

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# Arkel Arrest Case

Case concerning a Syrian man arrested in the Dutch town of Arkel in January 2023, suspected of committing war crimes and holding a leadership position within ISIS between 2013 and 2018.

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Investigation Name</b> | Lech                        |
| <b>Country</b>            | Syria                       |
| <b>Court</b>              | District Court of Rotterdam |
| <b>Year</b>               | 2024                        |

01

## Who is the accused in the case?

The Accused is a 38 year old Syrian man, known as al-A. In 2019, he applied for asylum in the Netherlands, after which he and his family settled in the Dutch city of Arkel in 2021. The man was arrested in Arkel on January 17, 2023, on the suspicion of holding a leadership position within ISIS in Syria between 2013 and 2018.

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## Which charges have been brought against the Accused?

The accused is suspected of holding a leadership position as a security commander within ISIS in Syria, between 2013 and 2018. The current indictment focuses on the Accused's membership in the terrorist organisation ISIS, as well as membership in a criminal organisation with the intent to commit war crimes.

In September 2025, the case was still in pre-trial phase, meaning that the formal indictment had not yet been finalised. The allegations concern the Accused's involvement in violent interrogations and the subsequent torture of detainees, as well as executions qualifying as war crimes and crimes against humanity. While the substance of the charges remains undisputed, his specific role in participating in the alleged crimes is less clear. The Accused is suspected of holding a leadership role, thus having overseen and taken part in these crimes. However, this indictment could be subject to change as more facts and witness testimonies will be included in the assessment. The alleged offenses are said to have taken place in or around the Yarmouk refugee camp in southern Damascus, Syria.

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The investigation into the alleged crimes is ongoing. Depending on its findings, additional charges may be incorporated into the final indictment. The final charges are expected to be presented in the next pre-trial hearing, scheduled for 16 april 2026.

### 03

## What is the legal justification for conducting a trial in the Netherlands for crimes committed in Syria?

Dutch courts can hear cases about the most severe crimes committed abroad, such as war crimes or crimes against humanity, under the legal principle of 'universal jurisdiction.' Universal jurisdiction allows national courts to prosecute individuals for serious crimes, regardless of where the crime was committed. This principle is based on the understanding that crimes like genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity harm everyone in the global community, and helps to ensure accountability, especially if the country where the crimes occurred is unwilling or unable to prosecute.

The Dutch International Crimes Act (Article 2(1)), provides for universal jurisdiction. On this basis, the Dutch authorities can prosecute the most severe crimes, such as the crime of genocide and war crimes, committed outside of the Netherlands if (a) the perpetrator is in the Netherlands, (b) the crime is committed against a Dutch national, and/or (c) the crime is committed by a Dutch national.

In this case, the Accused entered the Netherlands in 2019, where he continued to reside on a temporary residence permit. Therefore, he falls under Dutch jurisdiction, enabling the Dutch authorities to prosecute the Accused for the crimes he allegedly committed in Syria. This aligns with the Netherlands' commitment to upholding international human rights standards and ensuring accountability for grave violations of international (criminal) law.

04

## What is the broader significance of the case?

The case signifies the Netherlands' continued dedication to prosecuting perpetrators of international crimes. By prosecuting the suspect in the Netherlands, the Netherlands takes a leading role in international justice through fighting impunity of international crimes such as war crimes, terrorism and genocide since their occurrence and the suspect has become a Dutch national. The Netherlands consequently affirms that it is no safe haven for those suspected of serious crimes, and that time and geography do not erase culpability in cases of international crimes. Moreover, the Netherlands sets a precedent for other countries to prosecute individuals suspected of committing war crimes and other serious crimes and encourages global enforcement of international criminal law.

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## How can I attend the trial hearings?

At this stage, the court hearings in the Investigation Arkel case are pro forma hearings, which generally focus on the status of the investigation and procedural matters. These hearings take place at the District Court of Rotterdam.

The substantive trial hearings will start on 16 April 2026. Details on the location will follow shortly.

For updates on upcoming hearings and attendance options, please visit the Nuhanovic Foundation website or contact us at: [mail@nuhanovicfoundation.org](mailto:mail@nuhanovicfoundation.org).

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## What is the role of the Nuhanovic Foundation in this case?

Along with its partner organisation Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), The Nuhanovic Foundation monitors the case, communicates about it through its public channels, and cooperates with the prosecutor in facilitating logistical and legal aid for Syrian victims and witnesses who have testified during the pre-trial investigation.

# Stichting The Nuhanovic Foundation

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