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The Ninth Annual Report on Torture in Syria on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

14,388 Killed Due to Torture by the
Main Perpetrator Parties to the
Conflict in Syria from March 2011
Until June 2020



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, June 26, 2020

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



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I. Nine Years of Continuous Torture in Syria and the Syrian Regime is Main Culprit:

Every year on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, which falls annually on June 26, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) publishes an annual report dedicated to the issue of torture in Syria, with SNHR documenting hundreds of individual cases of torture over the past nine years. [In our 2019 report](#), we outlined the death toll of torture victims, which was higher than that recorded in the previous year, 2018, since torture and neglect of healthcare practices still continued in detention centers, as they continue to date. In this report, we focus mainly on the violations we documented since the last report, from June 26, 2019, to June 26, 2020, as well as outlining incidents that we documented previously which were not included in our previous reports, as well as providing the total documented death toll of victims who died due to torture between March 2011 and June 2020. The report also addresses the almost complete lack of any inclusion of such detainees in all amnesty decrees, and the torture practiced against them.



SNHR is exceptionally concerned about the issue of torture, as we issue a [monthly report](#) documenting victims of torture, in which we monitor the incidents and cases documented each month by the controlling parties. We also publish [news reports](#) about torture cases that we are able to document during our daily work. We have been able to build a strong network of contacts over the past nine years of our continuous work with the families of victims and with survivors, witnesses and local activists, inside and outside Syria, and we have also provided all means of communication to facilitate access and documentation such as E-mail, dedicated telephone numbers for documentation, social media pages and electronic forms. All of this has contributed to enhancing the documentation process in accordance with [our methodology](#) based on the provisions of international laws and the set of principles relating to torture, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance.

The definition of torture which we adopt in our methodology is the one cited in Article 1 of the United Nations' 1984 Convention against Torture, which states: "The term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity."

This report relies mainly on SNHR's archive of victims, as well as the archive of detainees and enforced disappearances, resulting from the daily monitoring and documentation that we have carried out continuously since 2011 up to the current moment concerning incidents of torture, arrest and enforced disappearance. We also constantly update these records, with all statistics included being registered by name, date, place and conditions of detention, the party responsible for the arrest, enforced disappearance and torture, the latest observations and documents, and other details. SNHR's information technology department has built a dedicated program for the database for each party to the conflict, providing information on detainees' original governorate, gender, marital and academic status, age group and place of arrest, with all data being entered automatically. Using the SNHR database, we can distribute the cases of arrests according to the governorate in which the incident took place, and the governorate which the detainee comes from. In this report, we distribute the deaths due to torture according to the governorate which the victim comes from, rather than the place where torture took place because, in most cases, the



place where the incident and the deaths by torture occurred are the detention centers in Damascus, so we distribute the deaths due to torture according to the governorate which the victim comes from in order to show the extent of the loss and violence suffered by the people of that governorate compared to other governorates, and refer to this in the report when doing so. The data added to the SNHR's database is retained securely, and we store several backup copies in different places.

Given the exceptional difficulties and the magnitude of the violations, the cases mentioned in this report represent the bare minimum of violations which we have been able to document, and we confirm that the real figures are far higher.

The report's methodology is also based on the interviews we conducted with families of victims and survivors of torture from different Syrian governorates, carrying out these interviews either by telephone or various online communication programs or by visiting them in their homes inside and outside Syria. In this report, we provide nine accounts, which we obtained directly rather than from open sources. In some cases, we used aliases to protect witnesses' privacy and prevent them from being harassed or prosecuted. Witnesses received no financial compensation or promises in exchange for interviews. We explained the purpose of the report beforehand to all the interviewees we spoke with, and obtained their consent to use the information they provided to serve the purposes of the report and the documentation processes. All this is in accordance with our internal protocols, which we have worked on for years, and we strive constantly to develop this to keep pace with the best practices in maximizing psychological care and minimizing potential trauma for the victims.

II. Summary on Torture in the Current Syrian Constitution and Law:

The state centrally controls its detention centers, so it is highly unlikely that deaths due to torture could take place without the knowledge of the ruling regime. In recent years, hundreds of reports of deaths due to torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers have spread widely within Syrian society, and in local, Arab and international media, in addition to the fact that the Syrian regime itself has informed dozens of families about the deaths of their family members in detention centers, often implausibly citing the cause of death as a "heart attack".



The Syrian regime bears responsibility for proving its claims that the deaths that occurred were not due to torture, it hasn't conducted a single investigation into any of these deaths for nine years, with this alone constituting clear damning evidence of the regime's culpability. In addition to this, it should be emphasized that this systematic torture and the many associate deaths involve not just one of the Syrian regime's organs, but require the participation of several state institutions, the most prominent of which are: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, the security services, civil prisons, military hospitals, the judiciary, the Ministry of Awqaf, and the Office of Burial Services; this too indicates a high level of coordination and harmony between these institutions, which can only be achieved by senior-level management officials in the Syrian regime controlling all of these institutions.

The current Syrian constitution, issued in 2012 by Decree No. 94, prohibits arbitrary arrest and torture according to Article 53, which states: (No one may be investigated or arrested, except under an order or decision issued by the competent judicial authority, or if he was arrested in the case of being caught in the act, or with intent to bring him to the judicial authorities on charges of committing a felony or misdemeanor), as well as stating that: (No one may be tortured or treated in a humiliating manner, and the law shall define the punishment for those who do so), and the General Penal Code in accordance with Article 391 which imposes a penalty of from three months to three years in prison for anyone who beats a person with a degree of severity during the investigation of crimes, and prohibits torture during investigation in accordance with Article 391; however, there are legal texts that explicitly oppose previous constitutional articles and Article 391, giving almost complete immunity to the security services and legalizing impunity, with the most prominent of these being the following:

1. Legislative Decree No. 14 of January 25, 1969, stating that: "It is impermissible to pursue any workers in the State Security Administrations for crimes they have committed during the execution of the specified duties they were authorized to carry out, except by virtue of an order to pursue issued by the director."
2. Article / 74 / of the Internal Security Law of the State Security Department and the rules of service for its employees issued by Legislative Decree No. 549 of May 25, 1969, states that: "No legal action may be taken against any General Intelligence Department employees, those assigned or detailed to the department, or those contracted with it for crimes incurred on the job or in the course of performing the job before referral to a department disciplinary board and before an order is obtained from the director."



3. Legislative Decree No. 69 of 2008, by which an amendment to the Military Penal Code gave immunity to police and political security personnel, who were previously amongst those who could be tried before the ordinary judiciary, and limited the ability to take action against them or against the army and the armed forces. Paragraph (a) of Article 1 of this decree stipulated: “Crimes committed by each of the officers, warrant officers and members of the Internal Security forces, members of the Political Security Division, and members of Customs Brigade, due to performing the tasks entrusted to them.” Paragraph (b) of the same article states, “Prosecution orders for officers, warrant officers, members of the Internal Security forces, members of the Political Security Division, and members of Customs Brigade are issued in a decision by the General Command of the Army and the armed forces, in accordance with the provisions of Article / 53 / of Penal Code and the Military Trial Procedure and its amendments.” This prosecution is issued in wartime, according to the Penal Code and the Military Trial Procedure by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces, who is at the same time the President of the Republic. Consequently, such prosecution was banned - if it had ever taken place - for officials at any level of leadership and limited to the senior leadership.
4. Decree No. (55) issued on April 21, 2011, related to counter-terrorism, of which Article 1 states: “Added to Article 17 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the following paragraph: responsible for law enforcement or authorized tasks investigate the crimes stipulated in Articles 260 up to 339 articles 221 and 388 and 392 and 393 of the Penal Code and collection of evidence and surveillance of the suspects, which should not exceed the reservation for them for seven days subject to renewal from the Attorney-General and in accordance with the data of each file on the unit should not exceed this period of sixty days.”

These three decrees and Article 74, which are supposed to be legal texts but in reality constitute a violation of the law, are decrees and texts that legitimize crimes, violate even the 2012 constitution, and violate fundamental tenets of human rights. For this reason, Syria under the current Syrian regime suffers from two problems; the first in terms of the legal texts themselves, and the second in terms of applying the law which is far graver; without a doubt, these legal texts, which express a commitment to ensuring impunity, along with the Syrian regime's failure to carry out any investigation or accountability for any member of the regime's security forces, no matter how low-ranking, against the background of acts of torture, have all contributed to increasing the rate of torture. Indeed, the regime's security services, in coordination with some doctors in military hospitals, are so sure of their impunity that they have invented new and horrific methods of torture that are even more brutal and



savage than their usual methods. We have noted using new methods of torture in the past two years that were not used in previous years, which have caused deaths due to torture to continue up to this day.

The laws established by the Syrian regime do not justify committing or concealing crimes, because they are not laws but rather pseudo-legal provisions that violate the law.

We in the SNHR rely on the identification of the relevant rules of customary humanitarian law in holding commanders and other senior officials responsible for war crimes committed by their subordinates pursuant to their orders (Rule 152), and to hold them accountable if they knew, or had reason to know, that these subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and did not take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible (rule 153); the International Criminal Court Statute (ICC Statute) expands the elements of this responsibility to include crimes against humanity, which are committed in time of peace or war, and war crimes. This law also holds military commanders in addition to senior officials, including civilians, responsible for this (Article 25 and 28 of the ICC Statute); in addition, combatants bear responsibility for their actions, even if they were carrying out orders from those of higher rank, and it is not enough to say that the combatant was acting according to orders issued by higher authorities, so those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity are held individually criminally responsible for their actions. The International Criminal Court Statute also states: “The fact that a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court has been committed by a person pursuant to an order of a Government or of a superior, whether military or civilian, shall not relieve that person of criminal responsibility,” meaning that although such an order may be considered one of the mitigating circumstances of the penalty, it doesn’t absolve the crime perpetrator from his/her responsibility. The SNHR has repeatedly warned, through reports and statements, of the need to refrain from carrying out any acts that lead to committing war crimes or crimes against humanity, in addition to noting that the international law provides that even duress to commit war crimes or crimes against humanity or extermination only become acceptable as a defense in extreme situations where there is no option but to kill or be killed (The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Erdemovic case, March 5, 1998, Para. 17).



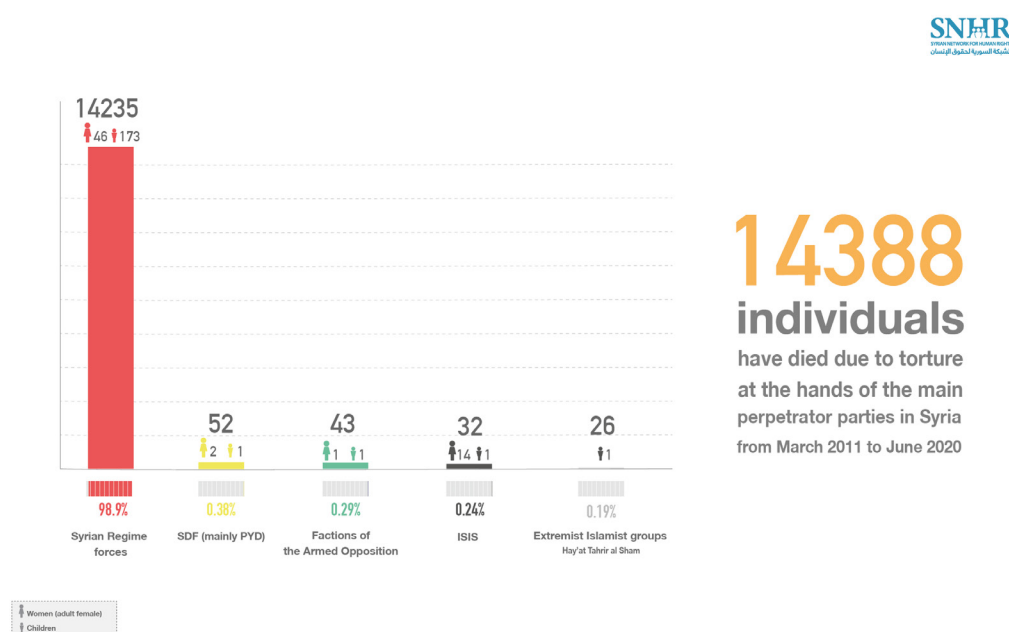
The various institutions of the Syrian regime have been involved in committing widespread and systematic violations, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes, with everyone who ordered, incited, encouraged, justified, participated, provided assistance in or facilitated those crimes considered to be involved in them; at the forefront of these institutions are those of the army and the security bodies. Since the first months of the popular uprising in March 2011, local, Arab and international media and the Syrian social media pages have been constantly filled with innumerable violations to which the Syrian people have been subjected by these two institutions, and it has become very difficult after nearly ten years for anyone to deny the knowledge that these violations have occurred.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

“The Committee against Torture should make far greater efforts in Syria, which has witnessed torture that is considered to be the most severe worldwide, amounting to crimes against humanity, and it should clearly show the extent of the Syrian regime’s violation of the Convention against Torture and international law in its annual report to all States parties to the Convention and to the General Assembly. The states which ratified the Convention should join forces to prevent the Syrian regime from the brutal torture practices that have continued for nine years now. Otherwise, what is the use of the Convention against Torture?”

