

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	188
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	Syria: Lift Blackout on Prisoners' Fate
Udgivet:	10. december 2009
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	16. juni 2010

Last Updated: Monday, 22 February 2010, 13:22 GMT

[unhcr.org](#) | [Partners](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact](#) | [Site Map](#)[Home](#) [Syrian Arab Republic](#)

Search

Enter a word or phrase [Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

Regions

[Africa](#)[Americas](#)[Asia](#)[Europe](#)[Oceania](#)

Countries

[Syrian Arab Republic](#)

Categories

[Country Information](#)[Legal Information](#)[Policy Documents](#)[Reference Documents](#)

Browse by

[A-Z Index](#)[Topics](#)[Publishers](#)[Document Types](#)

Resources

[Special Features](#)[Standards and Training](#)[Information Alerts](#)[Protection Starter Kit](#)[Library](#)[News](#)[Refworld Personalization](#)[External Links](#)Text size [A](#) [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)[Email this document](#)[Printable version](#)

Title	Syria: Lift Blackout on Prisoners' Fate
Publisher	Human Rights Watch
Country	Syrian Arab Republic
Publication Date	10 December 2009
Cite as	Human Rights Watch, <i>Syria: Lift Blackout on Prisoners' Fate</i> , 10 December 2009, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4b28a091c.html [accessed 22 February 2010]



Syria: Lift Blackout on Prisoners' Fate

(New York) - Syrian authorities should make public without further delay the fate of all prisoners whose whereabouts and well-being remain a mystery almost 18 months after security forces put down a riot at the Sednaya prison in July 2008, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch released a partial list today of Sednaya detainees whose families have not been able to get any information about them.

The government imposed a total blackout on [Sednaya](#) after prison authorities and military police used firearms to quell a riot on July 5, 2008. The prison holds at least 1,500 inmates and possibly as many as 2,500.

In July 2009, the authorities finally allowed some families to visit relatives in the prison, but have maintained a ban on visits to others and on information about other detainees. The actual number of Sednaya detainees who remain completely isolated from the outside world is believed to be much higher than the 42 whose names Human Rights Watch has obtained.

"The Syrian government needs to come clean on what happened in Sednaya a year and a half ago," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "Syrian authorities should end the anguish of the prisoners' families and allow visits to all detainees."

Some of the 42 detainees on the list who remain incommunicado have finished serving their sentences and should have been released. Others were on trial, but their trials have been delayed without explanation. One of those who should have been released is Nizar Rastanawi, a prominent human rights activist whom the state security court had sentenced to a four-year term on charges of "spreading false news" and "insulting the President of the Republic" after a member of the security services testified that he overheard a private conversation Rastanawi was having with another person. Rastanawi's sentence ended on April 18, but the government has not released him or provided any information about him.

A detainee's parents described to Human Rights Watch the difficulties they faced trying to get information:

We went to the prison [Sednaya] and registered our name with the prison guards. We waited there, with a baby, from 8 a.m. until 12 p.m. We had to pay 2,000 Syrian pounds [\$44 US] as a bribe just to register our visit request. Then the prison guards told us that our son has no right for a visit and they asked us to go see the Political Security branch in Damascus. They would not even tell us if our son was still in Sednaya or whether he was alive. To date, we are still waiting for an answer.

For the families allowed to see their detained relatives, visiting conditions are very difficult. Two families told Human Rights Watch that visits are limited to 30 minutes once a month, with a security guard standing between the prisoner and his family - who remain behind a set of metal bars. Visits are restricted to the immediate family.

Detainees released from Sednaya since July who have been contacted by Human Rights Watch or Syrian human rights activists have been afraid to discuss what happened or to provide information about other detainees. When asked about the fate of some friends who were

detained with him, one released detainee told a Syrian human rights activist, "Please don't ask me - we don't want to go back to prison."

To date, the government has not provided the families of detainees or the public with any information regarding the July 2008 events at Sednaya or the names of those injured or killed.

"The secrecy and fear surrounding the fate of detainees in Sednaya is a reminder of Syria's cruel treatment of prisoners and their families alike," Stork said.

International human rights law - including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Syria has ratified - prohibits arbitrary detention, which includes holding persons beyond the expiration of their sentence, and requires compensation for anyone who has been arbitrarily detained. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners require that prisoners be able to communicate with the outside world at "regular intervals." These UN rules also allow the use of force only when absolutely necessary and require notification of relatives immediately after a prisoner's death.

Background

Prison authorities and military police used firearms to quell a riot that began on July 5, 2008 at Sednaya prison, about 30 kilometers north of Damascus. Human Rights Watch obtained the names of [nine inmates](#) who are believed to have been killed in a standoff between the prisoners and authorities that reportedly lasted for many days. Syrian human rights organizations have reported that the number of inmates who were killed may be as high as 25. One member of the military police was also confirmed to have been killed. The government has not released any information about the action its forces took against the prisoners or any investigation it may have carried out about the violence at the prison.

Sednaya prison is under the control of Syrian military forces. The government holds pretrial detainees there, sometimes for years, under the jurisdiction of three separate branches of Syria's security apparatus - Military Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, and State Security. The prison is also used for people sentenced by the [State Security Court](#), a special court that does not meet international fair trial standards. Human Rights Watch has documented ill-treatment and torture of detainees upon arrival at Sednaya. Estimates of the number of inmates in Sednaya vary. One inmate who finished his sentence in 2007 estimated it to be around 1,500. Syrian human rights groups believe that the number has increased since then.

Families of the following Sednaya prisoners have not been able to get any information about them since the July 2008 prison riot:

1. Khaled Ali Khaled
2. Omar Sa'id Hussein
3. Muhammad Naser
4. Nasser Nasser
5. Ahmad Mer'i
6. Muhammad Mer'i
7. Bassel Maderati
8. Ziad al-Kilani
9. Muhammad Ezz el-Deen Diab
10. Muhammad Tayib Dardar
11. Ahmad Mahmud al-Sheikh
12. Amer Abdel Hadi al-Sheikh
13. Khaled Jum'a Abdel 'Al
14. Ahmad Ali Hurraniyet
15. Muhammad Ali Hurraniyet
16. Khaled Hamami
17. Abdel Mu'ti Kilani
18. Na'im Kassem Mrouwe
19. Muhammad Abdel Hafeez Kilani
20. Hussein Jum'a Othman
21. Samer Abu al-Kheir
22. Nizar Rastanawi
23. Ali Najib
24. Abdel Mu'ti Abdel Haleem
25. Fares Abu Setat
26. Bassam Husri
27. Firas Anwar Shukeir
28. Muhammad Anwar Shukeir
29. Jamal Hasas
30. Muhammad Abdel Jalil
31. Khaled al-Zafan
32. Ahmad Mahmud Fneish
33. Muhammad Ezz al-Deen al-Mukthar
34. Nidal Khalil Kasem

35. Kusai Muhammad Su'udi
36. Abdel Fattah Muhammad
37. Muhammad Mahmud Kar'ish
38. Muhammad 'Awad Derbass
39. Khodr Salman
40. Bilal Salman
41. Muhammad Salman
42. Tahseen Mammo

Copyright notice: © Copyright 1992-2009, Human Rights Watch