

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	2018
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Amnesty International
Titel:	Amnesty International Report 2023 – The State of The World's Human Rights
Udgivet:	24. april 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. april 2024

The State of the World's Human Rights; Syria 2023

All parties to the long-standing conflict and their allies continued to carry out unlawful attacks, killing civilians and destroying vital infrastructure. Türkiye-backed armed groups unlawfully killed four civilians. The government and armed groups denied civilians access to humanitarian aid. The government continued to subject tens of thousands of people to enforced disappearance; the UN General Assembly established an international institution to clarify the fate of missing people and provide reparation to families of victims. The government and armed forces arbitrarily detained individuals for expressing their views. Refugees remained at risk of arrest upon return to Syria. The government continued to prevent residents and internally displaced people in north-west Syria from accessing essential services, violating their economic and social rights. The government violated the right to housing of residents in Aleppo city whose homes were affected by powerful earthquakes on 6 February. The Israeli military violently quelled protests against the installation of turbines in the Golan Heights, a Syrian area occupied by Israel for 56 years.

Background

On 27 January, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons concluded that there are “reasonable grounds to believe” that the Syrian government used chemical weapons in attacks on 7 April 2018 in Douma, a city in Damascus Countryside Governorate.

On 6 February, two earthquakes struck south-eastern Türkiye and northern Syria with a magnitude of 7.8 and 7.5, respectively. The UN estimated that at least 6,000 people in Syria were killed, 400,000 families were displaced and over 8.8 million people were in urgent need of assistance. The earthquakes compounded dire economic conditions as more than half of the population was already food insecure.

On 7 May, the Arab League reinstated Syria’s membership after its suspension in November 2011 for its brutal crackdown on peaceful protests.

On 27 August, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the military force of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), arrested Ahmad al-Khabil, head of the military council in Deir ez-Zor city, for allegedly communicating with the Syrian government. His arrest triggered armed clashes between SDF forces and Arab tribes affiliated with Ahmad al-Khabil, which displaced at least 50,000 people to government-controlled areas.

In September, thousands of people in Sweida, a Druze-majority city in south-west Syria, protested the deteriorating economic conditions, calling for “regime” change.

Israel continued its air strikes on Syrian government, Iranian and (Lebanese) Hizbullah forces in Syria. On 12 October, in the context of the armed conflict in Gaza (see Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Palestine entries), Israel attacked by air Aleppo and Damascus international airports simultaneously. Three days later, pro-government forces launched rockets on the occupied Golan Heights.

By the end of 2023, 5.6 million Syrians had sought refuge outside the country since the conflict began in 2011.

Unlawful attacks

All parties to the conflict and their allies continued to conduct unlawful ground and aerial attacks on civilians and civilian objects in northern Syria, killing and injuring scores of civilians and destroying vital infrastructure indispensable for their survival.

Syrian government and its ally Russia

The Syrian government, supported by Russian government forces, escalated aerial attacks on civilians and civilian objects in north-west Syria, a region under the control of armed opposition groups, between October and December. According to the UN, as of 21 December, these attacks had killed 99 civilians and injured over 400 others. The UN added that 23 health facilities and 17 schools were damaged.

Prior to this escalation, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UN Commission of Inquiry) reported that the Syrian government had launched multiple unlawful ground attacks in north-west Syria. On 9 April, government forces shelled the densely populated centre of Sarmin town, east of Idlib city and around 5km from the nearest front line, killing a 13-year-old boy and injuring three other children who were playing outside. On 22 June, government forces launched two unguided rockets on Sarmin town, killing one woman and injuring a boy and four women.

The UN Commission of Inquiry also documented an air strike by Russian armed forces at 10am on 25 June on a residential building that the commission said was possibly used by an armed group, adjacent to a vegetable market in Jisr al-Shughur city in Idlib governorate, killing three civilians and injuring 34 others.

Türkiye

According to the UN Commission of Inquiry, on 18 January, a “likely Turkish guided air-to-ground missile” fired from a drone struck a pickup truck driving past a supermarket on the Qamishli-Malkiyah road in Hassake governorate in north-east Syria, which is under the control of AANES, a staunch opponent of Türkiye and the Syrian National Army (SNA), a coalition of Türkiye-backed armed groups. The attack killed a man and an 11-year-old boy and injured several people who were in the supermarket.

Türkiye further intensified aerial attacks on north-east Syria after the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) carried out a bomb attack on 1 October in Ankara, capital of Türkiye, which wounded two police officers. On 7 October, Turkish authorities said that 58 Kurdish fighters in north-east Syria had been killed in air strikes since the bomb attack. Kurdish authorities who govern north-east Syria reported that Turkish strikes on 5 and 6 October, which were in the vicinity of a displacement camp and several villages, killed 11 civilians and targeted at least three oil plants, two power stations, two hospitals and a school. The local authorities said the air strikes also caused power cuts affecting tens of thousands of residents in Hassake and Qamishli cities.

Unlawful killings

On 20 March, SNA members shot a Kurdish family in Jinderes town in northern Syria as they were celebrating Newroz, the Kurdish New Year. They killed four civilians and injured three others. The next day, the SNA arrested four armed fighters allegedly responsible for the attack but failed to disclose the outcome of their trial or whether victims and their families were provided with reparation.

Denial of humanitarian access

The Syrian government and SNA blocked access to humanitarian aid, including earthquake aid, in Aleppo governorate.

Syrian government

The authorities continued to restrict fuel and other essential supplies, including flour and medication, from reaching tens of thousands of civilians, including internally displaced people, living in predominantly Kurdish areas in the northern Aleppo region controlled by the Kurdish civilian council, affiliated with the AANES. During harsh weather, people burned household items and plastic to keep warm.