III. The Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture in Syria Since 2011, and Their Distribution

Between March 2011 and June 2020, we documented the deaths due to torture of at least 14,388 individuals, including 177 children and 63 women (adult female), at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria, according to the SNHR’s database, distributed as follows:



The Syrian regime: 98.9 percent

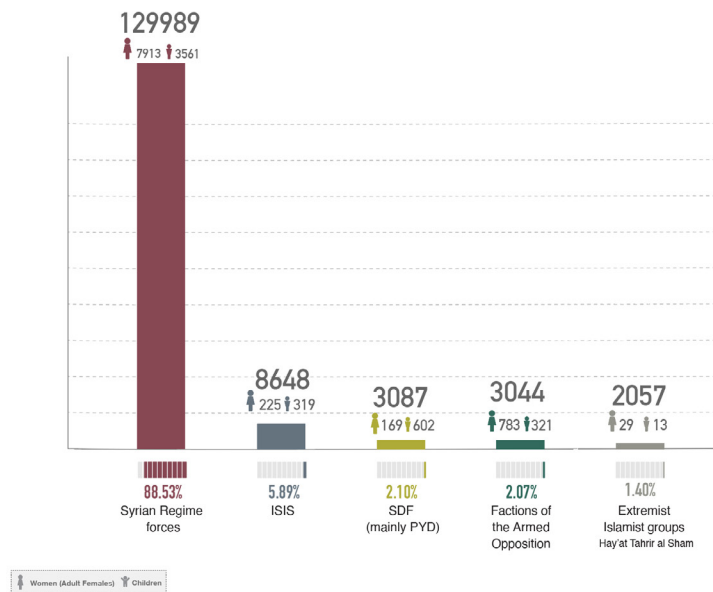
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 14,235, including 173 children and 46 women.
- **ISIS:** 32, including one child and 14 women.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
 - o **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 26, including one child.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 52, including one child and two women.
- **Armed Opposition factions:** 43, including one child and one woman.

While it is true that all parties to the conflict in Syria have committed the crime of torture in one form or another, the Syrian regime, which controls the country's military, security and judicial apparatus, is by far the most prolific offender, arresting at least 1.2 million Syrian citizens, who have been subjected in one way or another to torture and humiliation, with the regime still detaining the largest number, according to the following chart, which is based on the SNHR' database; in view of this massive number of detainees, 85 percent of whom have been forcibly disappeared, in addition to the existence of four security services along with their branches in all Syria's governorates employing tens of thousands of staff members, with all of the branches under their control practicing similar methods of torture and neglect of health care, this makes the death toll of torture victims by the regime far higher than those inflicted by all other parties to the conflict. The main cause of death due to torture is negligence in providing health care for wounds and illness, leaving the person suffering untreated until he or she dies. Numerous methods of torture are used that make detainees an exceptionally vulnerable group which is exposed to a serious risk of the spread of the COVID-19 among them. Finally, we note that whilst the majority of the victims are men, many deaths due to torture have been documented among women and children.



Chart shows the distribution of record of arrest or enforced disappearance since March 2011 until March 2020 at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria:

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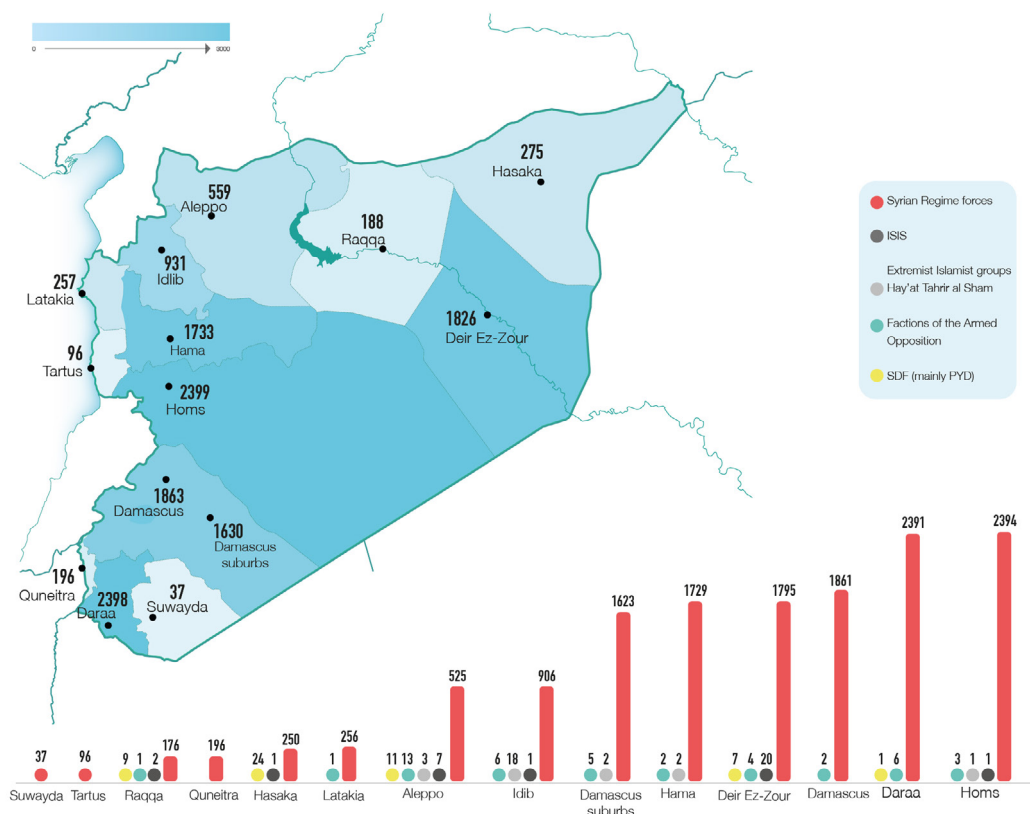


At least
146825
individuals
are still detained
or forcibly disappeared
at the hands of the
main perpetrator
parties in Syria
from March 2011 to March 2020

The map shows the distribution of death toll of victims who died due to torture across all the Syrian governorates:

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14388 individuals have died due to torture at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria from March 2011 to June 2020



We note from the previous map that the governorates of Homs and Daraa saw the highest numbers of residents killed due to torture; we have monitored the Syrian regime's use of torture in many cases against the background of the victim's affiliation with an area that opposes the Syrian regime as a form of collective retaliation in the regime's detention centers.

IV. The SNHR's Cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and on Torture

The SNHR team conducts regular [periodic correspondence](#) with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and on Torture. The Rapporteurs correspond with the Syrian regime about some the cases submitted which we were able to verify, which are also listed in the special annex in the report prepared by the UN Group on Torture in Syria. We have devoted a [form](#) on our official website that families can fill out, with the completed forms submitted automatically to the SNHR's arrest and torture department's team responsible for following up on each case, which then communicates with the families to complete the documentation and registration process.

In this context, the SNHR is requesting further cooperation from victims' families in order to submit as many cases as possible to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and on Torture. Our team works 24/7 to build broad relationships with the families of the torture victims, to obtain as much information as possible which is stored on our database dedicated specifically to victims of torture.

V. The Amnesty Decrees Didn't End or Reduce the Frequency of Torture or Arrest by the Syrian Regime

Over the past nine years, the Syrian regime has issued nearly 17 amnesty decrees, many of which were similar to one another and focused on securing the release of perpetrators of crimes, felonies and offences, while including only a very small number of detainees referred to exceptional courts such as the Counter-Terrorism Court and the military field courts, and excluding the largest proportion of detainees who were not subjected to any trial during the years of their detention, who have been classified as forcibly disappeared. We previously [issued a report](#) in which we monitored the detention and torture incidents that we recorded since the issuance of the last two amnesty decrees, Decree No. 20 of 2019, and Decree No. 6 of 2020. We also issued [a special report](#) in which we outlined our follow-up work regarding the implementation of the latest decree No. 6, nearly two months after its issuance, and the record of arrests, torture and releases recorded by the SNHR between the issuance of Decree No. 6 on March 22, 2020, and May 15, 2020.



The Record of Arrests, Torture and Releases Between the Issuance of Decree No. 6 on March 22, 2020, and June 26, 2020

A. The record of those released after the issuance of Decree No. 6 of 2020:

The SNHR's team has documented the release of at least 116 individuals from the Syrian regime's detention centers, between the issuance of Amnesty Decree No. 6 on March 22, 2020, and June 26, 2020. This record includes only those arrested in connection with their participation and activities in the popular uprising for democracy, or those who were randomly arrested or detained based on malicious security reports without a warrant, with the security branches conducting investigations into them and extracting confessions under torture.

The SNHR's team did not record any cases of release from detention centers of the four security branches (Military Security, Air Security, Political Security, and State Security), either from their central headquarters in Damascus city or their branches across the governorates. We stress that these branches possess the powers to not implement laws even if they include cases to which the provisions of the amnesty decree apply, and the Ministry of Interior or Justice cannot compel the security services to do anything. The security services' authority is of the highest level amongst state bodies and derives its power directly from the President of the Republic.

Photos of detainees recently released by Syrian Regime forces show the effects of the gross neglect of medical and health care during their detention, clearly demonstrating the threat to the 130,000 detainees who are still in the regime's detention centers:

Ghannam Hussein al Sultan, from Abu Hamam town, which is administratively a part of al Sh'aitat area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2014 and released on April 16, 2020.



Ghannam al Sultan while in detention center before his release on April 16, 2020

Abdul Hamid Mahmoud al Ghafel al Haj Ali, from Kherbet Ghazala town in the northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested on Tuesday, December 9, 2014, by Syrian Regime forces in Kherbet Ghazala town and was detained for about five-and-a-half years. On Friday, April 17, 2020, he was released from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.





Photo of Abdul Hamid al Haj Ali after his release on April 17, 2020



Photo of Abdul Hamid al Haj Ali before his arrest and enforced disappearance on December 9, 2014

Fares Jhayyem, a dissident conscript from Syrian Regime forces, from Zakiya town in the west of Damascus Suburbs governorate, was arrested in 2017, by Syrian Regime forces when he voluntarily came forward to undergo a settlement after he had received guarantee of safety from the reconciliation committee in Zakiya town. On Sunday, April 19, 2020, he was released from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.

