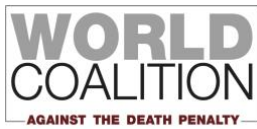


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**The Syrian Arab Republic's Compliance with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights  
Suggested List of Issues Relating to the Death Penalty**

**Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights**

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

**The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**

and

**Syrians for Truth and Justice**

for the 137<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Committee  
27 February – 24 March 2023

**Submitted 03 January 2023**

**The Advocates for Human Rights** (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. Established in 1983, The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publications. In 1991, The Advocates adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty worldwide and organized a death penalty project to provide pro bono assistance on post-conviction appeals, as well as education and advocacy to end capital punishment. The Advocates currently holds a seat on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

**The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**, an alliance of more than 160 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions, was created in Rome on May 13, 2002. The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its ultimate objective is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates for a definitive end to death sentences and executions in those countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking to obtain a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

**Syrians for Truth and Justice** (STJ) is a non-governmental organization comprised of local and global networks of researchers and volunteers dedicated to uncovering human rights violations in Syria. STJ's mission is to document human rights violations perpetrated against Syrians and work towards justice and change. In addition to documenting and reporting human rights violations, STJ implements capacity building projects on related issues, including digital security and civic engagement, and trains the next generation of Syrian human rights activists. STJ's aim is to promote inclusivity and justice to ensure that all Syrians are represented and their human rights secured.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report addresses the Syrian Arab Republic's ("Syria") compliance with its human rights obligations with regard to its use of the death penalty and supplements the The Advocates for Human Rights' ("The Advocates") previously submitted Suggested List of Issues Prior to Reporting from 2020.
2. Syria fails to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and has not taken steps toward the abolition of capital punishment. As recently as 2021, the Syrian government announced that it had executed 24 individuals in relation to a series of wildfires occurring in September and October 2020, which the government described as pyro-terrorism. The Syrian government has justified these executions under what human rights defenders have described as an "overbroad and abusive Counterterrorism Law of 2019."<sup>1</sup>
3. Reports indicate that various human rights abuses stem from the civil conflict that began in 2011. At least one organization has determined that State actors have committed war crimes that may amount to crimes against humanity.<sup>2</sup> In certain areas, civilians are restricted from accessing necessities, including healthcare services and electricity.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing conflict within the country continues to make it difficult to ascertain the extent of death sentences and executions within the country.
4. Reports also indicate that torture of detainees by state actors remains widespread, and detention conditions are "sub-human."<sup>4</sup> One report estimates that nearly 15,000 individuals have died due to torture since conflict began in Syria in 2011.<sup>5</sup> Enforced disappearances and incommunicado detention appear systemic.<sup>6</sup> Minority ethnic groups and women in particular are subject to violations during detention.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Syria: Events of 2021," accessed Dec. 19, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/syria#:~:text=Despite%20a%20decrease%20in%20active,that%20Syria%20is%20not%20safe.>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> United States Department of State, *Syria 2021 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Apr. 2022), 11. Also available online at: [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615\\_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Syrian Network for Human Rights, "Unlimited Brutality – Almost 15,000 Died Due to Torture in Syria," accessed Dec. 21, 2022, <https://snhr.org/blog/2021/08/14/56659/>.

<sup>6</sup> United States Department of State, *Syria 2021 Human Rights Report*, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Apr. 2022), 6-7. Also available online at: [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615\\_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*, 66-67.

