meshed Ruhin which was a village that this group invaded. Ebu Banat and Ebu Halif were able to survive from the conflict. Some of the group members who were able to survive the conflict continue their activities.

### **Are there any similar events in Syria?**

There is an explosion in the number of kidnappings in Syria. There are numerous cases, but the relatives of the kidnapped persons held for ransom somehow get the news about the kidnapping. However, we have not heard anything from these two archbishops. There are only rumors. Another similar mysterious event was the kidnapping of Catholic priest Paolo Dall'Oglio. It appeared that Dall'Oglio had been murdered.

### **Was the kidnapping of the archbishops planned?**

The group that I think it carried out the kidnapping is known for sadistic practices. It made me to think that the kidnapping was not planned when we look at Witness Eliya's testimony about how the incident happened, the psychopathic personality of Ebu Banat, and the efforts of Ebu Banat to prove his authority in the village that he invaded. However, we don't have enough data to say anything concrete about it.

### **You mentioned that the archbishops were killed with a bomb. Was this kind of murder committed before?**

This is a detail in an article published in Kavkazcenter site. This is a possibility. However, it seems that this is the most logical possibility so far. We know that Taliban in Afghanistan executes its captives by attaching bombs to the captives to demonstrate its power. It is not common murder method but it can be considered another way to execute its captives besides beheading the captives. In this sense, it fits to Ebu Banat's psychopathic personality. Besides, if they are dead, dying with a bomb would cause the body of the victims to disappear.

### **How do we arrive at the conclusion that they were killed? What are the factors contributing to this conclusion?**

The kidnappings in Syria result in two ways: The kidnapped is either being killed or staying alive. It is risky and burdensome to keep the kidnapped alive. If they are kept alive, the purpose is either for a ransom or for an exchange. The news of many kidnappings or exchanges turned out to be false later did not reach to a conclusion. The other possibility is that they had been killed. This possibility is more likely due to a small detail revealed in a website belongs to the Caucasian Emirate. In addition, last October, some Russian newspapers confirmed the information that I put out. Russians know these groups and they are watching them. Russian Duma spokesman said that they received information that the archbishops were killed on July 1<sup>st</sup>. In addition, according to the information based on the Russian newspaper RIA Novosti, the two

archbishops were killed by this group in the summer. In other words, same information was put out by groups with different interests.

Ebu Banat is known around the world for the gruesome images of the beheadings. I was able to find some raw video images that were not published anywhere else. This guy keeps on beheading people day and night. I mean he uses violence out of proportion. Ebu Banat demonstrates his violence in order to increase his authority in Meshed Ruhin which is a village he declared his Emirate. It wouldn't be logical to expect these archbishops to be alive if this group truly kidnapped these archbishops.

### **What are the resources that would confirm that Ebu Banat was the killer of the archbishops?**

The first review about Ebu Banat was written a week prior to the kidnapping in all4syria.com which is a website affiliated with the Free Syrian Army. They suspected the activities of Ebu Banat's group and they wanted to go to Meshed Ruhi village to investigate. Fire has been opened on them. However, the incident was being covered claiming that it was a mistake. It is found out from a review that there has been a lot of money and weapon in the group, but the group did not participate in an active war. Itab Mahmud, who wrote the review, named the camp as "fantasy camp". According to another article published a few months after the kidnapping on the same website, this group disbanded after a fight with the Free Syrian Army and the leader of the group is considered as an agent. The group's past activities are listed in the article perhaps after an investigation in the village. In this list of the group's activities included an assassination of the Free Syrian Army commander and similar activities and the kidnapping of the two archbishops. I also ran into similar the Free Syrian Army reports on a French diplomat's website.

My other resource is an article published at a website called kavkazcenter.com which is administered in Istanbul and is almost an official media outlet for Caucasus Emirate that is administered by Jihadist Doku Umarov. In addition, I reviewed hundreds of websites and images in order to reach the findings. Ebu Banat's group is known well because of the beheadings performed by this group. Der Spiegel wrote partially about this group. In October, some Russian newspapers also wrote some information about this group that would confirm my findings. In addition, I found some information on Kavkazpress.ru that was obtained from those who knew Ebu Banat and his family in Dagestan. I came across some raw video images of Ebu Banat's acts of beheadings and some other images from the group prior to its split up on vk.com/aboodaud. Those who want to see the resources about the subject, they can find them in my article published at suryaniler.com.

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## **Ebu Banat is at Maltepe Prison.**

### **What happened to Ebu Banat?**

Last July, it is claimed that three people were caught in Konya, who have allegedly a connection to the kidnapping of the archbishops. Turkish Officials said that these people have nothing to do with the kidnapping. The Foreign Affairs Ministry indicated that they were foreign people who had visa problem and that they were deported. However, during my research, I found out that one of these people was Ebu Banat. His real name is Magomed Abdurrahmanov. He had



**Ebu Banat (second from left, red bearded)**

arrested on July 4<sup>th</sup> for being a member of an armed terrorist organization. He is being held at Maltepe Prison right now in the section where the foreign prisoners are kept. His file is being held as secret. The prosecutor had not prepared the charges for these prisoners. However, Foreign Affair minister himself indicated to the Syriac leaders who visited him on July 19<sup>th</sup> which is exactly 15 days after Ebu Banat's arrest that this man had nothing to do with kidnapping of the archbishops and that he was deported. Why are the Turkish officials hiding the arrest of Magomed Abdurrahmanov who is allegedly beheaded three people and kidnapped the two archbishops? I don't understand. The truth should come out.

### **How do we know Magomed Abdurrahmanov is Ebu Banat?**

I found about his real name in Liveleak internet site where the video images of beheading were first uploaded. Later on, when these video images went viral around the globe, some people who knew this man started to write about him on some Russian websites. I reviewed all this information. His identity, his past and even his youth pictures were started to emerge. This information was matching the information I was getting in my research. Magomed Abdurrahmanov was from Dagestan and he was an ex-police officer. The name of the person who got captured is also the same. The names of his father and mother are also matching. In other words, there is no way he can be somebody else.

### **What else do we know about Ebu Banat?**

Jihadist people use nicknames. Ebu Banat is also a nick name. The meaning of the name in Arabic is "The girls' father". He was born in 1974. He had worked as a police officer in the town of Hadzhalmahi located in Levashinskogo. He founded a group named Omer Sisani which is affiliated with Caucasus Emirate. He settled down in a village named Meshed Ruhi nearby Aleppo in April and he committed gruesome atrocities and demonstrated his brutal practices.

The world learned about him in July from the video images in the internet that showed he was beheading a priest named Francois Murad and beheading other two people. However, later on, it turned out that the person who was shown the video image as being beheaded was not Francois Murad. At the end, it is certain that Ebu Banat is a person who could easily behead people and have unbelievably brutal practices.

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