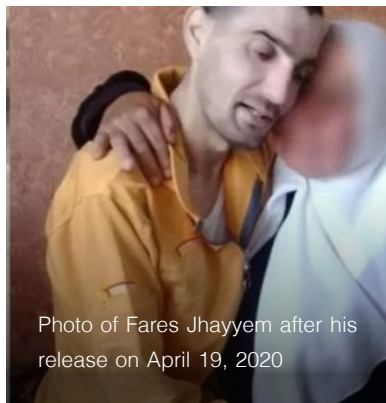


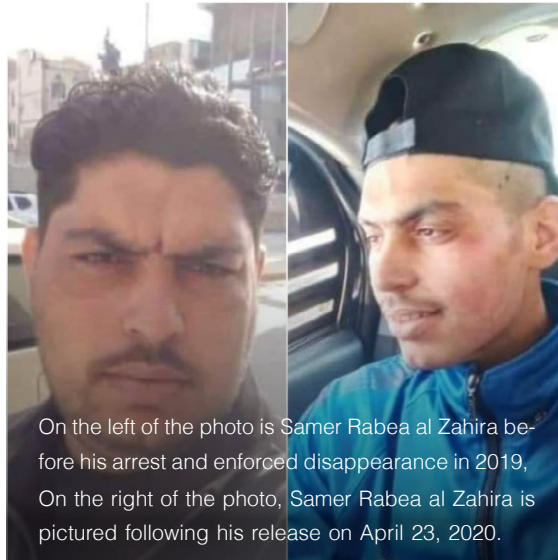
Photo of Fares Jhayyem after his release on April 19, 2020



Photo of Fares Jhayyem before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2017

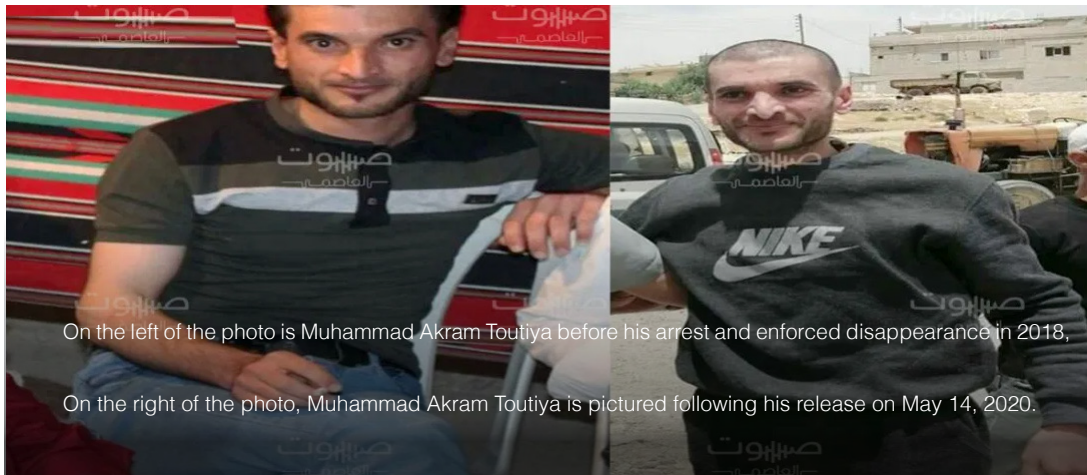
Samer Rabea al Zahira, aged 32, from Dablan village, which is administratively a part of al Ashra district in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in May 2019 in a raid on his home in Dablan village after returning from Lebanon and undergoing a settlement of his security status in a conciliation center in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, and was released from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate on Thursday, April 23, 2020.





On the left of the photo is Samer Rabea al Zahira before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2019, On the right of the photo, Samer Rabea al Zahira is pictured following his release on April 23, 2020.

Muhammad Akram Toutiya, from al Rhaiba city in al Qalamoun al Sharqi in Damascus Suburbs governorate, who was arrested in 2018 by Syrian Regime forces, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Qtiafa city in Damascus Suburbs governorate. Muhammad was among those who previously agreed on a settlement to their security status. On Thursday, May 14, 2020, he was released from Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs.



On the left of the photo is Muhammad Akram Toutiya before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2018, On the right of the photo, Muhammad Akram Toutiya is pictured following his release on May 14, 2020.

Hasan al Zain from Deir Salman town in Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate, who was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2018 from one of the shelter centers in Eastern Ghouta. On Thursday, May 21, 2020, he was released from a regime detention center.





The preceding images show the stark comparison between the health and physical wellbeing of newly released detainees before their detention and after their release, with the Syrian regime's negligence towards detainees' health and medical care being clearly visible. This plainly demonstrates the grave threat posed to the physical and mental health of the approximately 130,000 detainees who are still detained in the Syrian regime's detention centers, according to the SNHR's database.

B. The record of arrest cases and incidents by Syrian Regime forces since the issuance of Decree No. 6 of 2020:

The arbitrary arrests carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the areas under their control haven't ceased, in many cases targeting people who were granted a settlement certificate and promised by the regime that they would not be harassed after settling their status; despite these official certificates and promises, hardly a day passes without the SNHR's team recording a case or incident of arbitrary arrest, some of them collective, as part of raid campaigns on regime-controlled areas and neighborhoods. The SNHR's Detainees department has documented at least 163 arrests since the issuance of Amnesty Decree No. 6 on March 22, 2020, up to June 26, 2020, by Syrian Regime forces. We have noted through our monitoring that the Syrian regime has actually arrested more people than it released since issuing the latest Amnesty Decree. We also detailed arrests carried out by the regime during the last two months in the monthly report concerned with arrest, which was issued at the start of this [June](#) and the previous one issued at the start of [May](#), 2020.



C. The death toll due to torture since the issuance of Decree No. 6/2020:

The SNHR's team documented the deaths of at least 33 individuals, including one woman, due to torture and medical negligence in the Syrian regime's detention centers between March 22, 2020, and June 26, 2020, some of whom were arrested after the issuance of Decree No. 6, dying a few weeks after their arrest. Meanwhile, the bodies of five detainees were handed over to their families, bearing signs of torture, while the remaining victims' bodies have not been handed over to their families, and they are, accordingly, still classified as forcibly disappeared. A number of those victims had previously undergone a settlement of their security status.

VI. Practices of Torture by the Four Main Parties in Syria

A. Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):

In regard to the Syrian regime, it is necessary to focus on three main topics:

1. The vast majority of deaths due to torture are due to illness and neglect to death:

Torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers is practiced as a tool of revenge against detainees opposing the Syrian regime and against others similarly arrested for various reasons, including a similarity between their names and those of wanted individuals, and during mass campaigns of arrest during the storming of cities and towns. Torture invariably begins from the first moment of detention, when the detainee is subjected to being dragged, beaten, and humiliated, with this abuse escalating throughout the interrogation period through use of more severe methods of torture and continuing throughout the detention period as a form of punishment. This abuse also coincides with intentional negligence towards detainees' healthcare, starvation, and grotesquely unsanitary conditions of detention which lack the most basic hygiene and ventilation, as well as additional degrading treatment such as human stacking of detainees in narrow, cramped, airless cells unsuited to accommodating the large and increasing numbers of detainees crammed into them. The combination of these factors, primarily torture and medical negligence, has led to a rising death toll, causing almost daily deaths among detainees.

In many cases, torture acts have assumed a sectarian and region-based character, whereby the detainee is tortured simply because he or she belongs to an area whose population is known for opposing the Syrian regime, or merely for belonging to a certain sect. In a previous detailed report, SNHR documented the most notable torture methods used by Syrian regime forces in the regime's detention centers and military hospitals, [detailing 72 methods](#) of physical, psychological and sexual torture, which we described in a way that, as much as possible, lets readers know the reality of these abuses, with this harrowing report inspired by the accounts which hundreds of surviving detainees provided to us. In our



archive, we have catalogued dozens of photos and videos showing Syrian regime personnel carrying out torture acts of a sadistic and sectarian nature, most of which were filmed during the storming of cities and towns and in military hospitals; these photos and videos caused fear and intimidation among Syrian society and kept citizens in constant fear of the consequences of arrest.

As well as inflicting these horrendous methods of torture on detainees, the Syrian regime also deliberately subjects the imprisoned detainees to unimaginably squalid, unsanitary and massively overcrowded conditions in its detention centers which lack even the bare minimum of hygiene or sanitation to protect against illness and disease. These conditions are especially horrific in the headquarters of the four main security branches and military prisons, where large numbers of detainees are packed into cells of various sizes, with an average cell area measuring 4 x 6 square meters containing approximately 50 detainees; this means that each detainee barely has an area of 70 cm² for sitting and sleeping, with detainees usually taking turns to attempt to sit or lie down to sleep when their numbers exceed the holding capacity of the cell, as they routinely do. These cells also lack ventilation and the most basic standards of sanitation and cleanliness, with the conditions being even more squalid in the solitary confinement cells located on the detention centers' lower floors which lack even light. Throughout the duration of their detention in the security branches, detainees are also prevented from going outside to get any exercise, or exposure to fresh air or sunlight.

In addition to these congested unsanitary conditions, detainees are able to shower or wash only very rarely throughout the period of their detention, which often lasts for many years, with all these factors contributing to and exacerbating the spread of diseases, epidemics and infectious conditions, especially respiratory and skin diseases, which are further aggravated due to the lack of fresh air and the lack of exposure to sunlight and light. The narrowness of the cells and the cramped, overcrowded conditions also lead to suffocation and shortness of breath amongst many detainees due to inhaling the putrid smells of bodily waste, sweat, pus, and blood from wounds. The conditions of detention in security branches and military prisons are somewhat similar to the civilian central prisons in terms of overcrowding, human stacking, and lack of cleanness and ventilation.

Syrian Regime forces deliberately withhold sufficient quantities of pillows and blankets from detainees in detention centers, with those which are issued usually being filthy, threadbare, soiled and encrusted with blood, pus or other bodily waste and fluids, and lousy with parasites. In addition, detainees are denied adequate clothing and often left only in their un-



derwear since their clothing is worn, soiled or torn during torture or forcibly removed during inspections; all these practices expose detainees to severe cold in winter, when temperatures fall below freezing.

All these practices make each of the days, months, and years that detainees spend in detention into a never-ending hell, with these brutal conditions being a very deliberately imposed and widespread strategy on the part of the Syrian regime inflicted with the aim of degrading and further torturing detainees. Subjecting detainees to conditions that foster disease and infection and leaving them to suffer without medical help or treatment is another deliberate and conscious part of this strategy, forcing already physically and emotionally traumatized detainees to endure an additional layer of torment and debasement often leading to death. With the recent global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Syrian regime's admission that it has already documented cases of infection in early March 2020, the already grave situation facing prisoners in regime jails is now critical, particularly in light of the detention conditions that are, as explained above, favorable for the spread of infectious diseases such as the COVID-19; this now threatens the lives of approximately 130,000 people who are still documented as being detained or forcibly disappeared by Syrian Regime forces, according to the SNHR database, which we repeatedly cited in our reports.

Syrian Regime forces practice torture in detention centers as a tool to level charges and extract confessions from detainees. We in the SNHR wish to emphasize that the vast majority of detainees involved in the popular uprising for democracy in Syria, including political and human rights activists, media workers, and relief activists, and similar prisoners of conscience, have been accused by the security branches of several charges based on testimonies taken from detainees by the regime under coercion, intimidation and torture. The most prominent of these charges are: provoking sectarian strife, threatening the system of governance, weakening national sentiment, collusion with external agents and the enemy, supporting and financing terrorism, and weakening the nation's morale, all of which are broad and wide-ranging charges, which are documented within regime security authorities' reports, with these security reports being referred to the Public Prosecution service, after which the majority of these cases are referred to either the Counter-Terrorism Court or the Military Field Court.



All detainees, including women, children, the elderly, the sick, and those with special needs have been tortured, with no group excluded from these abuses. In a description that almost applies to all detainees, all those who have gone through the detention experience have been routinely tortured since the first moment of their detention, and throughout their movement between detention centers.

2. The Syrian regime convicted itself by issuing death certificates for forcibly disappeared individuals who were in good health when it arrested them:

The Syrian regime deliberately keeps the fate of tens of thousands of detainees unknown, aiming to inflict the greatest possible pain and humiliation on their families. Many of those classified as disappeared have been missing for many years now. On the SNHR's database, we have documented the cases of at least 83,000 individuals forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. The years 2012 and 2013 saw the highest numbers of arrests documented since the start of the uprising in 2011, with this wave of enforced disappearances clearly aiming to break and destroy the popular movement and terrorize those supporting freedom into silence and submission.