Following the 6 February earthquakes, the authorities delayed aid deliveries to Sheikh Maksoud and Ashrafiyah, two Kurdish-majority neighbourhoods in the north of Aleppo city, which exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. A humanitarian worker and local representative in north-east Syria told Amnesty International that it took seven days of negotiations for the government to allow 100 trucks carrying fuel and humanitarian aid sent by AANES to enter Sheikh Maksoud and Ashrafiyah on 16 February, and only then on condition that they divert more than half of the aid to the government and that the government would be solely responsible for distributing the aid in these neighbourhoods.

The government continued to block the entry of aid to 8,000 people living in Rukban camp, an informal settlement located in an isolated and inhospitable area between the Syria-Jordan border known as “the berm”. Residents lacked access to medical care, sanitation and clean water. On 20 June, the US military, based near Rukban camp, delivered essential supplies sent by US-based humanitarian organizations.

Syrian National Army

SNA armed groups supported by Türkiye obstructed aid from reaching people affected by the earthquakes in Afrin district in Aleppo governorate, shot in the air to disperse crowds trying to obtain assistance from aid trucks, and diverted earthquake aid to the armed groups’ relatives.¹

Four people interviewed by Amnesty International confirmed that the SNA obstructed at least 30 fuel and other trucks carrying humanitarian aid sent by AANES from reaching areas under SNA control. The trucks waited at the border crossing between north-east Syria and northern Aleppo for seven days before AANES retrieved them. A Kurdish man whose home in a village in Afrin district was destroyed in the earthquake told Amnesty International that people needed *wasta* (connections) with armed groups to obtain any assistance, and that no one had arrived to help them.

Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances

Syrian government

The government continued to subject tens of thousands of people, including journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers and political activists, to enforced disappearance, many for more than 10 years.

According to the UN Commission of Inquiry, government forces continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain individuals, including “through application of the cybercrime law to stifle criticism of government services or policy.”

On 23 March, security forces arrested Rami Viatli, an activist, in Latakia governorate. Local sources said that his arrest was believed to be in response to his post on Facebook on 12 March in which he called on the authorities to hold torturers accountable. On 5 September, the authorities arrested Lama Abbas, a political activist, without an arrest warrant. Two days earlier, she had used social media to call on people living in Latakia not to sell their land.

In April, Syrian security forces arrested at least six refugees who had been deported by the Lebanese authorities. Two former detainees told Amnesty International that Syrian security forces held them at a detention facility close to the Lebanese border, and they were only released after paying a bribe. They added that security forces transferred two of the arrested refugees to the Palestine branch of Syria's military intelligence in Damascus for defecting from the army.

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham

Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, an al-Qaeda-affiliated armed group that controls much of Idlib governorate, continued to subject journalists, activists and anyone who criticized their rule to arbitrary detention without access to a lawyer or family members.

The UN Commission of Inquiry reported that Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham detained a man for a week in Idlib in January after he criticized religious speeches.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

On 29 June, the UN General Assembly established an independent, international institution to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the tens of thousands of missing and forcibly disappeared people in Syria since 2011 and provide reparation to their families.

On 8 September, a criminal court in France's capital Paris announced that it will try in their absence three Syrian senior security officials accused of complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trials will be held in May 2024.

On 10 October, the International Court of Justice (also known as the World Court) held the first public session in the case submitted by Canada and the Netherlands alleging that the Syrian government was violating the UN Convention against Torture. On 16 November, the court issued an order directing Syrian authorities to take all measures to prevent acts of torture and other detention-related abuses.

On 15 November, French judges issued international arrest warrants for Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, his brother Maher al-Assad and two other senior officials on charges of complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes over the use of banned chemical weapons against civilians in Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Countryside in August 2013, which killed 1,000 people.

Economic and social rights

Around 4.4 million people in north-west Syria, including 2.9 million internally displaced people, continued to depend fully for their survival on UN-coordinated humanitarian assistance provided through the cross-border aid mechanism. Russia ended the cross-border mechanism on 11 July after it vetoed a UN Security Council resolution for its extension. On 9 August, the Syrian government reached an agreement with the UN to continue cross-border aid until mid-January 2024.

The 6 February earthquakes exacerbated the humanitarian needs of residents in north-west Syria, including the increased number of people living in tents that offered minimal privacy or protection from extreme heat, cold or rain, with limited or no access to water, sanitation and healthcare.

Right to housing

Residents and humanitarian workers in Aleppo city reported that assessments conducted by engineering committees, formed by the authorities to assess the structural safety of buildings, might not have been done meticulously and that the demolitions carried out after the 6 February earthquakes did not comply with due process requirements and safeguards against forced evictions as described in international human rights standards.² Residents were unable to challenge the committees' decisions and were often not given enough time to remove their belongings before demolitions. In some cases, residents whose homes were demolished because they were deemed unsafe for habitation were not offered alternative housing or compensation. In addition, residents seeking to repair their homes damaged by the earthquakes faced bureaucratic obstacles.

Occupied Golan Heights

The Golan Heights remained under Israel's occupation and illegal annexation. On 22 June, Israeli forces responded violently to quell protests by the Syrian Druze community, a religious minority, against the construction of wind turbines in the area. According to media sources, 20 protesters were injured.

Right to a healthy environment

Syria continued to face a multi-year drought due to increased temperatures driven by climate change and exacerbated by other factors, including water management failures. Damage, destruction and neglect of key water sites and infrastructure by warring parties during the conflict, as well as continued obstruction of aid, further exacerbated the impact of droughts on people in Syria.

1. [“Syria: Vital earthquake aid blocked or diverted in Aleppo’s desperate hour of need,” 6 March](#)
2. [“Syria: Aleppo authorities must ensure that building safety measures do not result in forced evictions and homelessness”, 4 September](#)