## The Syrian Arab Republic fails to uphold its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

### I. The State does not limit death penalty to the most serious crimes (Concluding Observations, para. 7)

5. In its 2005 Concluding Observations, the Human Rights Committee (“the Committee”) expressed concern regarding the death penalty not being limited to the most serious crimes.<sup>8</sup> The Committee recommended the State to limit the imposition of the death penalty to the most serious crimes per Article 6(2) of the Covenant. The Committee also requested that Syria provide precise information explaining the reasons for death sentences imposed and executed.
6. In our August 2020 List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR), we noted that Syrian law allows for the death penalty in instances other than the intentional killing of a person, including “vaguely defined acts of terrorism, which include a wide range of activities including political dissent.”<sup>9</sup> The Syrian government does not appear to have taken any steps to limit the use of the death penalty to only those instances involving intentional killing, nor has it clarified its definition of “terrorism.”
7. Syria executed 24 individuals in 2021 in relation to a series of wildfires occurring in September and October 2020. The Syrian authorities issued a social media statement on October 21, 2021, that alleged individuals had intentionally started the fires, which had resulted in a number of deaths, along with damage to public infrastructure, public facilities, and private property. The State claimed they had identified, apprehended, and executed the alleged perpetrators for committing acts of “pyro-terrorism.”<sup>10</sup>
8. Prior to issuing the statement, Syria’s Minister of Justice had recommended maximum penalties for the individuals involved with the fires. The circular in which this recommendation was issued was not numbered, indicating that it was not duly archived.<sup>11</sup>
9. In an April 2022 interview, a farmer from a town impacted by the fires reported, “I believe that most of the fires were unplanned. They happened due to high temperatures, or because of people’s barbecues during picnics in the areas.” The farmer believed the Syrian government’s response to be insufficient, citing their inaction despite locals reporting the fires.<sup>12</sup> Given the opaque nature of reporting surrounding the case, the weight of the evidence against the individuals is unclear. The fires have “yet to be fully corroborated as a result of deliberate

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<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Syrian Arab Republic* (Aug. 9, 2005) U.N. Doc. CCPR/CO/84/SYR, ¶ 7.

<sup>9</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights and The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *The Syrian Arab Republic’s Compliance with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Treaty: Suggested List of Issues Prior to Reporting Relating to the Death Penalty* (Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights, Aug. 2020), ¶ 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Justice, Syria, “Facebook post on October 21, 2021,” accessed Dec. 11, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/MOJ.SYR/posts/2670469479926560>.

<sup>11</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, *Case Study: The Laws and Mechanisms Underlying the Death Penalty in Syria*, (Oct. 2022), 4. Also available online at: <https://stj-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Case-Study-The-Laws-and-Mechanisms-Underlying-the-Death-Penalty-in-Syria.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*, 5.

human action, and not simply rising temperatures and drought,” possibly mixed with inadvertent human action.<sup>13</sup>

10. The Ministry of Justice cited Penal Code No. 48 (1949) to justify the executions. Although an exact article is not referenced, it is possible that the Ministry acted under Article 577. In conjunction with Articles 574, 575, 576, and 678, Article 577 prescribes the death penalty for an act of arson that “leads to the loss of life, permanent disability, material harm to others, setting fire to inhabited or uninhabited homes, wood or forests, or damages through using explosives.”<sup>14</sup>
11. The Ministry of Justice also cited Counter-Terrorism Law No. 19 (2012) to justify the executions. Article 1 of the law defines acts of terrorism as “Every act intended to create panic among people, disturb public security, damage the infrastructural or institutional foundations of the State, that is committed via the use of weapons, ammunition, explosives, flammable materials, poisonous products, or epidemiological or microbial instruments or via the use of any tool that achieves the same purpose.” This offence is vaguely defined and is not confined to acts that intentionally result in death (thus failing to limit the death penalty to the “most serious crimes”).<sup>15</sup>

## **12. Suggested questions relating to not limiting the death penalty to the most serious crimes**

- What steps has the State Party taken to reduce the number of crimes eligible for the death penalty and to limit the availability of the death penalty to the “most serious” crimes in accordance with the ICCPR?
- Under what circumstances is the death penalty a mandatory punishment?
- How does the State Party ensure that courts are able to take into account mitigating circumstances in determining the appropriate sentence in all cases?
- What procedures are in place to allow individuals to seek pardon or commutation of their sentence?
- What efforts has the State Party undertaken to make the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 19 more precise or confined only to actions that intentionally result in death?

## **II. The State’s death penalty practices lack transparency and due process (Concluding Observations, para. 7)**

13. In its 2005 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its concern regarding “insufficient information relating to the number of persons whose death sentences have been commuted, and the number of people awaiting execution.”<sup>16</sup> In The Advocates’ August 2020 LOIPR, we noted that “[m]any trials and executions are carried out swiftly and secretly.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*, 7–8.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*, 8–9.

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Syrian Arab Republic* (Aug. 9, 2005) U.N. Doc. CCPR/CO/84/SYR, ¶ 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*, ¶ 11.