At the beginning of 2018, the Syrian regime revealed the fate of a number of the forcibly disappeared, whose whereabouts it had denied any knowledge of for years. We documented the first case of these disappeared individuals' deaths being officially registered by the regime at the state civil registry departments in May 2018, and detailed in [two separate reports](#) the mechanism used by the regime in these civil registry departments to register detainees' deaths, and were able to document at least 968 cases, including nine children and two women, which the Syrian regime revealed their demise. In registering these deaths, the Syrian regime provided no details of the cause of death in any of the cases, did not hand over the detainees' bodies to their families, and failed to provide any notification of the deaths when they took place.

The SNHR believes that all of these disappeared died due to torture, with the only cases exempted from torture being those killed more immediately by death sentences issued by the al Midan Military Court, which account for as little as 5 percent of the total, according to what we have been able documented.

As the SNHR has made clear in all of its reports, the Syrian regime no longer provides any physical evidence to any of the families who regime officials call to inform them of their loved ones' deaths in regime detention, or when the regime discloses the fate of those forcibly disappeared through the Civil Registry departments as more recently, with the regime



failing in all cases to provide any physical evidence providing that the grieving families' disappeared relatives are dead. Other than a peremptory telephone call notifying them or a certificate from the Civil Registry departments, the regime has failed to definitively disclose the fate of the disappeared. Based on all these factors, the SNHR confirms that the regime is still practicing the crime of enforced disappearance, with these disappeared individuals not being physically accounted for, whether alive or dead. In accordance with international law in this regard, we will, therefore, continue to consider all of them as forcibly disappeared, with the main party held responsible for their disappearance being the Syrian regime.

3. Arrests, enforced disappearances, and amnesty decrees constitute a significant source of income for the Syrian regime and security services:

As we can see from aforementioned information concerning the Syrian regime's policy of enforced disappearance, it is clear that the Syrian regime's failure to inform detainees' families of the deaths of their loved ones in detention centers is a deliberate strategy used for several objectives; the most important of these is to increase families' trauma, pain and suffering by leaving them in limbo, not knowing their husbands', sons', mothers' or daughters' final fate. Another factor is the opportunity which this uncertainty provides to take advantage of families' desperation for financial gain by fraud via well-established regime networks through mediators who exploit the fragile, traumatized psychological state of victims' loved ones by making false promises to secure the release of their family members in return for huge sums of money; these promises and the information provided are usually false, with the detainees in question often having already died due to torture. Since it is impossible to verify or disprove the information provided by these regime mediators, the families' desperation, trauma and despair often compels them, for lack of any other option, to provide as much money as they can simply to obtain information about their family members or to have some hope of their release. We in the Syrian Network for Human Rights advise all people not to resort to these mafia networks that deal with the Syrian regime and profit from desperate people's suffering because these are networks which are essentially highly professional liars and fraudsters.

As for the extremely limited and complex methods by which families can try to discover the fate of their detained loved ones, these are either through consulting freed survivors of detention centers, by regularly visiting the Military Police headquarters in Damascus or through visiting civil registry departments, as mentioned above.



The most notable incidents of torture by Syrian Regime forces during last year (since the annual report on this day last year):

The SNHR spoke with detention survivor, Abdul Rahim al Tabbakh¹, a street vendor from al Sukkari neighborhood of Aleppo city. Syrian Regime forces arrested Abdul Rahim on September 11, 2019, in a campaign of raids in al Sukkari neighborhood in search of men wanted for military service, before he was released on March 4, 2020.

Abdul Rahim told us about how he was tortured throughout the period of his detention, and described his arrest by members of the Military Security Branch who took him to their local headquarters. He said: **“At first I thought I was wanted for military service, but the investigator quickly accused me of being armed, and five members started beating me and kicking me with their feet on my chest, head, and genitals, until I fainted. This same beating process was repeated over the course of four days, sometimes with their feet and sometimes with a metal stick, until I confessed that I was armed; then the interrogator asked me ‘Where is the weapon?’, and a new wave of torture started, which lasted for a week, and ended with the interrogator saying ‘You will complete your confessions in Damascus’, and forced me to put my fingerprint on my confessions while my eyes were closed.”** Abdul Rahim said that he was then transferred to Branch 215 in Damascus, where he stayed for twenty days, describing to us the conditions of detention there, saying: **“We were fifty people in a narrow cell, in the basement, little food, and being beaten from time to time, especially when we were going to the bathroom.”** Abdul Rahim told us that after this he was then transferred to Adra Central Prison, and was sent to the Counter-Terrorism Court, where his family paid a sum of money to a lawyer, who secured Abdul Rahim’s release. Abdul Rahim still suffers from the effects of torture he was subjected to to date.

Mahmoud al Sarhan, a dissident conscript from Syrian Regime forces, from al Joulan town in the suburbs of Quneitra governorate, and a resident of Daraa city Camp, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime’s Military Security forces on June 12, 2020, while he was passing through one of the regime’s checkpoints near the National Hospital in al Sahari neighborhood of Daraa city. We documented that he was released the next day, with the photo taken for him after his release showing the effects of severe torture on his body.



Photo shows the effects of severe torture on the body of the released detainee, Mahmoud al Sarhan, who was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in June 2020 – The photo was taken after his release

¹ An alias – Via phone on April 22, 2020



The most notable victims of death due to torture by Syrian Regime forces:

Abdul Aziz Deeb Barhoum, a volunteer with the Syrian Red Crescent's Douma Branch, who is from Douma city, east of the Damascus Suburbs governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Thursday, August 21, 2014, after being summoned for investigation by a security branch. His family learned on Thursday, November 28, 2019, that he had been registered at the Civil Registry Department as having died on Monday, October 27, 2014, and we at the SNHR consider it probable that he died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. Since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Abdul Aziz's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



Abdul Aziz Deeb Barhoum

Omar Muhammad Ghannoum was a university student at the Faculty of Human Medicine at Tishreen University in Latakia city, from al Hamidiya village, which is administratively a part of al Qsair city, west of Homs governorate. Omar, born in 1992, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Wednesday, May 1, 2013, at Tishreen University. On Friday, January 17, 2020, his family learned that he had been registered at the Civil Registry Department as having died on Monday, November 24, 2014. We at the SNHR consider probable that he died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Omar's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



Omar Muhammad Ghannoum

We spoke with a cousin of the victim Omar Ghannoum, Haitham², from whom we learned that Omar's family had repeatedly tried to obtain information about Omar's whereabouts through mediators, but to no avail. Haitham added: **“On May 1, 2013, Omar was arrested in Tishreen University in Latakia by members of the Syrian regime, and we knew nothing about him after that, despite our repeated attempts to find out his whereabouts; when his family extracted a family registration statement, they were shocked to find that Omar was registered as having died on November 24, 2014.”**

² Via phone on May 13, 2020



الجمهورية العربية السورية
وزارة الداخلية-الشؤون المدنية

بيان وفاة

بيان صادر عن الولاية الالكترونية للشؤون المدنية بتاريخ: ١٣٠٤٠١٩٠١٩-٠١-٢٠٢٠ ورقم: ١٥٨٤٤٣٢٠

اسم المتوفي ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم ونسبة الأم	اسم ونسبة الأب	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني
عمر غنوم ٠٤١٩٠٠٥٣١٤٨	محمد ٠٤١٩٠٠٥٣٢٤٧	نوال ٠٤١٩٠٠٥٣١٦٣	١٩٩٢/١٢٠ من شهر كانون الثاني لعام ١٩٩٢ ونسبته والثاني ونسبته	نمشق	نكر	سوري	٢٠١٤/١٢/٢٤ اليوم الرابع وعشرون من شهر نيسان لعام ألفين وأربعة عشر	الأمانة الضاح	محل القيد كفر موسى	رقم القيد ٤
ملاحظات: محكمة الميدان الثانية ١٠/١٢/٢٠١٨ ٢٠١٨										

اسم المستخرج: ايمان جوهرة
مركز الاستخراج: مركز خدمة المواطن في محافظة ريف دمشق-جديدة عرطون-الاتصالات

رقم الواقعة: ٢٥٩
تاريخ الواقعة: ٢٠١٩/١١/١٤

A death statement of the victim Omar Muhammad Ghannoum issued by the Civil Registry Department – Source: the victim's family

Duraïd Mustafa Haj Ibrahim, born in 1992, was a student at the History Department at the faculty of Arts in Aleppo University. Duraïd, who came from Jarjanaz town in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested in 2013 by Syrian Regime forces at the Immigration and Passport Department in Idlib city. On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, his family learned that he had been registered in the Civil Registry Department as having died on Wednesday, December 10, 2014. We at the SNHR consider it probable that he died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Duraïd's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



Duraïd Mustafa Haj Ibrahim

الجمهورية العربية السورية
وزارة الداخلية-الشؤون المدنية

بيان وفاة

بيان صادر عن الولاية الالكترونية للشؤون المدنية بتاريخ: ١٠٠٤٠٢٤١٧-٠٢-٢٠٢٠ ورقم: ١٦٤٣٧٩٧١

اسم المتوفي ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم ونسبة الأم	اسم ونسبة الأب	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأم ونسبته الرقم الوطني	اسم الأب ونسبته الرقم الوطني
دورايد الحاج ابراهيم ٠٧٠٩٠٠٥٣١٩٩	مصطفى ٠٧٠٩٠٠٣٩٠٩٨	دنا ٠٧٠٩٠٠٥٣١٩٥	١٩٩٢/١/١ اليوم الأول من شهر حزيران لعام ١٩٩٢ ونسبته والثاني ونسبته	نمشق	نكر	سوري	٢٠١٤/١٢/١٠ اليوم العاشر من شهر كانون الأول لعام ألفين وأربعة عشر	الأمانة الضاح	محل القيد قريه جرجنار	رقم القيد ٧٠
ملاحظات:										

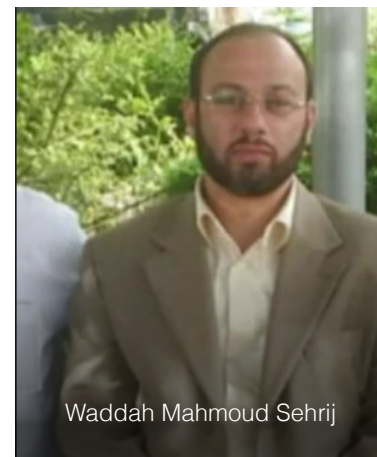
اسم المستخرج: محضر زينة
مركز الاستخراج: مركز خدمة المواطن في محافظة ريف دمشق-جديدة عرطون-الاتصالات

رقم الواقعة: ١/٣١٠
تاريخ الواقعة: ٢٠١٩/٢/٢٠

Death certificate of Duraïd Mustafa Haj Ibrahim



Waddah Mahmoud Sehrij, a graduate of the Faculty of Sharia at al Azhar University in Egypt, and a former sharia judge serving factions of the Armed Opposition in Aleppo city, from Aleppo city, was born in 1971. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Friday, December 16, 2016, in an area between the neighborhoods of al Kallasa and al Eza'a in Aleppo city. On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, his family learned that he had been registered in the Civil Registry Department as having died on Monday, September 18, 2017. We at the SNHR consider it probable that he died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Waddah's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



We spoke with Mr. Ahmad Waddah Sehrij³, a brother of the victim Waddah, who told us about his brother's detention by members of the State Security Forces since December 2016, saying: **"Since that date my brother has been forcibly disappeared; we received unconfirmed information that he was in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs. In July 2019, Waddah's wife went to the Personal Status Department in Aleppo to obtain a family registration statement, in which it appeared that Waddah had been dead since September 18, 2017, and we do not know the place of death or any other information."**

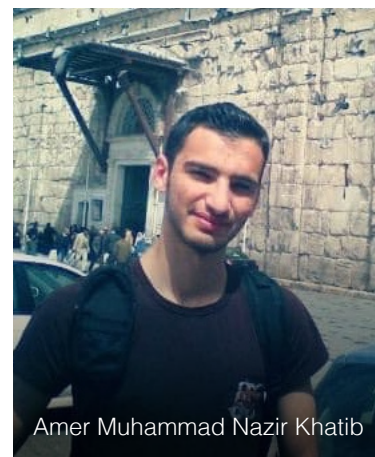
Ahmad Hamdi Kashkoush, a military defector from Syrian Regime forces, from Dael city in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was born in 1992. He surrendered to the regime's Military Security Branch in Dael city in October 2018, and was among those who had previously made a settlement. On Saturday, June 8, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Ahmad's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



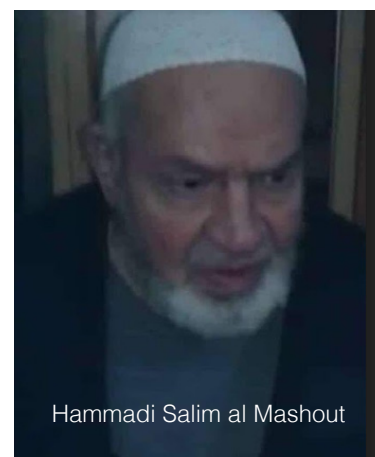
³ Via phone on April 6, 2020



Amer Muhammad Nazir Khatib, a university student at the Aleppo University's Faculty of Civil Engineering, from Taftanaz town in the northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by personnel from the Syrian Regime's Air Security Branch on Wednesday, May 23, 2012, in Aleppo city. On Monday, June 17, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers in Damascus city. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Amer's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



Hammadi Salim al Mashout, known as 'Abu Ryad', from al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was 70 years old when he was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in January 2019, as he was passing through one of their checkpoints while on his way from Deir Ez-Zour city to Damascus city for medical treatment. He was taken to Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Saturday, June 22, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to medical negligence in Adra Central Prison.



