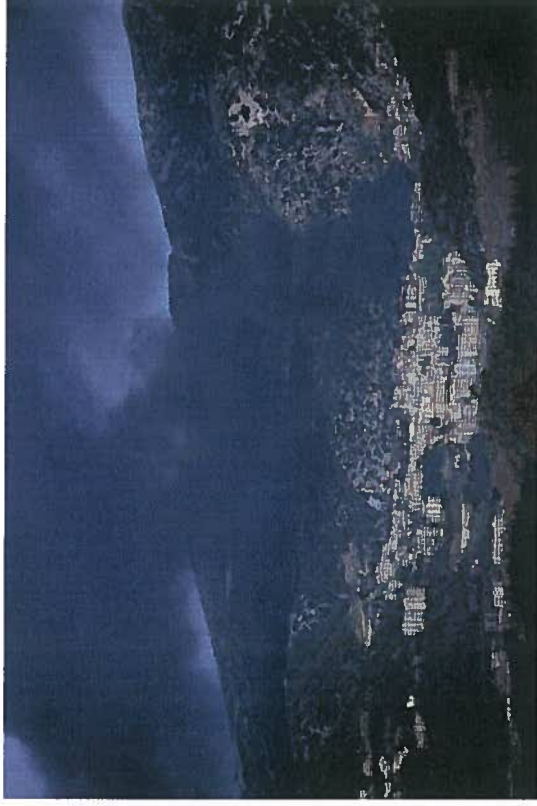


Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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BBC introduces exclusive information on attack of Kessab from Armenian eyewitness

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YEREVAN, MARCH 27, ARMENPRESS. It's very difficult -- because it's so dangerous -- to get first-hand reports on attack against the Armenian-populated town of Kessab, which is situated near the Turkish-Syrian border. As reports "Armenpress", BBC has managed to get an account of the battle for an Armenian Christian town in the north-west. Kessab has just been captured by Islamist rebels from government forces. This is the view of one Armenian farmer, who was forced to flee from the town three days ago.

"For about the last three years we have civilians that have to look out to protect our town. They noticed in the middle of Friday night that the Turkish army which was on the border had left the area. Kessab is very close to the Turkish border. Around four a.m. trucks carrying armed militant started coming from the Turkish side. We heard gunfire and the militants attacked Syrian government police posts near the town around 5:30 am. They started using mortars against these police posts. We heard lots of explosions near the villages close to the Turkish border. We didn't know at that point who these militants were. After 6:30 people started understanding what is going on and they started moving away from the centre of the town. We left our homes without being able to take anything with us. I didn't have time even to change my clothes before leaving. We got a few clothes and took our travel documents with us. We moved further away from the town centre and gathered in a village further away with our vehicles. Some people went straight to Latakia, but some others thought the conflict will be over soon and they stayed in the villages away from the town centre.

There was gunfire and rockets coming from the Turkish side of the border. I had with me my children, 88-year-old father and my mother who has cancer. We were one of the first people who left the town, we didn't have many problems traveling to Latakia, and we went through many villages with different ethnicities. There has never been any conflict in our area until very recently. More people left Kessab for Latakia after 24 hours. The point where we all met was the Armenian Church in Latakia. Armenians in Latakia have been hosting us in their houses. There are still some 50 elderly people who stayed in the town. When I tried to contact our neighbors in the town from their land line phones they were answered by some people who didn't speak local Arabic they were telling us "God is great" in Arabic. I heard that there were some Tunisian and Chechen militants among them".

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