14. With regard to the 2021 executions following the wildfires (see paragraphs 7-11 above), the Syrian government published neither the names nor indictment lists of the separate charges against the 24 individuals.<sup>18</sup>
15. Further, the Syrian authorities spent no more than one year from October 2020 to October 2021 to identify, arrest, try, sentence, and execute the 24 individuals.<sup>19</sup>
16. It has not been possible to ascertain information about the investigation, arrest, trial, sentencing, and execution of these individuals because the Syrian government does not permit external and independent organizations to monitor the application of fair trial standards and mechanisms of executions.<sup>20</sup>
17. On October 21, 2021, the then-dissolved Special Pardon Committee (“SPC”) approved the enforcement of death sentences against the 24 individuals in connection with the 2020 fires. It was not until April 21, 2022, that Syrian president Bashar al-Assad issued Legislative Decree No. 108 which reconstituted the SPC in Syria’s Ministry of Justice.<sup>21</sup>
18. In March 2021, President al-Assad issued Legislative Decree No. 6 which commuted the death sentences of those whose crimes were committed before March 22, 2021, to life imprisonment.<sup>22</sup> Information regarding the number and identity of those whose sentences were commuted, however, was not made available.

#### **19. Suggested questions relating to transparency and due process**

- Please provide the names and indictment lists of the separate charges against the 24 individuals in connection with the wildfires which occurred in September and October 2020.
- Please provide information relating to the identification, arrest, and trials of the 24 individuals.
- Please provide detailed reasons for the death sentences imposed and carried out on the 24 individuals.
- What efforts has the State Party undertaken to provide information regarding the number and identity of individuals whose sentences have been commuted from a death sentence to a life imprisonment?
- How does the Syrian Government make available to the public information on death sentences and executions?

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<sup>18</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, *Case Study: The Laws and Mechanisms Underlying the Death Penalty in Syria*, (Oct. 2022), 8-9. Also available online at: <https://stj-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Case-Study-The-Laws-and-Mechanisms-Underlying-the-Death-Penalty-in-Syria.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Public holidays and judicial recess reduce that amount by at least a month and a half. *Id.*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*, 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, “Syria: The President Enforces Death Sentences through a Formal Pardon Committee,” accessed Dec. 21, 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-the-president-enforces-death-sentences-through-a-formal-pardon-committee/>.

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Global Report: Death Sentences and Executions 2020*, (London: Amnesty International, Ltd., April 2021), 46. Also available online at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/3760/2021/en/>.

- Please provide disaggregated data broken down by age (including current age and age at the time of the offense), race and ethnicity, nationality, and sex relating to all persons sentenced to death or executed during the reporting period, including: the crimes of conviction; location and date of arrest; duration of pre-trial detention; date legal counsel was provided or obtained; location, date, and duration of trial; date of sentencing; location of post-trial detention; and location and date of execution, if applicable.
- What procedures are in place to ensure that individuals at risk of being sentenced to death have access to adequate, competent legal representation at all stages of proceedings and to ensure that trial proceedings comply with the Covenant?
- What steps has the Syrian Government taken to permit external and independent organizations to monitor the application of fair trial standards and mechanisms of executions?
- What efforts, if any, has the State taken to provide greater transparency and due process within the criminal justice system?

### **III. The State subjects people convicted of crimes to torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (Concluding Observations, para. 9)**

20. In its 2005 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its continued concern about reports of State officials carrying out torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>23</sup> The Committee recommended the State party take firm measures to eradicate all forms of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by law enforcement officials.<sup>24</sup>
21. In our 2020 LOIPR, we noted that the Syrian Government reported that it “acceded to the Convention against Torture and prepares a report on it every year.”<sup>25</sup> Our submission also referenced existing Syrian laws prohibiting and criminalizing torture, stating that despite these provisions various forms of torture and inhuman treatment continue.<sup>26</sup>
22. In March 2022, President Bashar al-Assad issued a new anti-torture law – Law No. 16.<sup>27</sup> The law defines torture as including, among other things, “every act or omission that results in severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, inflicted on a person with the intention of...punishing for an act he committed, or intimidating or coercing him.”<sup>28</sup>
23. The penalties in Law No. 16 are severe; if the act of torture leads to the death of a human being, or is accompanied by rape or “indecenty,” the crime is considered a felony with a penalty of

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<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Syrian Arab Republic* (Aug. 9, 2005) U.N. Doc. CCPR/CO/84/SYR, ¶ 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights and The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *The Syrian Arab Republic’s Compliance with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Treaty: Suggested List of Issues Prior to Reporting Relating to the Death Penalty* (Minneapolis: The Advocates for Human Rights, Aug. 2020), ¶ 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, “Syria: Anti-Torture Law Issued 35 Years After the Convention against Torture Went Effective,” accessed Dec. 21, 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-anti-torture-law-issued-35-years-after-the-convention-against-torture-went-effective/>.