Osama Jum'ah al Zakahi, was a law graduate, from Taldao city in the northern suburbs of Homs governorate. Osama, who was born in 1972, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Sunday, May 6, 2018, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints as he was on his way from Homs city to al Masna' border crossing on the Syrian-Lebanese border. On Tuesday, July 16, 2019, his family learned that he had been registered in the Civil Registry Department as having died on November 6, 2018. We at the SNHR consider it probable that he died due to torture in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Osama's body over to his family, he is still classified as forcibly disappeared.



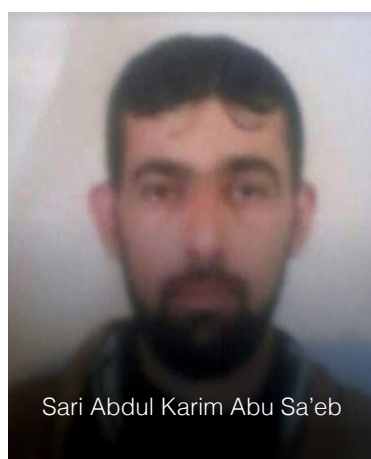
Ahmad Abdul Hamid al Majarish, a military defector from Syrian Regime forces, from Mhajja town, north of Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in August 2018 in Mhajja town. On Saturday, August 17, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to torture in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. We note that Ahmad had previously undergone a status settlement agreement with the Syrian regime.



Abdul Sattar Musa al Awad, a 61-year-old gentleman from al Sheikh Maskin city in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by personnel from the al Sheikh Maskin police station affiliated with Syrian Regime forces in 2018 before being transferred to the Military Security Branch in Damascus city. He was among those who had previously made settlements of their security situation. On Monday, September 9, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers.



The brothers Raslan and Sari Abdul Karim Abu Sa'eb, from Burad village in the southern suburbs of Suwayda governorate, born respectively in 1980 and 1986, worked in agriculture and livestock farming and were former members of a faction of the Armed Opposition in Daraa governorate. They were arrested in April 2018, by Syrian Regime forces when they surrendered themselves in order to reach a security settlement. On Tuesday, September 24, 2019, their family was informed that they had been registered as dead in the Civil Registry department, with SNHR considering that they probably died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers in Damascus city. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand Raslan's or Sari's bodies over to their family, both are still classified as forcibly disappeared.



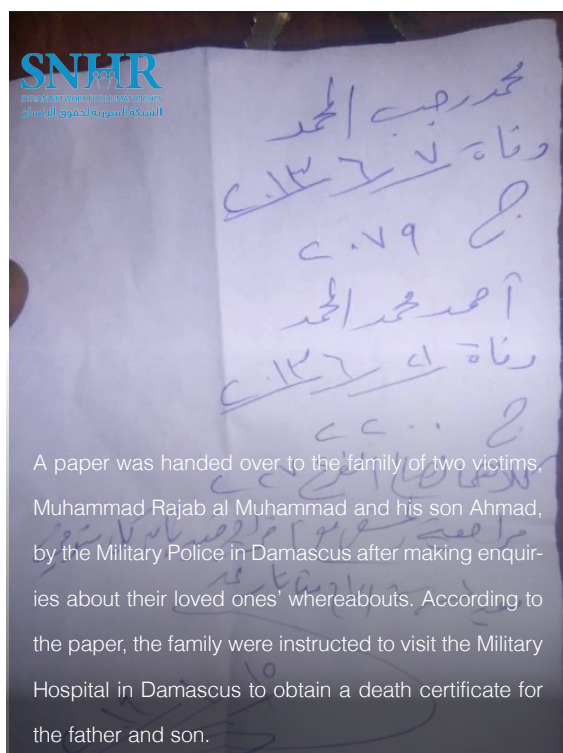
Muhammad Rajab al Muhammad “al Kharaji”, born in 1969, and his son Ahmad, from Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, were arrested by Syrian Regime forces during 2011 in al Qtaifa city, north of Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Tuesday, October 15, 2019, we received information confirming their deaths due to torture in Branch 227 (Region Branch); we note that according to the death certificates registered in the Civil Registry, Muhammad’s date of death was recorded as being Friday, June 7, 2013, while his son Ahmad’s date of death was recorded as being Friday, June 21, 2013.



Ahmad Muhammad Rajab al
Muhammad “al Kharaji”



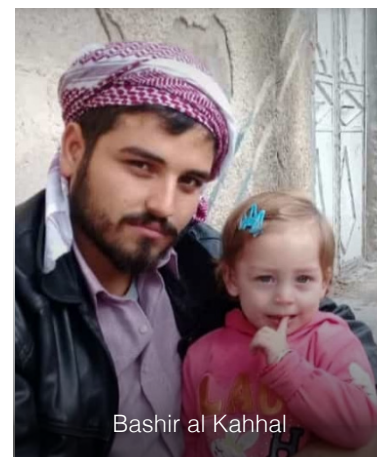
Muhammad Rajab al
Muhammad “al Kharaji”



A paper was handed over to the family of two victims, Muhammad Rajab al Muhammad and his son Ahmad, by the Military Police in Damascus after making enquiries about their loved ones' whereabouts. According to the paper, the family were instructed to visit the Military Hospital in Damascus to obtain a death certificate for the father and son.



Bashir al Kahhal, from Douma city in the Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate, was a dissident former recruiter from Syrian Regime forces. In July 2019, Bashir, who was born in 1992, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces after surrendering himself to the regime's forces in order to re-enlist for compulsory military service, having already previously made a security settlement of his situation. On Monday, October 21, 2019, his family was notified that they should come to collect his body from the Military Hospital in Harasta city in Damascus Suburbs governorate. The next day, his body was handed over, bearing marks of torture.



Jehad Muhammad al Mesleh, an imam and preacher at a mosque in Nawa city in the west of Daraa governorate, came from Deir al Bakht town in the northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. Al Mesleh, who had previously made a settlement to his security situation with the regime, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2018 in Deir al Bakht town. On Friday, November 15, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers.



Dr. Osama Omar al Khaled, a 64-year-old general practitioner of Palestinian-Syrian nationality, was a resident of al Shajara town in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate. He was arrested on Friday, August 3, 2018, by Syrian Regime forces while he was in Ma'raba IDPs Camp in Hawd al Yarmouk area in the west of Daraa governorate, and was taken to the Raid Branch prison in Damascus city. On Monday, November 25, 2019, SNHR received information confirming his death due to medical negligence in Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate after he had been transferred to a hospital in Damascus city.



Hussam, Ahmad and Haitham Muhammad Abu Halaweh, born in 1968, 1983 and 1988 respectively, from Ibta' town in the north of Daraa governorate, were arrested in July 2018, by Syrian Regime forces in Ibta' town. The three brothers were among those who had previously made a settlement of their security status. On March 19, 2020, their family learned that they had been registered in the Civil Registry department as having died. SNHR considers it probable that they died as a result of torture in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. We stress that since Syrian Regime forces did not hand their bodies over to their family, they are still classified as forcibly disappeared.



Hussam, Ahmad and Haitham Muhammad Abu Halaweh

Saleh Muhammad Saeed Jarjanazi, a regime officer with the rank of colonel, from Taqsis village, in the southeast of Hama governorate, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in August 2014, while he was passing thorough one of the regime's checkpoints in Tal Qartal village, south of Hama governorate, as he was travelling from Hama city to Taqsis village. In March 2020, he was transferred from Adra Central Prison to Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, and on Friday, April 17, 2020, his body was handed over to his family, bearing signs of torture.

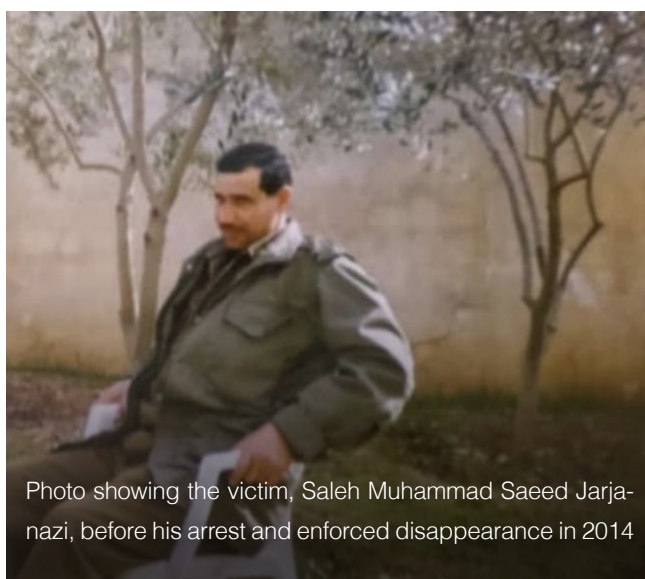


Photo showing the victim, Saleh Muhammad Saeed Jarjanazi, before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2014



We spoke with Ahmad al Hassan⁴ , a cousin of the victim Saleh Jarjanazi, who told us: **“In August 2014, Colonel Saleh was arrested at a checkpoint belonging to the Syrian regime in Tal Qartal village, south of Hama governorate, while he was on his way from Hama city to Taqsis village, and he was carrying a huge amount of money at the time.”**

Ahmad said that Saleh’s family paid 23 million Syrian pounds to parties close to the Syrian regime in exchange for reducing Saleh’s sentence from execution to seven years in prison and transferring him to Adra Central Prison. Ahmad added that Saleh’s family was able to visit him several times in Adra Central Prison, with the last visit taking place in February 2020. Ahmad added: **“After that, Saleh was transferred in March 2020 to Seydnaya Military Prison, and on April 16, 2020, his father was informed of his death, and the next day his father went alone to identify his son and receive his body in a closed coffin, which he was forbidden to open after receiving it. Saleh was buried in his village.”**

Mrs. Heyam Muhammad al Nafea, born in 1985, came from al Qouriya city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. She was arrested on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, by Syrian Regime forces at the Immigration and Passport Building in Damascus city, and was taken to the regime’s infamous Palestine Branch in the city. Since then, she has been classified as forcibly disappeared, as nobody, including a lawyer, was allowed to visit her. On May 11, 2020, Syrian Regime forces notified her family of her death 10 days earlier on Friday, May 1, 2020, notifying them that they could collect her body from the Tishreen Military Hospital in Damascus city. According to information SNHR has received, she was in a good health at the time of her arrest, indicating that she probably died due to torture and medical negligence.

We contacted Mr. Abdul Baqi⁵ , a relative of the victim, Heyam, who said: **“Heyam was arrested upon her visit to the Immigration and Passports Department in Damascus city in order to extract a country visit request for her brother, who works in Lebanon. Less than two months after her arrest, we learned that she had died in the Palestine Branch about ten days after her arrest, with her husband receiving a call from the Military Hospital, in which he was informed of her death. It was written on the death certificate that the cause of death was a heart attack.”** Abdul Baqi added that the security forces had informed Heyam’s husband when she was taken to the Palestine Branch that they would take some action and then release her.

⁴ Via phone on May 20, 2020

⁵ Via phone on May 12, 2020



B. ISIS:

The ISIS terrorist group has been defeated, losing the vast majority of the areas it controlled, and therefore there are no longer any detention centers affiliated with it where it can practice torture and inflict the torture methods it once used, which we detailed in our previous annual reports, and in a special report, "[The Black Bottom](#)", which focused on ISIS' detention centers.

Although the extremist ISIS group's control over many areas declined at the beginning of 2019, it has left a terrible lasting impact on the minds of residents of those areas, particularly the families of missing and forcibly disappeared persons, who confirmed to us that ISIS had informed some of them of the death of their disappeared family members, but failed to hand over the bodies or to inform the grieving families of their loved ones' burial place, which is an exact copy of the Syrian regime's strategy in this field.

C. Extremist Islamist groups:

- [Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:](#)

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (HTS) established several detention centers and assigned their management and investigation to its security wing, which is the most important and most influential wing in the Hay'at Tahrir al Sham group, on which it relies as a major pivotal point in support of all the other sectors affiliated with it. The security wing is responsible for launching combat campaigns against factions of the Armed Opposition, carrying out arrests, tracking and prosecuting activists, especially media workers and workers in humanitarian organizations, and pursuing members of opposition factions fighting against HTS, and their relatives, and other opponents of the policy of HTS' management of areas of under its control, according to security services recruited and managed by often unidentified figures, with most of the leaders and influential individuals in this wing being foreigners. We are currently working on a detailed report on HTS' detention centers and methods of torture. The methods of torture practiced by HTS in its detention centers vary, with a number of them being very similar to those practiced by the Syrian regime in its detention centers, while HTS has also devised methods of torture of its own. We recorded at least 15 methods of torture practiced systematically by HTS in its detention centers.



The most notable torture methods used by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

1- Coffin:

A metal box, affixed to a wall, measuring around 100 x 40 cm, into which the prisoner is squeezed with his hands fixed to the top before the door is closed on him, with the prisoner's chest sometimes crushed using a metal compressor consisting of a convex metal plate that is tightened using a spiral screw controlled from outside the door, with the detainee remaining inside this cramped space for several hours or days. According to the testimonies obtained by the SNHR from survivors, HTS abolished this type of torture after the death of two people inside it in Shaheen Prison in early 2018.

2- The vertical shabeh position:

The detainee's arms are tied to a metal cylinder fixed in a ceiling or high place, lifting his body so it swings above the ground, after which the jailer pulls the detainee's body downward, deliberately to inflict the greatest amount of pain and injury to the detainee's body, with the detainee often left in this condition for many hours or days. This method is similar to al shabeh method used by Syrian Regime forces in their detention centers.

3- Salt:

During torture, the jailer fills the detainee's mouth with approximately 100g of table salt, then forces him to close his mouth tightly for 15 minutes, then forces him to open his mouth and fills it up with water.

4- The Scorpion:

The HTS member responsible for torture first ties the detainee's left arm behind his back from the left side, and also ties the right arm behind his back, but from above the right shoulder, before pulling the two arms towards each other and handcuffing them at the wrists. The detainee is left for an hour or more in this position, causing him excruciating pain. Survivors whom the SNHR has talked with called this position of torture the 'Scorpion'.

5- Electrocution:

Battery clips connected to an electrical control device are used, with the battery clips fixed to sensitive and vulnerable parts of the body (lips - nose - ear - genitals - fingertips). This practice causes catastrophic effects including the melting and burning of the electrified organ; this is why this method is one of the most terrifying methods for detainees. Survivors told us that they have seen detainees and prisoners who lost their earlobes and noses due to being subjected to torture with battery clips.



6- The Tire:

The detainee is stuffed into a car tire with the legs bent inside the tire, with a wooden stick shoved between the two knees, which are inserted in the tire, then the detainee is turned and beaten on the feet and the rest of his body using the stick or an electrical cable doubled over in such a way that its weight, strength and durability are increased or a plastic tube.

7- Starvation:

The detainee is deprived of part or all of his usual food ration. According to survivors of detention, whoever was subjected to this punishment, would receive only one round of bread and one piece of vegetable per day.

8- Solitary Confinement:

The detainee is kept in a solitary cell, which is a small, cramped and narrow cell, and is detained there for the entire duration of interrogation, which may last for long days and even months. During that period, the detainee is prevented from going outside to be exposed to the sunlight, and from communicating with anyone, with all his requests, such as getting medicine and others, being rejected. According to the accounts we obtained, the longest period of solitary confinement that the witnesses we interviewed knew of was that of a detainee who remained in the solitary cell continuously for one-and-a-half years.

9- Simulation of death:

The personnel inform the detainee that they are taking him for execution; in some cases, they fire bullets towards him with the intention not of injuring him but of psychologically terrorizing him, only faking carrying out the death sentence against him; at other times they bring him back and tell him that the execution has been postponed.

10- Impairing the detainee's mental and intellectual capabilities through drugs:

The detainee is drugged with medication and prescription drugs that affect his mental concentration and intellectual state. Survivors of detention told us that HTS used these types of medicine in efforts to force the detainee to confess and provide information while in a state of semi-consciousness, with these drugs causing some detainees to lose their power of speech, or causing severe vomiting and involuntary urination in a number of cases. Survivors could not determine what kind of drugs they were forced to take.



11- Instigating mutual hostility and tension inside the same cell:

HTS attempts to instigate hostilities between prisoners by deliberately assembling people from different mutually hostile orientations in one collective cell, such as putting those accused of dealing with the Syrian regime or prisoners of regime forces with anti-regime activists, or putting ISIS members with detainees from members of Armed Opposition factions. Survivors we met told us that they were always in a state of tension and anxiety over being incarcerated along with their opponents, and one of them witnessed a number of people being beaten by ISIS members due to charges brought against them.

12- Spying on detainees:

HTS puts operatives or agents among detainees in the collective cells, posing as imprisoned individuals / detainees, who work for the group by monitoring the detainees and reporting the conversations and news reports exchanged between them to the investigators in HTS, leading detainees to live in constant fear and anxiety and to refrain from speaking and expressing themselves to one another.

13- Hearing the sounds of torture:

Usually, detainees are tortured in rooms adjacent to cells holding other imprisoned individuals / detainees, with the trauma of hearing the sounds of torture and beatings of fellow detainees and their cries of distress leading to psychological collapse among a number of prisoners.

14- Placing the coffin shroud before the detainees' eyes:

Most of the survivors told us that they saw the white shrouds used by HTS to wrap the bodies of the people it has executed, which were intentionally placed either in the corridors of the detention center or in the exercise yards in order to intimidate detainees and remind them of death.

15- Digging graves:

The HTS members force prisoners of Syrian Regime forces from among the Alawite community to carry out digging and forced labor, and in most cases to dig the graves used to bury the people executed by the group on various charges.

The SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 26 individuals, including one child, in HTS' detention centers between March 2011 and June 26, 2020.



The most notable incidents of torture by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

Human rights activist Omar al Eis⁶, from Kafranbel city, was arrested by masked members affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on September 21, 2018, in his home in the city, and was taken to al Uqab Prison on charges of expressing a secular anti-Sharia thought. Omar was kept in one of the prison solitary cells for a continuous period of 126 days, sometimes punctuated by depositing one or more additional detainees with him, before transferring them again. Omar spent the last days of his detention in a collective cell in al Uqab Prison. The SNHR contacted Omar who told us that the sounds of torture in al Uqab Prison did not stop during the entire duration of his detention, adding: **“Except for Friday, the sounds were always continuous, due to the lack of investigators in prison on Friday. They transported some of the detainees on food carts, and I saw their feet rotting due to the severity of the beating while some of them suffered fractures.”**

About a month after Omar was incarcerated in a solitary cell, he was summoned for questioning over conversations found on his mobile phone, after which he was presented before a judge in a Sharia hearing where he was charged with 'apostasy'. After eighty days, his family managed to visit him at the follow-up office outside al Uqab Prison for an hour after several people and dignitaries mediated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on their behalf, and he was released on March 20, 2019.

Walid al Fares⁷, a media activist, from al Habeit village in the southern suburbs of Idlib, was arrested by members affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in his home on May 3, 2015, and was taken to al Uqab Prison on charges of harboring and smuggling elements belonging to factions of the Armed Opposition, before he was released on June 6, 2015.

The SNHR spoke with Walid who told us that members affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham took him blindfolded in a car to al Uqab Prison, after storming his home and vandalizing its contents during their inspection. He added: **“I was beaten and verbally abused all the way. When I arrived, they took me out of the car, stopped me at the door and asked me to turn toward the wall, then they put me in a cell with another person who was accused of being a member of Jamal Ma'rouf. It was a solitary cell and had a toilet pit. I asked the man in the cell: Where am I, and he answered me in a low voice: 'In al Uqab.'”** Walid described the cell as being extremely narrow, to the extent that he was unable to stretch his legs fully, and added that the fetid smell was so foul that it caused him to suffer breathing difficulties. He said: **“I knocked on the door and started shouting so that they might take me out to another place so that I could breathe; a member opened the door and kicked me in my chest and said to me: 'Die, pig!'”**

⁶ An alias – Via phone on April 7, 2020

⁷ An alias – Via phone on April 7, 2020



Walid told us that he was summoned for investigation three days after his arrest, with the interrogator asking him about his weapon, and accusing him of facilitating the escape of elements belonging to factions of the Armed Opposition, describing them as traitors. Walid says, **“After the flood of accusations leveled against me by the investigator, Abu Khadija, he logged in my cell phone and turned on audio recordings in it that were conversations with my friends wanted by HTS, then he kicked me and threatened me with death and ordered me to be returned to the solitary cell, where I remained for days without investigation. I could hear the voices of those who were subject to al shabeh ‘ghost’ [a form of torture], especially the man who was with me in the same cell, who had been arrested and detained in solitary confinement for three months, and was subjected to the ghost every day; in Ramadan, they executed him.”** Walid spoke about his observations in al Uqab Prison, saying: **“They always called out the names of those who they wanted to execute at five a.m. at dawn, and my cell was close to the interrogation room. I used to hear names such as Abu Yousef al Hamawi, Abu Khaled Mazout, Abu Khadija al Sourani, and Abu Yousef al Mughir.”**

Walid told us that he was then interrogated twice every week and was subjected to the ‘ghost’ and severe beatings during these sessions. Thirty-three days after his arrest, Hay’at Tahrir al Sham released him, Walid said, adding: **“The members threw me out of their car on the road to Kansafra village in Idlib suburbs, and I was unable to stand then due to the severity of the torture I’d experienced. Some passersby helped me to get home.”**

Khaled Arman, a media activist, from the northern suburbs of Homs governorate, is a graduate of the College of Sharia at the University of Damascus. Khaled was subjected to forced displacement by Syrian Regime forces several times in both the northern suburbs of Homs and the southern suburbs of Hama, eventually settling in Ariha city in the suburbs of Idlib governorate. Khaled was arrested by members affiliated with Hay’at Tahrir al Sham in his home on Friday, June 14, 2019, and was taken to a detention center at the group’s central security headquarters.