<sup>28</sup> Law of Syria No. 16, Art. 1, (2020). Also available online at: <http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=5516&cat=22943&>.

death. Harsher sentences are also imposed in specified circumstances such as torture inflicted upon a child or a person with a disability, in order to obtain a confession, to achieve personal or political ends, or on an employee.<sup>29</sup>

24. The new law, however, does not offer redress for past victims of torture, does not include protective measures for witnesses or survivors of torture, nor does it specify any compensation for torture survivors or their families in the event of their deaths.<sup>30</sup> Importantly, it also does not include details of measures that could be undertaken to prevent torture in detention facilities occurring in the future.<sup>31</sup> The new law further does not address previously existing legislation granting immunity to military and security agents who engage in criminal offences during the course of their employment.<sup>32</sup>
25. It is unclear from the text of Law No. 16 how acts of torture will be addressed, investigated or enforced.
26. In 2022, Amnesty International described the treatment of people held in detention in Syria as “sub-human.” People in detention facilities purportedly experience acute mental health problems due to overcrowding and lack of sunlight. Reports indicate that sometimes more than 50 people share a single cell measuring three meters squared. People in detention have also died from starvation, lack of air in their cells, and illnesses caught during imprisonment and left untreated.<sup>33</sup>
27. In a 2017 report, Amnesty International found that detention officials often exposed people in the facility to extremely cold temperatures, especially during winter months.<sup>34</sup> Many people in detention were reported to have died due to intentional actions from state actors such as taking individuals’ clothing and blankets, and throwing water on them in extremely cold temperatures.<sup>35</sup>
28. Officials also reportedly denied people in detention access to showers and adequate sanitation, which has led to disease.<sup>36</sup> Amnesty International noted that people in detention were denied medicine and medical care and instead reported being beaten by doctors.<sup>37</sup>
29. Incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance of individuals continues to be endemic in Syria, with the UN Commission of Inquiry for Syria (COI) determining in 2021 that

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<sup>29</sup> *Id.*, Art. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, “Syria: New anti-torture law ‘whitewashes’ decades of human rights violations,” accessed Dec. 22, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/03/syria-new-anti-torture-law-whitewashes-decades-of-human-rights-violations/>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, “Syria: Anti-Torture Law Issued 35 Years After the Convention against Torture Went Effective,” accessed Dec. 21, 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-anti-torture-law-issued-35-years-after-the-convention-against-torture-went-effective/>.

<sup>33</sup> Amnesty International, “Detention in Syria,” accessed Dec. 22, 2022, <https://saydnaya.amnesty.org/en/detention-in-syria.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Amnesty International, *Human Slaughterhouse: Mass Hangings and Extermination at Saydnaya Prison, Syria*, (Feb. 2017), 35. Also available online at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/5415/2017/en/>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*, 35-36.



“widespread enforced disappearance was deliberately perpetrated by government forces throughout the decade on a massive scale, to spread fear, stifle dissent and punishment.”<sup>38</sup>

30. The COI noted that the families of persons subject to enforced disappearance feared approaching authorities to ask about the location of relatives due to possible reprisals; and those who did were forced to pay large bribes to learn the locations of their relatives or were denied any information regarding the fate of their loved ones.<sup>39</sup>