We contacted Khaled⁸, who told us that six masked members affiliated with HTS raided his house, pointed pistols and rifles at him, beat him, then handcuffed him and confiscated his mobile phone before they began searching the house: **“My wife, who has diabetes, was so scared; I told them to stop shouting and vandalizing the house because my wife is sick but they did not care, with one of them hitting me on the head with the butt of a pistol and insulting me. They did not stop doing that, but they searched my wife’s personal clothes, and whenever I asked them to stop it and to not violate the sanctity of the house, I was beaten again.”**

Khaled said that he was then taken in a van, to the central security headquarters in Idlib city, and talked about his deep concern at the time for his sick wife, who would remain alone in their home, as they have no relatives in Ariha - the place of their displacement - or the surrounding area. He added that he was beaten and insulted in the car until they arrived at the group’s headquarters, saying: **“We arrived after about 15 minutes. They dragged me from the car towards a building where I went down to a small stairway towards the basement, and at a window there a man asked me about my name. They took my things like the belt of my pants and my prescription glasses - which I couldn’t see without using them, but they returned them to me later, and they forced me to put my fingerprint on many papers while I was blindfolded,”** Khaled says that he was later told by one of the HTS personnel that these papers were his execution papers. Khaled described the cell that he was deposited in, saying: **“I was shocked by the horror of what I saw in front of me - 27 people crammed into a dark, narrow room with a toilet in one of its corners. I discovered from those people that I was in a former government building in Idlib city and they asked me to tell them about the situation outside.”**

Khaled faced charges of belonging to ISIS, with most of the people who were with him in the cell, who came from various Syrian governorates, also accused of belonging to ISIS or collaborating with the Syrian regime or the US-led coalition forces. On the day after Khaled was incarcerated in the central security headquarters, HTS personnel took a photo of his face; he later learned that this was done with the aim of collecting information about him and conducting a security study by a group of the HTS’ security personnel. After nine days, they began interrogating him. He recalled: **“They took me to the interrogation room while I was blindfolded, and I sat in a chair, with the investigator beginning by reading a file. I was startled to hear the charges against me, including: killing an HTS member, being a security**

⁸ An alias – Via phone on May 14, 2020



official in the ISIS organization, distributing financial guarantees to the widows of ISIS members in Idlib, and fighting with Abdul Basit al Sarout against HTS. As soon as he finished speaking, I told him that all these claims are pure slander, and all the charges are fabricated against me, and I have no relationship with ISIS. The interrogator slapped me on the face and insulted me, ordered that my hair be shaved, and they brought me back to the cell, where detainees told me that if I confessed, I would sentence myself to death.”

Khaled says that the following day he was again taken for interrogation, and again denied the charges against him, which led to him being subjected to torture and solitary confinement for 37 consecutive days. Khaled told us about the patterns of torture he suffered: **“On the second day of the investigation, the interrogator subjected me to the ghost and the Blanco and hit me with a water hose of the kind used for sanitary plumbing, on all parts of my body until blood came out of my back and feet, and I fainted. After waking up I found myself in a very small solitary cell, and near me was a toilet pit, which smelled foul. I stayed there for a week, before I was called back for investigation. I crawled towards the toilet due to my severe pain.”** Khaled told us that he was summoned for more interrogation again a week later, and the investigator asked him again about the charges against him and asked him to confess to them. Khaled recalled that he denied the charges again, with the interrogator directly subjecting him to severe beatings on the face for doing so, adding that he was also subjected to new patterns of torture. He added: **“They put battery clamps on my lips and ears, and plugged them in for a few seconds; I shouted due to the severity of the pain and I felt that I was near death at the time; then they took me back to the solitary cell, where I stayed for a whole month, during which I could hear the sounds of torture and the moaning of the tortured people in the coffin.”**

Khaled said that he also heard the voices of women and children who he said were the wives and children of ISIS members, arrested by HTS to force their husbands to surrender themselves. He added: **“The jailers used to take the children from time to time into the corridor so that they might stop crying.”**

Khaled also recalled, **“After one month of my solitary confinement, I was transferred to a collective cell with about 30 other people and most of the food provided to us was bulgur, rice and boiled potatoes.”** Khaled told us that he suffered severe allergic reactions several times due to the lack of hygiene, lack of exposure to the sun, and the use of dirty blankets, and added that he did not receive any treatment or medication.



Khaled said that during his detention he saw people being taken for execution, and that he also met prisoners who would later be executed. He said: **“One day, two men entered our cell, one from Sarmin town, about 45 years old, and the other from Eqerbat town in Hama suburbs, and they’d been in al Uqab Prison before being taken to the central security with four others who were distributed to the other dormitories. They knew that they were brought here to implement the death sentence against them. Their charges varied between belonging to ISIS and killing members of HTS. The next day they actually were executed. One of them told me that he saw a white fabric in al Uqab Prison intended to cover the executed prisoners. Then they’d inform the wives of those executed that they had been executed and that the wives were obliged to wait for the stipulated waiting period.”**

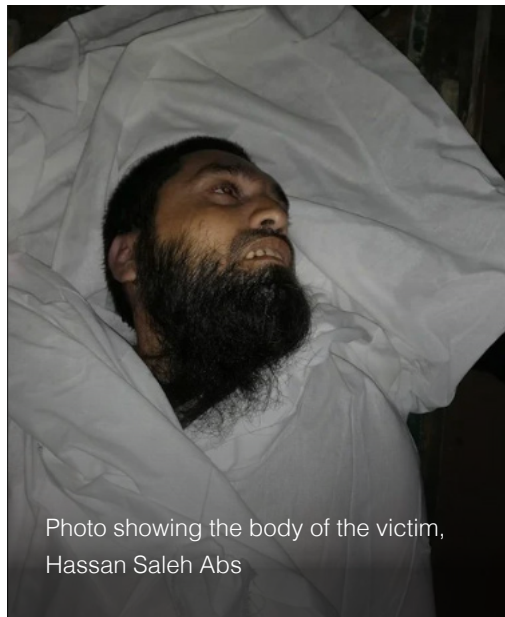
On November 19, 2019, Khaled was transferred to another prison located on the road between Sarmada and Kafr Daryan towns in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which was a building that had previously been captured by Hay’at Tahrir al Sham from Jaish al Islam and turned it into a security branch dedicated to prisoners from ISIS and the US-led coalition. On December 10, 2019, Khaled was presented to a judicial committee headed by Ibrahim Shasho, the Minister of Endowments in the Salvation Government, and also including Mazhar al Wais, and Abu Azzam al Jazrawi, with the latter nicknamed the ‘blood judge’ for the many execution sentences he had issued. Other committee members were HTS’ Attorney-General, Abu Azzam al Turkmani, and the ‘Amir’ or leader of the group’s investigators Zaid al Hamawi, whom Khaled heard boasting about the killing of eight ISIS members while torturing them. The committee issued a decision to release Khaled on April 11, 2020.

The most notable victims of death due to torture by Hay’at Tahrir al Sham:

Hassan Saleh Abs from Sarmin city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1980, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with Hay’at Tahrir al Sham during April 2020. On April 20, 2020, his family received information that Hay’at Tahrir al Sham had tortured him to death in one of the group’s detention centers, with his body subsequently being handed over to his family.

This killing, which is considered a flagrant violation of international human rights law, and is classified as an extrajudicial killing, because it was carried out without any fair trial, and in accordance with the extremist beliefs of Hay’at Tahrir al Sham.





D. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):

Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) use torture in the group's detention centers against detainees and abductees as a way to extract confessions, with torture often carried out in a vengeful way and based on ethnic prejudice. The methods of torture used by SDF vary and are often similar to those practiced by the Syrian regime, with the most common methods, according to the accounts of the survivors of detention centers, being severe and harmful beatings, fracturing bones, falqa, shabeh, flogging, pulling out nail, and electrocution, in addition to solitary confinement and shaving part of the detainees' heads as a punishment to further humiliate and insult detainees. Other torture methods used by the SDF include deprivation of food and medicine, overcrowding, and poor hygiene. Since 2016, we have recorded a noticeable increase in the death toll of torture victims by Syrian Democratic Forces, compared to previous years, and we recorded SDF handing over a number of the victims' bodies to their families, with the bodies bearing signs of torture. We also have many photos in our archives of survivors from SDF detention centers, whose bodies bear signs of beating and bruises.

The SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 52 individuals, including one child and two women, in SDF detention centers between March 2011 and June 26, 2020.

The most notable incidents of torture by Syrian Democratic Forces:

Video footage from a surveillance camera shows the severe overcrowding of a large number of detainees in the cells of Ghwayran Prison located in Hasaka governorate, which is controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces. The video was published on March 30, 2020, after prisoners revolted inside the prison against the bad conditions affecting them which can be clearly seen in this image. This video confirms what SNHR has previously highlighted in



regard to the torture methods used by Syrian Democratic Forces in their detention centers. The SDF must immediately release the prisoners of conscience, media workers and civil society activists, and those of related categories, in addition to those in categories who are most likely to be infected by COVID-19, such as elderly persons.

We spoke with Mua'th al Muhammad al Kal⁹, from Raqqa city, the owner of a mobile phone maintenance store, who was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in his store on February 13, 2020, and was released on April 25, 2020, as part of an agreement with tribal sheikhs in Raqqa. Mua'th told us the details of his arrest and imprisonment, saying: **“The Asayish arrested me because of an argument that took place between me and one of their personnel in the shop. They took me to the General Security headquarters in Raqqa, where they put me in a solitary cell and left me without food for two days, before they took me for interrogation; there the investigator accused me of dealing with ISIS, and said that I was transferring money to families of ISIS members. I denied the charge, so they took me to a room on the ground floor and there they subjected me to the ‘ghost’ for an hour, while beating me on my back and stomach, then they brought me back to the solitary cell where I stayed for ten days. They gave me food in there once every two days, before they transferred me to the collective cell. There, I learned from the prisoners that I would stay here until they transfer me to the ISIS prison in Hasaka, but after the mediation of the tribal sheikhs, I was released with another 26 detainees, most of whom were detained because of false reports against them.”**

The most notable victims of death due to torture by Syrian Democratic Forces:

Fajr Ibrahim, a teacher of physical education from al Tabaqqa city in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested in February 2019 by Syrian Democratic Forces in al Tabaqqa city. On Wednesday, January 29 2020, SNHR received information confirming his death due to medical negligence in an SDF detention center in Raqqa city. His body was handed over to his family.

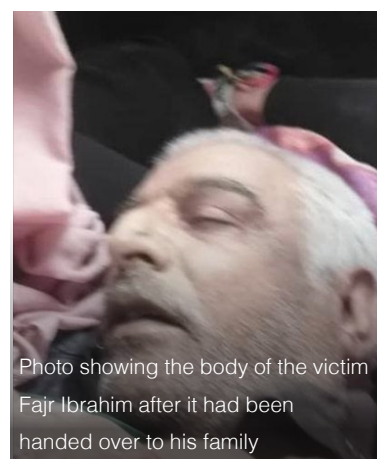


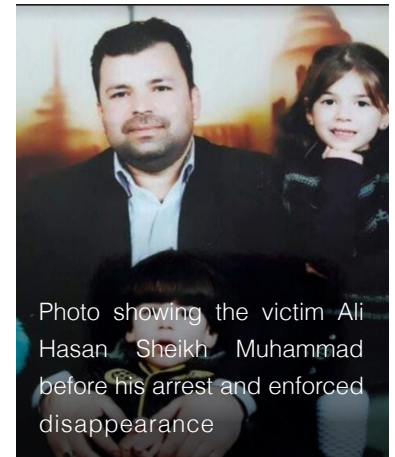
Photo showing the body of the victim Fajr Ibrahim after it had been handed over to his family

⁹ Via phone on May 10, 2020



Ali Hasan Sheikh Muhammad from Raqqa city was arrested on Monday, July 6, 2015, by Syrian Democratic forces at the Marash Binar crossing in Ein Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, while he was travelling along with two other civilians, through the crossing heading to Turkey. Since then, Ali, who was born in 1977, has been classified as forcibly disappeared, as nobody, including any lawyer, has been allowed to visit him or to know his fate.

At the beginning of May 2020, his family received information that he had died due to torture in a Syrian Democratic Forces' detention center at the end of July 2015. SNHR confirms that Syrian Democratic Forces didn't hand over his body to his family; this failure to hand over the bodies of those who die in the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers to their families is commonplace, with any person whose body has not been handed over deemed to be still classified as a forcibly disappeared person.



E. Factions of the Armed Opposition:

Armed Opposition factions have practiced torture in their detention centers, and resorted to severe beatings, electrocution, shabeh, the tire, and mainly flogging, as we detailed extensively in a previous report about the Armed Opposition factions' methods of torture in their detention centers entitled '[Awaiting Justice](#)'. Since 2017, we have recorded an increase in the use of torture methods by the Armed Opposition factions, and a corresponding increase in the death toll, and since the beginning of 2019, we have recorded the opposition factions resorting to kidnappings and torture of the kidnapped to force their families to pay ransom money in exchange for their release, mainly in areas under their control in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Torture has often been practiced on the basis of ethnic prejudice and has been practiced against civilians, including women and children, to force them to agree to requests by opposition factions' members, such as the use or seizure of these people's property.



The most notable incidents of torture by factions of the Armed Opposition:

On Saturday, July 13, 2019, a local media outlet published photos of the child [Majd Hamada](#), with his body bearing signs of torture. The child, Majd, from Jarablos city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was reportedly tortured in the Ghandoura police station in Jarablos city, after accusations were leveled against him by the Director of al Ghandoura Police.



Thirty-two-year-old Muhammad Khaled al Khalaf from Um Ushba village, which is administratively a part of Ras al Ein area in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with one of the Armed Opposition factions on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, while he was passing through one of their checkpoints in Ras al Ein area after refusing to give his car to the checkpoint personnel. As a result of his refusal, he was arrested and taken to one of their detention centers in Ras al Ein city. On Monday, January 27, 2020, he was released, with his body bearing signs of torture, and was transferred to a Turkish hospital due to his poor health.





Photos showing signs of physical assault on the civilian Muhammad Khaled al Khalaf

On Sunday, June 3, 2020, gunmen affiliated with factions of the Armed Opposition arrested three civilians from Tal Abyad city, north of Raqqa governorate, and beat them inside one of their detention centers in the city.



Photos showing signs of torture on the bodies of civilians arrested by factions of the Armed Opposition on June 3, 2020, in Tal Abyad city, Raqqa



Sheikh Muhi al Din Sheikh Ali Na'san, a 68-year-old civilian with special needs (suffering from intellectual and mental disabilities), is from Jendeires town, which is administratively a part Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Thursday, April 30, 2020, gunmen affiliated with Ahrar al Sharqiya faction, which is affiliated with Armed Opposition factions, beat him on the main street in Jendeires town market, on the pretext of breaking his fast in Ramadan.



Sheikh Muhi al Din Sheikh Ali Na'san

Muhammad Jamil al Hamid, from al Qouriya city in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, was arrested by the Military police for using the flashlight of his phone during a march in the street - which is poor eyesight - so he was accused of photographing military headquarters of factions of the opposition, and was subsequently beaten and tortured, before he was released on Tuesday, June 2, 2020.

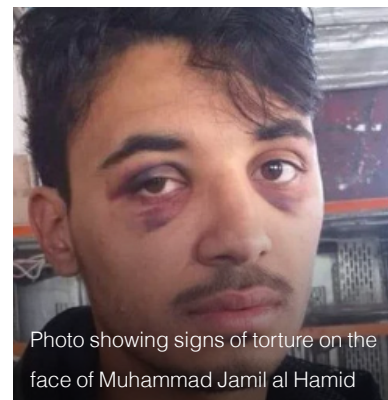


Photo showing signs of torture on the face of Muhammad Jamil al Hamid

The most notable victims of death due to torture by factions of the Armed Opposition:

Hamada Hanif Hussein, from Blilko village, which is administratively a part of Rajo town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested on Friday September 7, 2019, by gunmen of the Military Police affiliated with factions of the Armed Opposition in Blilko village, and was tortured to death in the prison of Rajo town, before his body was handed over to his family on Monday, September 9, 2019, bearing signs of torture.



Photo of the victim Hamada Hanif Hussein



Video showing signs of torture on the victim's body, Hamada Hanif Hussein



VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal Conclusions:

- International law wholly prohibits torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment. This being a customary rule, states are prohibited from dismissing or undermining this rule in favor of other rights or values, even in times of emergency. Violating the laws prohibiting torture is an international crime according to international criminal law, with those individuals who issued orders for torture, or assisted in its occurrence defined as being criminals with legal responsibility for these practices.
- Syrian Regime forces have practiced the crime of torture systematically and in a widespread manner, violating the right to life, as well as constituting a flagrant violation of international human rights law. It has been proved beyond doubt that the Syrian regime is fully aware of this and of the certainty that the inhuman conditions of detention routinely and inevitably lead to continuous suffering and pain and regularly to death. Despite knowing all of this, the regime has done nothing to stop these criminal actions. Killings as a result of torture constitute crimes against humanity, and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, which amount to war crimes.
- The number of cases of enforced disappearance in Syria carried out by Syrian Regime forces that we have documented has now exceeded 83,000, with all these individuals being subjected to torture. We have no indication that the Syrian regime has stopped practicing torture, with the number of deaths due to torture exceeding 14,200 in total, confirming that the Syrian regime is involved in systematic, regular and widespread attacks against Syrian civilians, in particular everyone who has called for political transition, to a degree where these violations constitute crimes against humanity; the participation of several government institutions also demonstrates that this is a deliberate strategy of the ruling class in the Syrian regime and further demonstrates its central role in these crimes.
- The Syrian regime has clearly violated the provisions of the Syrian constitution and the provisions of the Convention against Torture that Syria ratified in 2004, as well as tampering with existing laws by enacting legislation that protects its forces from any prosecution.
- Syrian Democratic Forces have not respected the principles of international human rights law or international humanitarian law. The practices of torture against the group's opponents against the background of non-international armed conflict constitute war crimes, however, these didn't amount to widespread systematic attacks on the civilian population.



- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham bears responsibility for torture in its detention centers, and has committed the war crime of torture, with the execution of detainees in accordance with illegal courts amounting to a war crime.
- Acts of torture practiced by factions of the Armed Opposition against the people in areas under their control constitute a clear violation of international human rights law, and of international humanitarian law if they were committed against their opponents in a non-international armed conflict, amounting to a war crime.

Recommendations:

UN Security Council and the United Nations, According to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations:

- Protect civilians detained by the Syrian regime from torture and lethal torture, and rescue those who remain alive.
- The UN General Assembly must take the initiative in the Syrian situation and resort to invoking the principle of Uniting for Peace, given the total paralysis affecting the Security Council due to the Russian-Chinese veto.
- Establish a mechanism to compel the Syrian regime to end practices of torture, and to reveal the whereabouts of the bodies of the victims and to hand these over to their families.
- Russia must stop blocking the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- All UN relief agencies must search for families that have lost their primary breadwinner or one of their members due to torture, ensure that aid is continuously delivered to their beneficiaries, and initiate rehabilitation.
- Impose UN sanctions on individuals and entities involved in torture acts and death under torture.

The International Community:

- States which are parties to the Convention against Torture must take the necessary measures to establish their jurisdiction over perpetrators of torture and make all the necessary material and security efforts for this objective.
- All states worldwide must ensure that the Syrian regime respects the Geneva Conventions, in particular Common Article 3, and the rules of customary humanitarian law.
- Take serious punitive measures against the Syrian regime to deter it from continuing to kill Syrian citizens under torture.



- Provide more funds, support and sufficient grants to local organizations concerned with the care and rehabilitation of torture victims and their families.
- Provide support to individual activists and local organizations that document violations without imposing tutelage or political directives.
- Impose sanctions on individuals and entities involved in torture acts and death under torture

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Study the cases included in this report, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights willing to cooperate and provide more evidence and details.
- The findings of this report intersect significantly with the findings of the COI's previous reports, so the COI must publicly acknowledge that these practices are clearly still widespread and constitute a systematic targeting of Syrian civilians.

The Syrian regime:

- Immediately stop using all torture methods and extracting confessions under torture, adhere to the principles of international human rights law, and stop deploying the capabilities of the Syrian state in torture and in terror of Syrian society.
- Investigate all torture acts and deaths due to torture, and compensate families and victims.
- Immediately allow access for the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all objective human rights organizations to the detention centers.
- Take legal and historical responsibility for this comprehensive national catastrophe.
- Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrary detained, particularly children and women, reveal the fate of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons, and suspend all death sentences because they are issued by unfair courts and amount to extrajudicial killing.

Syrian Democratic Forces:

- Adhere to the standards of international human rights law, stop the use of torture against political or military opponents, launch investigations of those involved in these crimes, and hold them accountable.
- Allow the International Committee of the Red Cross and human rights organizations to enter detention centers immediately and without any prior coordination.



- Disclose information about all detainees, publish lists of their names, publish sites and places of secret detention centers, and allow their families and human rights organizations to visit them.

Extremist Islamist groups:

- The implementation of international human rights law in the areas and prisons under their control must be observed and all forms of torture must be stopped in their detention centers.

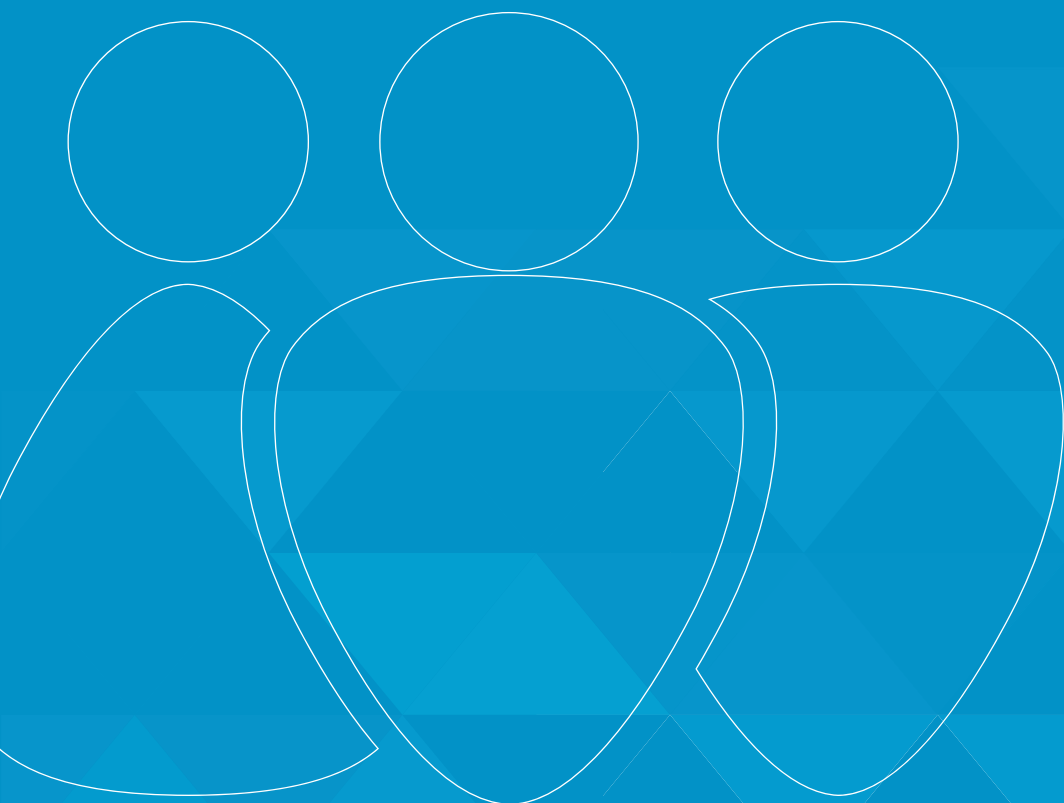
Armed Opposition factions:

- Respect the provisions of international human rights law, end unlawful trials, and end all torture in detention centers.
- Immediately allow the International Committee of the Red Cross and objective human rights organizations to visit all detention centers and end all imprisonment of detainees in secret detention centers.
- Hold all individuals involved in torture accountable and expel them directly.
- Factions affiliated with Hay'at Tahrir al Sham must abandon the group as soon as possible.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the survivors of torture for their gracious and valuable contributions to this report, and to offer our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and their friends.





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