### **31. Suggested questions relating to torture and detention conditions**

- What efforts has the Syrian Government undertaken to investigate and remediate each alleged case of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment in detention facilities; and hold accountable the perpetrators of such acts?
- How do Syrian authorities ensure that any person suspected of a crime, particularly if the crime is eligible for the death penalty, has access to counsel during all phases of investigation and interrogation and that no official uses torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment to extract confessions or other incriminating testimony?
- What measures has the State Party taken to establish a system of regular and genuinely independent monitoring of places of detention, with the aim of ensuring that conditions of detention conform to articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR, and to the Mandela Rules?
- What procedures ensure that no court considers statements made under torture as evidence, except against a person accused of torture or other ill-treatment as evidence that the “confession” or other statement was made? What procedures are in place to allow courts to investigate and respond to a person’s allegation that a statement was made under torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment?
- Please describe the extent to which the Syrian Government provides systematic training to law enforcement, prosecutors, investigators, prison officials, and judicial officers regarding human rights as a standard component of curricula, covering the topics of the prohibition of torture, interrogation techniques that are consistent with international human rights standards, conditions of detention, and the treatment of detainees.
- What safeguards are in place to prevent authorities from subjecting persons to incommunicado detention?
- What measures has the State taken to establish oversight and accountability to ensure compliance with fair trial standards?
- What efforts has the State Party undertaken to ensure that Law No. 16/2022 criminalizing torture is enforced?

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<sup>38</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, (March 11, 2021), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/46/55, ¶ 18.

<sup>39</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice, “Syria: Anti-Torture Law Issued 35 Years After the Convention against Torture Went Effective,” accessed Dec. 21, 2022, <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-anti-torture-law-issued-35-years-after-the-convention-against-torture-went-effective/>.

- What further efforts are being made by the State Party to hold accountable those responsible for subjecting detainees to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment?
- Please provide information about all cases in which a person was charged or prosecuted under Law No. 16/2022 for conduct that occurred in a detention or interrogation facility, including factual circumstances giving rise to the charge, the persons charged, the outcome of the prosecution, and the status of the case.
- Please provide information on the measures that the State Party has taken to stop the use of incommunicado detention, if any, and success of these measures.

#### **IV. Treatment of Minority Groups by the State party (Concluding Observations, para. 19)**

32. In its 2005 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its continued concern about discrimination against Kurds and ethnic minorities.<sup>40</sup>
33. In the Human Rights Council’s *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, the Council noted that it was primarily members of minority religions, sects, or ethnicities who experienced violations while in detention.<sup>41</sup>
34. State actors also disproportionately detained people of Kurdish and Yazidi origin.<sup>42</sup> These members of minority communities described frequent and severe beatings to extract confessions regarding alleged links to the Kurdish administration.<sup>43</sup>
35. State actors also increasingly targeted and detained women, some for purposes of forced marriage.<sup>44</sup> “While detained, Kurdish (and, on occasion, Yazidi) women were also raped and subjected to other forms of sexual violence, including degrading and humiliating acts, threats of rape, performance of ‘virginity tests’, or the dissemination of photographs or video material showing the female detainee being abused.”<sup>45</sup>
36. Women and other minorities continue to face discrimination and unfair treatment. For example, the State Party’s Penal Code punishes women with longer sentences than men for the crime of adultery.<sup>46</sup> Further, the State Party subjects nonbinary people, transgender women, and sexual minorities to sexual violence.<sup>47</sup> Under Article 520 of the Syrian Penal Code, “unnatural sexual intercourse” is punishable by three years in prison.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Human Rights Committee, *Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Syrian Arab Republic* (Aug. 9, 2005) U.N. Doc. CCPR/CO/84/SYR, ¶ 19.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, (March 11, 2021), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/46/55, ¶ 37.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*, ¶ 41.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*, ¶ 43.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*, ¶ 44.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Syria: Events of 2021,” accessed December 19, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/syria#:~:text=Despite%20a%20decrease%20in%20active,that%20Syria%20is%20not%20safe.>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

37. The Center for Operational Analysis and Research reported that State Party detention centers “were routinely identified as sites of torture and sexual and gender-based violence for suspected members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex community.”<sup>49</sup>

**38. Suggested questions relating to the treatment of minority groups by the State Party**

- What efforts is the State Party engaging in to prevent discrimination against Kurds and other ethnic minorities and women during and prior to detention in accordance with Article 26 of the ICCPR?
- What efforts are the State Party engaging in to prevent improper treatment of Kurds and other ethnic minorities and women while in detention?
- What efforts are the State Party engaging in to foster equality for minority groups and prevent degrading treatment against minorities?

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<sup>49</sup> United States Department of State, *Syria 2021 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Apr. 2022), 9. Also available online at: [https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615\\_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf](https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615_SYRIA-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf).