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

14,537 Killed Due to Torture by the Parties to the Conflict and the Controlling Forces in Syria, Mostly by the Syrian Regime, from March 2011 Until June 2021

Saturday 26 June 2021

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.

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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I. Torture Is a Primary Violation and One of the Most Widely Practiced, Without Known Limits:

This is the annual report issued by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, which falls annually on June 26. Throughout the year SNHR also issues [monthly reports](#) on the death toll of victims in Syria, including the record of victims who were killed due to torture, [in addition to dozens of news articles on deaths and other incidents involving torture](#), which is inextricably linked with arbitrary detention; there is hardly a detainee who has not been subjected to any method of torture, as we have repeatedly confirmed in many of the reports we issued. What distinguishes this tenth annual report is its extensive nature, including a wide range of incidents of torture and death due to torture that we have documented since last year's [ninth annual report](#), issued on June 26, 2020. This report also includes an update on the cases of deaths due to torture by all the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces since the beginning of the popular uprising in March 2011 up until June 2021.

This report aims to emphasize and reiterate a point we have often made previously, namely that from the earliest days of the uprising torture has been one of the primary violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime against political protesters, following their arbitrary arrest, with participants in peaceful demonstrations generally subjected to: beatings, insults, threats and arrests without a judicial warrant, as well as having their mobile phones confiscated, and being prevented from communicating with their families or a lawyer. Many of those detained in this way have subsequently been classified as forcibly disappeared. Each of these practices involves one or more forms of torture. The enforced disappearance of any detainee includes severe forms of physical and psychological torture, for the detainee as well as for his or her family, with this torture often leading to the detainee's death. Also, over the course of past ten years, we have been unable to determine the amount of torture that a detainee is subjected to by the Syrian regime compared to the invariably falsified charges against him or her, meaning that the level of torture is wholly subject to the whims of the head of the security branch, with the period of torture generally having no time limit, meaning that even if it ends on a certain day, it may be resumed a few days later. All these points mean that we have been unable to discover the existence of any fixed rules or boundaries for the interrogators and torturers, further increasing the detainees' suffering since they do not know the extent of the torture they'll be subjected to or when - or if - it will end without killing them. We have addressed the methods of torture extensively in [a special report](#).

The crime of torture in Syria is systematic and widespread, most especially by the Syrian regime, which is detaining by far the largest number of detainees. Accordingly, the SNHR is exceptionally concerned about the issue of torture; in addition to issuing monthly report, news and statements, as well as corresponding periodically with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, we have built a database on [victims killed by torture](#), in addition to creating a huge archive providing details on [tens of thousands of cases involving detainees who were subjected to torture](#).

By monitoring this violation, we have been able to build a wide network of contacts with survivors of torture, and with their families, who are always the cornerstone of our work. We have also provided all possible means of communication to facilitate access and documentation of new cases 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 Torture¹, 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."

The report is based on interviews we conducted with the families of victims and survivors of torture inflicted in detention centers of various parties to the conflict. The interviews were conducted in a way that prioritized ensuring the security and safety of the victims, as well as of the SNHR team members, with these interviews carried out either by telephone or via various online communication programs or by visiting the victims or family members in their homes inside and outside Syria. In this report, we provide 13 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 persecuted. 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, which we strive constantly to develop in order to keep pace with the best practices in maximizing psychological care and minimizing potential trauma for the victims.

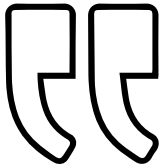
The statistics included in this report are also based on the cumulative work, resulting from the daily monitoring and documentation work that we have carried out continuously since 2011 up to the current moment concerning incidents of arbitrary arrest and torture, with SNHR carrying out a monthly update of the database. We can confirm that various amounts of information are available for each case used in compiling all the statistics included in the report, which is normal within the Syrian context and in the context of the great challenges facing our work; in general, these cases include basic information such as name, date, place and conditions of detention, the party responsible for the arrest, enforced disappearance and torture, the latest observations and documents provided, 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 the torture took place because, in most cases, the place where the incident and the deaths by torture occurred are the detention centers in Damascus city, 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. The data added to the SNHR's database is retained securely, and we store several backup copies in different locations.

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 1, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>

Given the exceptional difficulties and the magnitude of the violations, the cases mentioned in this report represent the barest minimum of the violations which we have been able to document, and we confirm that the real, so-far undocumented figures are far higher. Also, this report does not include documentation of the psychological repercussions experienced by survivors of torture.

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



The massive extent of the torture, inflicted using unimaginably brutal methods, on a significant proportion of Syrian society numbering at least tens of thousands, by all parties to the conflict, most especially the Syrian regime, which weaponizes state institutions to serve as torture instruments, has generated a state of intense frustration towards the perpetrators of these violations, mixed with a strong desire for revenge; the continuing nature of the Syrian conflict, despite the passage of over a decade since it began, means that many members of society who have been traumatized by torture and see no hope of justice are like time bombs. The international community must lead the transitional justice process as quickly as possible.

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

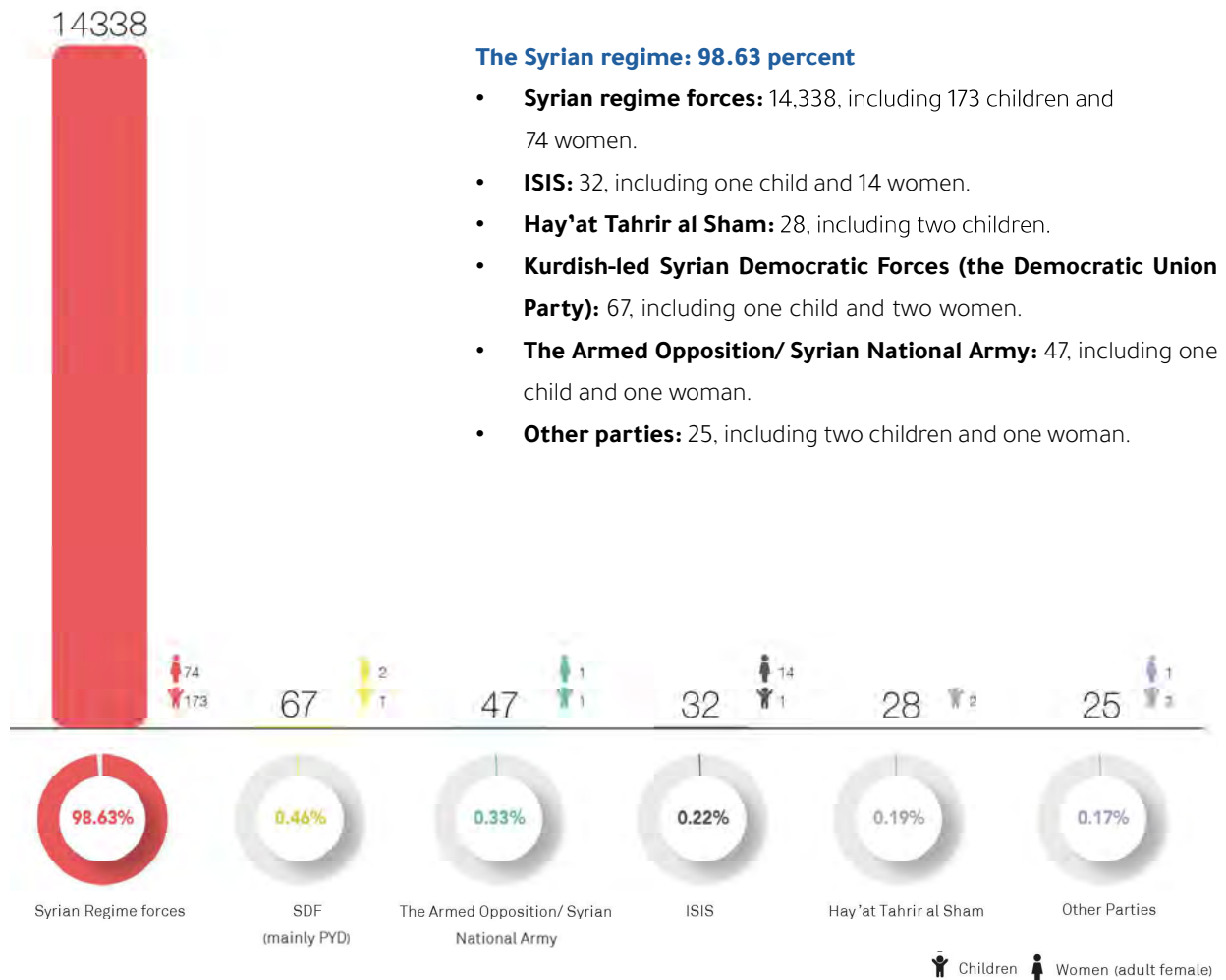
The SNHR team conducts regular [periodic correspondence](#) with the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and on Torture. The Rapporteurs correspond with the Syrian regime about some the cases submitted which we were able to verify, which are also listed in the special 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.

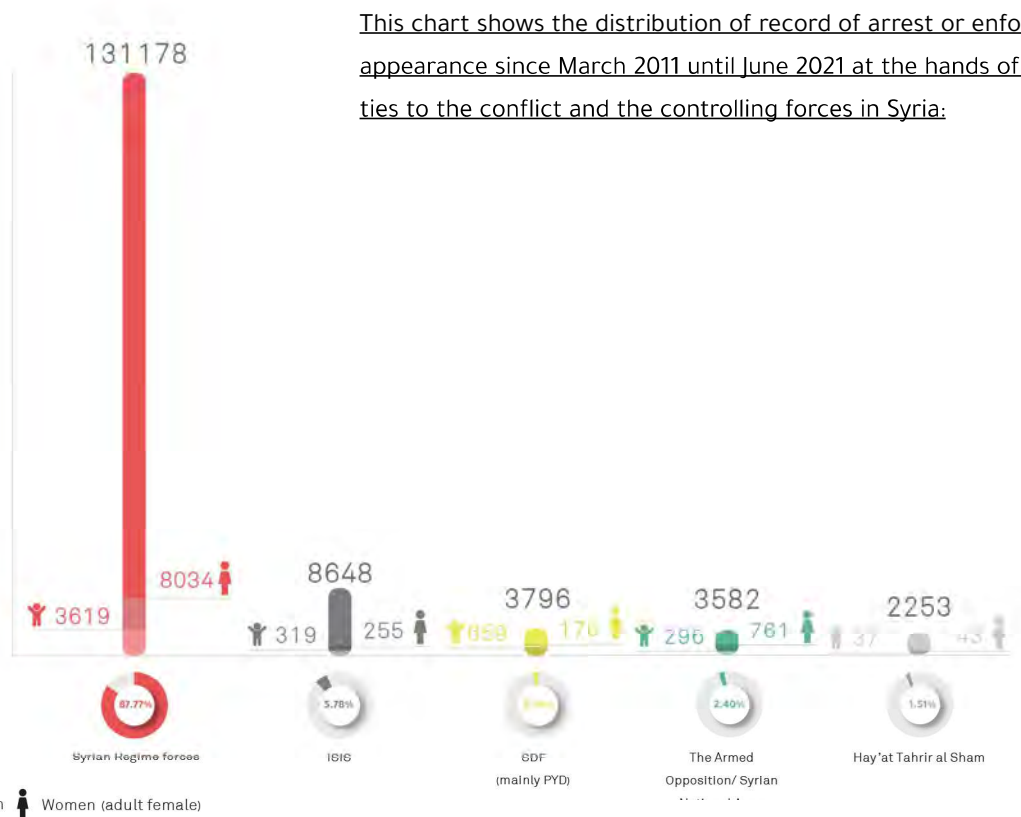
In this context, the SNHR is requesting further cooperation from victims' families in order to submit as many cases as possible to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions and on Torture. Our team works 24/7 to build broad relationships with the families of the torture victims, to obtain as much information as possible which is stored on our database dedicated specifically to victims of torture. We have made every possible safe communication method available on communication applications and assigned phone numbers for the work of our team to facilitate the process of reaching the victims' families.

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

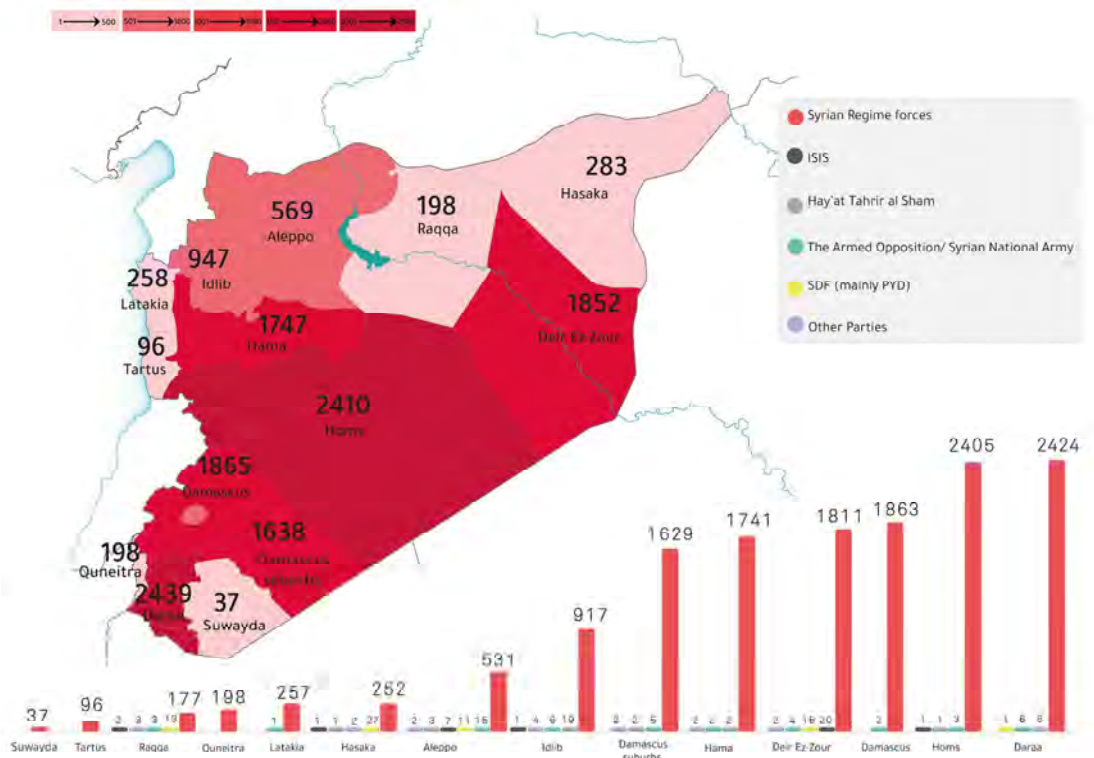
Between March 2011 and June 2021, we documented the deaths due to torture of at least 14,537 individuals, including 180 children and 92 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, according to the SNHR's database, distributed as follows:



The Syrian regime, which is responsible for the arrest of by far the largest number of Syrian citizens, continues to detain or forcibly disappears the great majority of them, with torture continuing throughout the duration of every person's detention. Torture is very much a state policy for the Syrian regime, as is confirmed by the paragraphs related to torture contained in the reports of the International Commission of Inquiry, in particular the report on the regime's torture regimen entitled "[Out of Sight, Out of Mind](#)," as well as [another report issued on March 11, 2021](#). This adds to our conviction that the killing of this vast number of Syrian citizens is a deliberate strategy by the head of the Syrian regime responsible for its decision-making process, with the regime's security branches being simply tools used for implementing this end. For ten years, these security branches have practiced the most horrific methods of torture, exacerbated by starvation and medical negligence, which has led to a massive death toll unprecedented anywhere else on earth in the modern era. We confirmed previously that the main cause of death due to torture is the medical negligence towards the torture victims, who are left to suffer untreated until death; SNHR's database shows that, while the vast majority of victims are men, there are many cases of deaths due to torture among women and children, with torture methods including sexual violence.

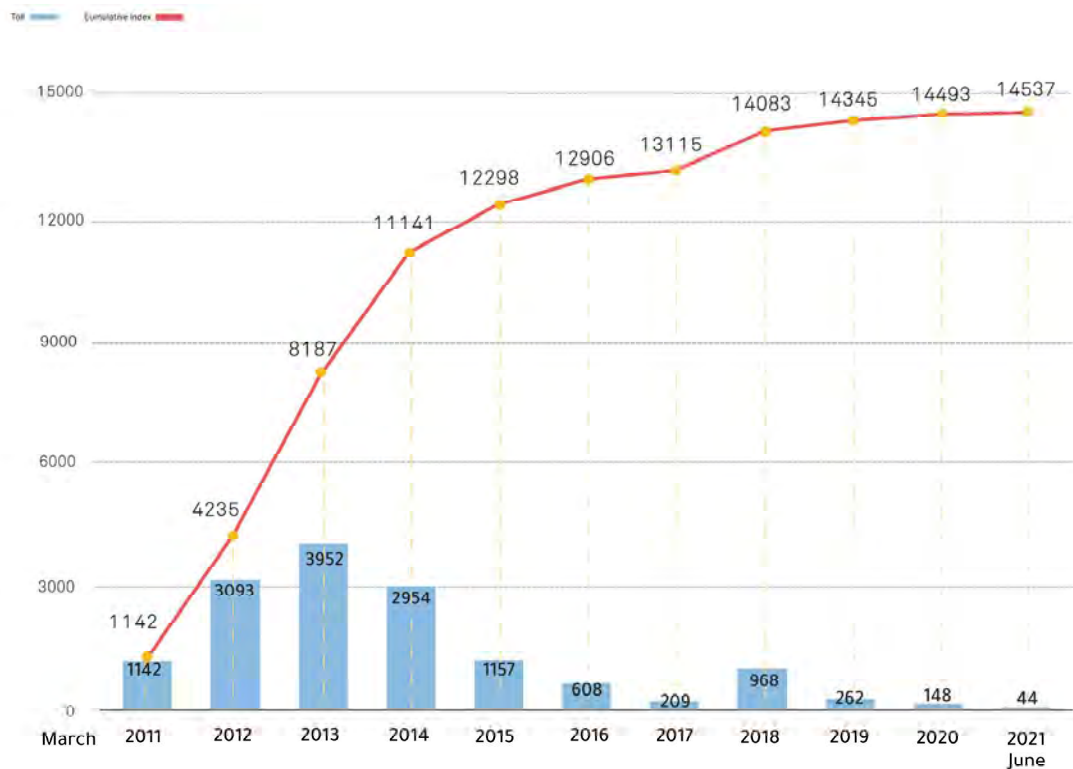


The following map shows the distribution of the death toll among victims who died due to torture across all the Syrian governorates:



We note from the previous map that the governorates of Daraa and Homs saw the highest numbers of residents killed due to torture; we have documented the Syrian regime's use of torture in many cases in connection with the victim's affiliation with a certain area known for opposing the Syrian regime as a form of collective retribution in the regime's detention centers.

The following chart shows the distribution of the documented death toll of torture victims in Syria by years since March 2011:



The above chart shows that the years which saw the highest deaths due to torture were 2013, then 2012, followed by 2014.

IV. The Syrian Regime Has Established 'Laws' That Allow Torture and Prevent Criminals from Being Held Accountable:

Since 1970, the Syrian regime has controlled the People's Assembly through the Ba'ath Party, and ended the judicial authority by controlling the Supreme Judicial Council, imposing conditions that the council's president should be the President of the Republic, and that the President of the Republic appoints the judges of the Supreme Constitutional Court. As we have indicated previously, the Syrian regime has absolute control over all three powers - executive, legislative and judicial - with the executive power wielding total control over the other two and with the powers of this authority being concentrated exclusively in the hands of the President of the Republic. It is important to understand that this monopolization of power means the Syrian regime can introduce whatever pseudo-legal texts it wants, no matter how blatantly these contradict international human rights law, and call them laws. The Syrian regime not only practices torture, but also imposes laws that give complete immunity from prosecution to those who carry out its orders, 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, state 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."

The highly centralized nature of the Syrian regime means that it could not torture at least tens of thousands of detainees and kill vast numbers of them, as graphically seen in the photos smuggled out by former regime photographer 'Caesar' published in thousands of media outlets worldwide, without direct orders from the individual at the head of this pyramid, namely the President of the Republic. Despite the Syrian regime's systematic use of torture and the vast number of associated deaths, all of which necessitates the participation of not just one but several state institutions, no regime official has ever launched or been subjected to a single investigation into any of these deaths. The most prominent of the network of Syrian state entities involved in torture, whether as perpetrators, enablers or accomplices, 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.

V. The Most Prominent Officials Involved in Torture by the Syrian Regime:

The laws established by the Syrian regime do not justify committing or concealing crimes since they are not laws in any meaningful sense, but rather pseudo-legal texts that blatantly violate the law. We at the SNHR rely on 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 orders² accountable if they knew, or had reason to know, that these subordinates were about to commit or were committing such crimes and failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures in their power to prevent their commission, or if such crimes had been committed, to punish the persons responsible³; 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 this⁴. In addition, combatants bear responsibility for their actions, even if they were carrying out orders from their higher-ranking superiors, and it is an inadequate excuse to claim that the combatant was acting according to orders issued by higher authorities, meaning that those who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity should be held individually criminally responsible for their actions⁵. 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"⁶, meaning that although such an order may be considered one of the mitigating circumstances in considering the penalty for this crime, it doesn't absolve the crime's perpetrator of 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 international law provides that, even duress, the perpetration of 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 killed⁷.

The various institutions of the Syrian regime have long been involved in committing widespread and systematic violations, many of which constitute crimes against humanity⁸ and war crimes, with everyone who ordered, incited, encouraged, justified, participated, provided assistance in or facilitated those crimes⁹ considered to be involved in them; at the forefront of these institutions are those of the army and the security bodies. There is a tendency among fact-finding committees and international commissions of inquiry towards revealing the names of individuals involved in perpetrating violations, with the SNHR having taken this view for years, and demanding that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria should reveal the names of individuals whose involvement in committing egregious violations constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes it has verified.

² ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 152, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule152

³ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 153, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule153

⁴ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 28, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

⁵ ICRC, International Humanitarian Law, Rule 151, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1_rul_rule151

⁶ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 28, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

⁷ The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Erdemovic case, IT-96-22, Para. 17, <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/erdemovic/tjug/en/erd-ts980305e.pdf>

⁸ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

⁹ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

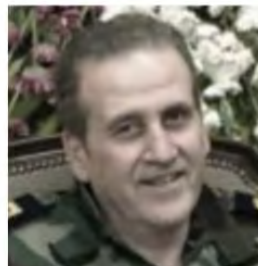
**Names
and
positions
of the
most
prominent
leaders
of the
Syrian
regime
involved
in torture:**



Yasin Ahmad Dahi



Shafiq Ahmad Massa



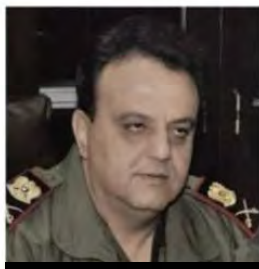
Ghassan Jawdat Ismail



Adib Nemr Salameh



Osama Ali Asaad



Akram Muhammad



Samer Muhammad Sweidan



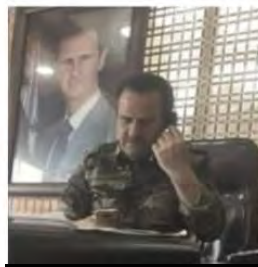
Ryad Shehadah



Ghassan Halim Khalil



Mazen Hawwash al Kanj



Mufid Warda



Naser al Ali



Wafik Naser



Muhammad Mahmoud Mahalla



Kefah Melhem



Muhammad Ibrahim al Shaar

Husam Muhammad Nouri
Anya Louqa

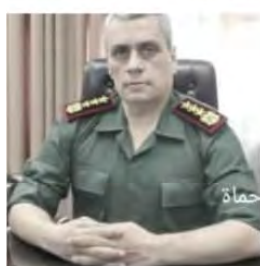
Naser Samee Dib



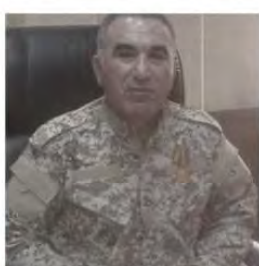
Suleiman al Tinawi



Malek Ali Habib



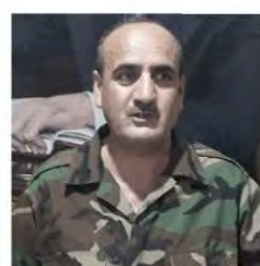
Bassam Muhammad Khaddour



Emad Mayhoub



Louay al Ali



Suleiman Musa Qana

Yasin Ahmad Dahi

a Brigadier-General, from Khrebe village in Tartus governorate, was born in 1960. He headed Branch 235 affiliated with the Military Security Division known as the 'Palestine Branch' in 2014, and supervised the torture of detainees there. Before being appointed to run the branch, he was a detective officer there, becoming an assistant to the head of the branch in 2012. He was also appointed as Head of the Military Security Branch in Deir Ez-Zour city in 2013, Head of the Military Security Branch in Homs city in 2016, and Head of al Mazza Branch of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate between 2010 and 2014.

We note that Dahi has been nicknamed the 'Monster of Ghouta' for his participation in regime raids on the cities and towns of the Eastern Ghouta region, where he participated in the raid on Saqba city in the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus on Saturday, June 16, 2012, which resulted at the time in the deaths and arrests of dozens of civilians. He also participated in a massacre in Mesraba town in the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus on Wednesday, April 4, 2012.

Shafiq Ahmad Massa

a Brigadier-General born in 1956, whose mother's name is Abba, comes from al Zara village in the western suburbs of Hama. He has served as the Head of the [Raid Branch 215](#) affiliated with the Military Security Division and supervised the crackdown on and detention of peaceful demonstrators in 2011 by members of his branch in the Kafrsousa neighborhood of Damascus. He is also accused of committing torture against and issuing orders to carry out extra-

judicial killings of detainees in Branch 215, which is known as the 'Death Branch' due to the high number of deaths due to torture there.

Ahmad Alia

an officer from Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, the director of the prison in Branch 215, is currently aged 60. He is well known for issuing torture orders in Branch 215, as well as for his sectarianism and brutality towards detainees. He supervises the inspection of female detainees, with many of the female detainees we spoke with telling us about the harassment they had been subjected to by Ahmad Alia. He also supervises the distribution of food to the cells and, according to information obtained from former detainees, he's known for routinely depriving the entire population of group cells of food as punishment, or depriving individual detainees of part of their already meagre food rations. Ahmad Alia is also known for preventing detainees from leaving Branch 215 for medical treatment, except in very rare cases.

We note that Ahmad Alia is known as 'Gargamel' among the female detainees.

Abdul Salam Fajr Mahmoud

born in 1959, a Brigadier-General, whose mother's name is Shahznan, comes from al Fou'a village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Abdul Salam is the head of the Investigation Branch affiliated with the Air Security division in Damascus city. Abdul Salam has practiced various methods of torture at the Air Security division's Mazza Military Prison and is accused of being personally

responsible for the murder of many detainees, most prominently the children Hamza al Khatib and Thamer al Shara'i, according to testimony provided by Afaq Ahmad, a defector from the branch's administrative staff.

According to accounts from former detainees obtained by the SNHR, Abdul Salam Mahmoud was responsible for supervising the transfer of the bodies of detainees who died due to torture in the interrogation branch to the Military Hospital 601 located in the Mazza neighborhood of Damascus city; these transfers take place after other detainees are forced to use marker pens to number their cellmates' bodies.

Jawdat al Ahmad

a Brigadier-General, from Qerdaha city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, has been the head of the Air Security department in the central region in Homs city since 2011. During his tenure, the Air Security Branch has been used for systematic, widespread and extremely brutal torture; he has allocated a section of the ground floor in the branch for the daily mass torture of detainees. According to survivors of detention there, Jawdat al Ahmad imposes penalties on personnel responsible for torture if they fail to inflict it with sufficient brutality against detainees. The SNHR has also learned from the accounts of some survivors of detention there that Jawdat al Ahmad supervised the abuse of detainees' bodies and gave orders that they be dumped in the streets near neighborhoods whose residents had opposed the Syrian regime to spread further fear in those neighborhoods. We also note that Jawdat al Ahmad participated in several of the massacres committed in Homs governorate, including the massacres in Bab al Dreib, Karm al Zaytoun, al Bayyada, Baba Amr and Ashera, as well as the infamous al Sa'a (the Clock Tower Square) massacre that took place in Homs city on Sunday, April 17, 2011, when his personnel stationed on the roofs of buildings near the Police Command building and in the road between the old and new Clock Tower Squares, opened fire indiscriminately on civilians.

Ryad Habib Kharfan Abbas

is a Major-General, from Ein Qayta village, which is administratively a part of the Beit Yashout district, in the Jabla area of Latakia governorate. He is the Commander of the Military Police in Syria, which is responsible for the management of military deten-

tion centers, including the infamous Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. In mid-2013, he was the Head of the Political Security Branch in Aleppo city where he directly supervised interrogations and torture, in addition to issuing orders to detectives empowering them to use all methods of torture during interrogation.

Ghassan Jawdat Ismail

a Major-General, from Jneinet Raslan town, east of the Draikeesh area in Tartus governorate, born in 1960, is currently the Director of Air Security, and was formerly the Deputy Director of Air Security.

Ghassan Ismail issued orders for his personnel to participate, along with the Fourth Division, in the repression and shooting of demonstrators in Darayya city in Damascus Suburbs governorate in 2011, and is accused of liquidating detainees in the Mazza Military prison in Damascus city, and of forcibly disappearing other detainees. He is also accused of involvement, along with Brigadier General Wafik Naser, the former president of the Military Security Branch, in repeated kidnappings that took place in Suwayda in 2018.

Ghassan held three positions before being promoted to the Deputy Director of Air Security, being appointed as the Head of the State Security Branch in Suwayda governorate in 2016, prior to which he was the Head of the Special Tasks Branch from 2011.

In July 2012, Ghassan was one of 27 people named on a list of 27 Syrian regime individuals included in the 17th package of EU sanctions.

Iyad Iskandar Mandou

a Brigadier General, from Ram al Anz village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, has held several senior positions within the Air Force Intelligence Service in several Syrian governorates. In 2011, Iyad Mandou held the position of head of the Airport Security and Protection Battalion at Damascus International Airport, after which he was promoted in September 2016 to head the Air Force Intelligence division for the northern region, namely 'the governorates of Aleppo and Idlib.' In July 2018, he was appointed as the Head of al Manteqa (Area) Branch - Branch 227- of the Military Intelligence Division, though he remained in this post for only three months before being transferred. The Syrian Network for Human Rights believes that Iyad Mandou is currently the Head of the Air Force Intelligence of the eastern region of Syria.

Imad Muhammad

a Brigadier General, succeeded Brigadier General Iyad Mandou as the Head of Branch 227 in 2018.

Adib Nemr Salameh

a Major-General, born in 1953, from Daher al Mughar village, which is administratively a part of al Salamiya city in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, was the Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the northern region of Aleppo governorate from 2006 until 2016. In September 2016, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the Air Intelligence Department throughout Syria, with his successor as head of its northern region being Brigadier General Iyad Mandou. Adib Salameh is considered one of the most prominent assistants to Major General Jamil al Hasan in the management of the regime's infamous Air Force Intelligence Service in Syria.

Osama Ali Asaad

a Brigadier General, was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Daraa governorate in July 2019; in January 2021, he was promoted from Colonel to Brigadier General.

Akram Muhammad

a Major-General, from Hadida village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, headed the State Security branch in the Aleppo governorate between 2009 and 2012; in 2013, he became head of the '255' branch of the General Intelligence 'State Security' in Damascus city, succeeding Brigadier General Ghassan Khalil. Three years later in 2016, Muhammad was appointed as Head of the State Security branch in Tartus governorate; at the beginning of 2019, he was promoted from Brigadier General to Major-General. In May 2019, he was appointed to the position of first deputy head of the General Intelligence Department throughout Syria.

Anas Ali Zreiq

a Brigadier General, was appointed Head of the Political Security branch in Aleppo city in December 2020.

Jawdat Ibrahim al Safi

a Brigadier General, from Dirotan village, which is administratively a part of Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Damascus Suburbs in 2016; in February 2015, he was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Suwayda governorate, succeeding Brigadier General Muhammad Hikmat Ibrahim. Al Safi previously served in the '154' Regiment in 2011, which is considered responsible for the regiment's checkpoints in the Damascus area.

Samer Muhammad Sweidan

a Brigadier General, from Barmaya village, which is administratively a part of Banyas city in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, was appointed in October 2020 as Head of the Political Security Branch in Hasaka city, succeeding Brigadier General Amjad Nizami. He had previously been appointed as Head of the Investigation Branch of the Political Security branch of Raqqa governorate in June 2019.

Sayel Asaad Daoud

a Brigadier General, from Rabah village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, is currently the head of the Air Force Security Branch in Homs city. In 2011, he was the deputy head of the Air Force Intelligence Branch in Homs city, supervising hundreds of arrest campaigns, along with the interrogation and torture of detainees at the Homs Air Force Branch. He continued working at the Air Force Security branch in Homs city until the beginning of 2012, after which he was assigned the task of establishing the National Defense Forces in Homs.

Ryad Shehadah

a Brigadier General, was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Damascus city in December 2020, after heading the Political Security branch in Homs city.

Adnan al Ahmad

a Brigadier General, was appointed as Head of the Patrols Branch - Branch 216 - in October 2018, succeeding Brigadier General Muhammad Zamrini. Al-Ahmad previously worked as the Head of the Military Security

Branch in Latakia between 2011 and 2015, before becoming Head of the Military Security Branch in Tartus in January 2018.

Ghassan Halim Khalil

a Major-General, was appointed in 2017 to the position of Assistant Director of the State Security Department under Major-General Muhammad Dib Zaitoun. Prior to this, Khalil served as Head of the '255' Information Branch of the State Security Service between 2010 and 2013, when he was appointed Head of the External Branch, 'Branch 279', on the recommendation of Major-General Ali Mamlouk, who headed the State Security Department before being transferred to the National Security Office.

In 2020, he was appointed Governor of Hasaka governorate; we issued a [report previously](#) on the Syrian regime appointing military leaders involved in committing crimes against humanity and war crimes to the highest levels of civilian leadership in the state.

Mazen Hawwash al Kanj

a Brigadier General, from Latakia city, was the head of the Military Security Branch in Aleppo governorate (2018), the head of the Military Security Branch in Hama governorate (2015), the head of the Military Security Branch in Deir Ez-Zour governorate (2014), and the head of the Military Security Department in al Nabk city (2011). Al-Kanj has been awarded several honorary medals by the Russian leadership at the Hmeimim airbase.

Muhammad Khalouf

a Major-General, from Assal al Ward city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, headed Branch 235, known as the 'Palestine Branch' of the Military Intelligence Division from 2009 until April 2014. He currently holds the position of Deputy Director of the General Intelligence Department.

Muhammad Zamrini

a Brigadier general, from Safita city in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, was appointed as Head of the Patrols Branch - Military Intelligence Division - in 2015, and previously served as Head of the Military Security branch in Homs city in 2011.

Muhammad Ammar Zakariya Sardili

a Brigadier General, who was formerly Head of the Information Branch, was appointed as Head of the Political Security Division's Investigation Branch in Hama city in June 2019.

Mufid Warda

a Brigadier General, appointed as Deputy Head of the Military Security Branch in Homs governorate in 2017, previously held the position of Head of the Military Security Detachment in Talkalakh city in the western suburbs of Homs governorate in 2011. In April 2014, the then Colonel Mufid Warda was transferred to succeed Colonel Mazen al Kanj as Head of the Military Security Department in al Nabk. In 2016, Colonel Mufid was promoted to Brigadier General, and transferred to al Keswah city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, where he headed the Military Security Department in the city.

Naser al Ali

a Major-General, from Maqtaa al Hajar village, which is administratively a part of Manbej city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, is the Director of the Political Security Service in Syria. Previously in 2012, he was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Aleppo governorate, and in 2013 he was transferred to Tartus city to serve as Head of the Political Security branch in the governorate, remaining there for several months, before being appointed as Head of the Political Security Branch in Damascus in mid-2013. On July 7, 2019, a decree was issued appointing him as Head of the Political Security Division, succeeding Major-General Husam Louqa.

Wafik Naser

a Brigadier General, from the suburbs of Jabla in Latakia governorate, was tasked with heading the Military Security Branch in Suwayda governorate in October 2011; in 2012, he was appointed to succeed Major-General Zuhair Hamad as Head of the Security and Military Committee in the Southern Region, serving in this post until October 2017; at the beginning of 2018, he was transferred to the Military Intelligence Branch in Hama governorate, before being appointed as Head of the Military Security Branch in Aleppo governorate in August 2020.

Yaser Muhsen al Sulaiman

a Brigadier General, was appointed in June 2019 as Head of the Political Security Branch in Aleppo governorate; prior to this, he was the Head of the Political Security Division's Patrols Branch before being appointed as Head of the Central Political Investigation Branch known as 'al Fayhaa Branch'.

Muhammad Mahmoud Mahalla

a Major-General, from Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia, born in 1959, was appointed in April 2015 as Head of the Military Intelligence Division. In 2009, he took control of the Political Security Department, where he assumed the role of Head of the Information Branch. He was subsequently appointed as Deputy Head of the Political Security Division with the rank of Major-General; in March 2015, he was transferred to the Military Intelligence Division to become the Deputy Head of the Division, then headed by Major-General Rafiq Shehadah, before being appointed as Head of the division April 2015 up until 2019.

Kefah Melhem

a Major-General, from Jnainet Raslan village in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, is currently the Head of the Military Intelligence Division. In 2014, Melhem was appointed Head of the Information Branch of the Military Intelligence Division, and in July 2014, he was promoted to Major-General and appointed as Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Division.

Muhammad Ibrahim al Shaar

a Major-General, from al Heffa city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, born in 1950, previously served as Head of the Military Security Branch in Tartus and Head of the Military Security Branch in Aleppo, before becoming Head of the '227' al Manteqa (Area) Branch of the Military Intelligence Division in 2006; he was subsequently assigned to head the Military Police. Despite reaching retirement age, he was appointed on April 14, 2011 as Minister of the Interior, serving in this post until November 2018.

Husam Muhammad Nouri Anya Louqa

a Major-General, from Khanaser city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate, became Head of the Political Security Division in 2018 after serving as the Assistant Director of the General Intelligence Department since 2016. Prior to this, from 2011, he served as the Head of the Political Security branch in Homs city before becoming Deputy Head of the city's Military and Security Committee.

Naser Samee Dib

a Major-General, from Ein al Arous village in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, held several positions in the Political Security Service. In 2017, he was appointed as an Assistant to the Head of the Political Security Division, serving in this post until July 7, 2019, when he was promoted to the position of Director of the Criminal Security Department. In December 2020, he was appointed as Assistant to the Minister of Interior.

Nofal al Hussein

a Brigadier General, from al Bayyada village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, held the position of Head of the Military Security Branch in Idlib governorate from 2010 until 2015, after which he retired from service. Al-Hussein is considered responsible for the executions of detainees in detention centers in Idlib city, following the withdrawal of Syrian regime forces from Idlib governorate.

Ibrahim al Wa'ri

a Major-General, from Abu Hakfa village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, was appointed Head of al Manteqa (Area) Branch known as Branch

227 in 2016, having held several more junior positions in the same branch; in February 2017, he was appointed as Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs. In June 2021, he was appointed Deputy Head of the General Military Intelligence Division.

Suleiman al Tinawi

a Brigadier General, from Jieroud city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, was appointed in July 2018 as Head of the Information Branch of the Air Force Intelligence Department. Prior to this, in 2011, he served as Head of the Central Office and Director of the Office of Major-General Jamil al Hasan.

Malek Ali Habib

a Major-General, from Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, held several senior positions at the Military Security Service. The Syrian Network for Human Rights believes that he is currently leading the forces of the Military Security Branch in military operations in the Syrian Badiya Region; he previously held the position of Head of the Military Security Branch in the Badiya region, known as 'the Tadmur Branch', and is considered responsible for torture and executions that took place in the branch.

Emad Ahmad Mayhoub

a Brigadier General, from Saghata village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, served as the Head of the Military Security Branch in Latakia governorate, then the Military Security Branch in Tartus governorate. In August 2020, he was appointed as Head of the Military Security Branch '261' in Homs governorate, before being the Head of the Military Intelligence Division in Damascus in June 2021.

Bassam Muhammad Khaddour

a Brigadier General, was appointed as Head of the Political Security branch in Hama city in June 2019. In 2020, he was appointed as the Head of the Political Security branch in Damascus Suburbs governorate, serving in this position to the current date.

Louay al Ali

a Brigadier General, from Tartus city, was appointed in 2018 as Head of the Military Security Branch in Suwayda - Branch 217, Daraa governorate Department.

Suleiman Musa Qana

a Brigadier General, from Jbab village in the suburbs of Daraa governorate, was the Head of the Military Security Branch in Tartus governorate, before being transferred in June 2021 to the Military Security Branch in Homs governorate and being appointed as its Head.

Kamal al Hasan

a Brigadier General, currently holds the position of Head of al Manteqa (Area) Branch in Damascus city, affiliated with the Military Intelligence Division.

Jamal Khatib

a Colonel, currently work at al Manteqa (Area) Branch in Damascus city.

Ibrahim Abbas

a Brigadier General, is the Head of the Military Security Branch in Hama governorate.

Osama Sayouh

a Brigadier General, from Ta'nita town in the suburbs of Tartus governorate, is the Head of Branch 215 'Raid and Storm Brigade' of the Military Intelligence Division.

In general, every official in the Syrian regime is fully aware of the regime's torture practices, often participating in them, and is capable of acting to save detainees from torture; those who have not done so are implicated in and contributing directly to the crime of torture. The Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity clearly defines the responsibility of individuals in its second article, which states¹⁰: "If any of the crimes mentioned in article I is committed, the provisions of this Convention shall apply to representatives of the State authority and private individuals who, as principals or accomplices, participate in or who directly incite others to the commission of any of those crimes, or who conspire to commit them, irrespective of the degree of completion, and to representatives of the State authority who tolerate their commission."

VI. Legislative Amnesty Decree No. 13 of 2021, Similar to the Previous Seventeen Amnesty Decrees, Didn't End or Reduce the Frequency of Torture or Arrest:

None of the amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime, which number at least eighteen to date, have led to the release of any detainees or forcibly disappeared persons imprisoned in connection with the uprising for freedom. On the contrary, we continue to document ongoing arrests on various pretexts of any person who participated in the political uprising.

Recently, the Syrian regime's President issued Legislative Decree [No. 13](#) on Sunday, May 2, 2021, which provided for a general amnesty for perpetrators of misdemeanors, offences, and felonies that were committed before the date of its issuance. Looking at the articles of this decree, we find that it provided amnesty for very limited charges usually used against detainees on the basis of expressing their opinion or in connection with support for the popular uprising, with such detainees usually charged with several offences simultaneously, so that if the amnesty decree includes one of these charges, it does not include the other. The following are the cases of arbitrary arrest and torture that we documented since the issuance of this decree, about which we will issue an extensive report in the next few days.

The Record of Arrest Cases by Syrian Regime Forces Since the Issuance of Decree No. 13 of 2021:

The SNHR's Detainees Department team has documented at least 159 arrests, including three children, between the issuance of Amnesty Decree No. 13 on May 2, 2021, and June 2021, by Syrian regime forces. The arrests carried out by Syrian regime forces have targeted people who were granted a settlement certificate, who received promises from the regime that they would not be harassed after settling their status. The record of the arrest cases shows that Syrian regime forces arrested more individuals than they released, both according to Decree No. 13 or since their sentences had expired combined, which confirms that the Syrian regime is still continuing its policy of arrest and enforced disappearance and does not seek in any way to reduce the number of detainees held in its detention centers, issuing fake amnesty decrees purely for use in political disinformation.

The Death Toll Due to Torture Since the Issuance of Decree No. 13 of 2021:

The SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 13 individuals due to torture and medical negligence in the Syrian regime's detention centers, since May 2, including two who had been granted settlement certificates resolving their security status, while another, who was formerly a member of the Syrian regime army, was arrested at the beginning of 2021 and died a few weeks after his arrest. Meanwhile, the body of another detainee was handed over to his family from al Basel Military Hospital in Homs city, bearing signs of torture, while the remaining victims' bodies have not been handed over to their families.

¹⁰ UN, Convention on the non-applicability of statutory limitations to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Article 2, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1970/11/19701111%2002-40%20AM/Ch_IV_6p.pdf

VII. Torture and Its Methods by the Parties to the Conflict in Syria:

All the parties to the conflict have practiced torture, even if they differ in terms of extent, manner and methods. As we mentioned earlier, the Syrian regime was the first party to practice torture and bears by far the greatest responsibility, being responsible for the vast majority of all documented deaths due to torture; we have issued an [extensive report](#) on 72 of the torture methods most commonly used by the Syrian regime over the years. The other parties to the conflict have replicated a large number of these methods, and we have noticed that they share many of the same characteristics. There are 10 main torture methods practiced by all parties to the conflict within their detention centers, which are:



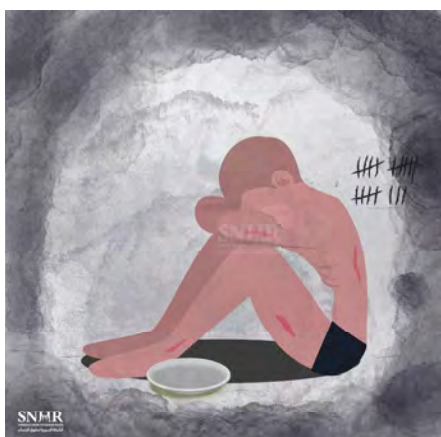
1. **Electrocution:** Battery clips connected to an electrical control device are used, with the battery clips fixed to sensitive and vulnerable parts of the body (lips - nose - ear - genitals - fingertips). This practice causes catastrophic effects including the melting and burning of the electrified 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.



2. **The Tire:** The detainee's body is bent over and stuffed into a car tire, leaving him squashed with his hands touching his feet and unable to move, before being savagely beaten and kicked on various parts of his body. The detainee is left inside the tire for hours before being released from it, causing additional severe pain and difficulty in movement.



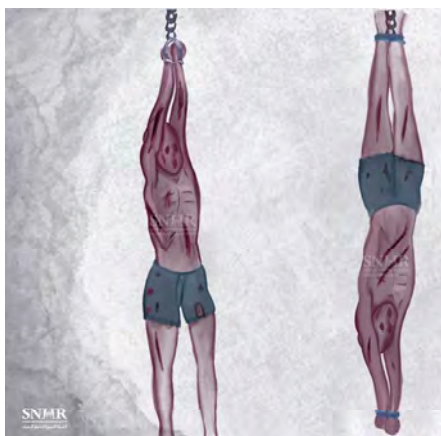
3. **Solitary Confinement:** The detainee is kept in a solitary cell, which is a small, cramped and narrow cell, and is detained there for the entire duration of interrogation, which may last for long days and even months. During that period, the detainee is prevented from going outside to be exposed to sunlight or fresh air, and prohibited from communicating with anyone, with all his requests, such as for medicine or other basic items, being flatly rejected. Solitary confinement can last for long periods, even extending to years.



- 4. Starvation:** The imprisoned individual/ detainee is deprived of part or all of his/her usual food ration as a punishment or to coerce a confession in exchange for food; even in 'normal' circumstance, imprisoned individuals/ detainees are usually given exceedingly small amounts of food throughout the entire duration of their detention, causing a significant weight loss of more than 50 kg among adults.



- 5. Exhaustion:** The detainee is forced to engage in forced labor after being subjected to torture or is deprived of food as a punishment, such as cleaning corridors, washing clothes and dishes, frequently for long hours, and carrying heavy objects, which causes the detainee's already weakened body to collapse.



- 6. The shabeh:** The detainee's hands or feet are tied to a metal cylinder fixed to the ceiling, leaving his body suspended, not touching the ground, so his full weight is hanging from the wrists or feet, causing severe swelling of the hands or feet, with the detainee often left in this excruciatingly painful position for many hours or days.



- 7. Beating:** The detainee is restrained and subjected to continuous and severe beatings on all parts of his body. Beating is practiced on a continuous basis as part of all the torture methods and positions used. It is practiced with a club, rod, electrical cables, or thick plastic tubing.



8. Falqa (Bastinado/Foot Whipping): The detainee's hands and feet are tied. The security members responsible for torture then raise the detainee's feet and beat their soles with an iron, wooden or plastic truncheon or with cables, electrical wires or hoses. This beating usually lasts for hours and causes swelling to the feet and skin lacerations. Throughout this torture, the security personnel restrain the detainee in a fixed position and prevent him from moving or trying to escape from the beatings. Usually when this process is finished, the detainee is then forced to stand on his wounded feet, and to jump and walk, causing further agonizing pain.



9. 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.

10. Flogging: The detainee is stripped naked and restrained in various ways, such as being tied to a pillar or forced to lie on his abdomen or back, then flogged. Flogging is usually practiced simultaneously along with other methods and stress positions such as al shabeh.

We will deal with each of these parties in some detail in the following paragraphs, and list the most notable incidents of deaths due to torture that they have caused:

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

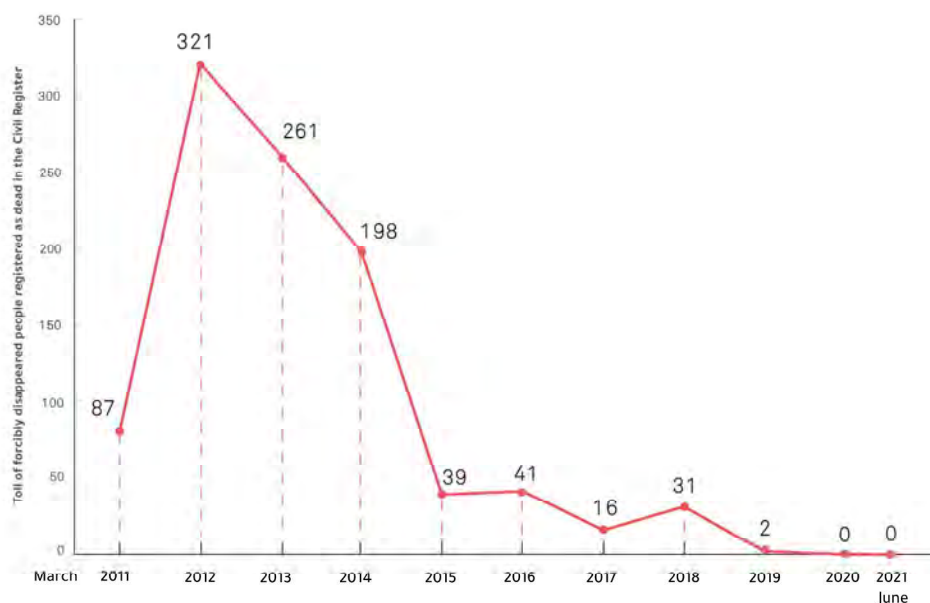
All arrests and enforced disappearances carried out by Syrian regime forces have been accompanied by torture, which begins from the first moment of arrest and continues throughout the period of detention and enforced disappearance in various forms and methods, all of which are widespread and deliberately practiced in all detention centers, with torture affecting all detainees, including women, children, the elderly, disabled, invalids and people with special needs, excluding no-one. Torture often reaches exceptionally violent stages during the interrogation of the detainee with the aim of retaliating against him/her or extracting confessions and information under torture. 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. This abuse also coincides with intentional negligence towards detainees' healthcare, as well as 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, in addition to depriving the detainee of clothes and blankets in extremely low or high temperatures, with these barbaric conditions that the detainee may suffer from and endure for many years leading to a rising death toll due to torture and neglect of healthcare, causing almost daily deaths among detainees.

With the 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, without taking any preventive measures within the public facilities in areas under its control, the already grave situation facing prisoners in regime jails is now critical, particularly in light of the detention conditions that are favorable for the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19; this now threatens the lives of approximately 131,000 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.

The SNHR team documented the deaths of at least 14,338 individuals, including 173 children and 74 women, in the Syrian regime detention centers between March 2011 and June 2021.

In previous reports, we talked about the phenomenon of the Syrian regime notifying the families of those the regime forcibly disappeared, through the civil registry departments, that their family members had died. The record of cases we documented reached 996, including nine children and two women. The SNHR believes that all of these disappeared individuals 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 to document, with the regime failing to hand over the detainees' bodies to their families. The following is a chart showing the distribution of the 996 cases by the years in which they were arrested by Syrian regime forces:

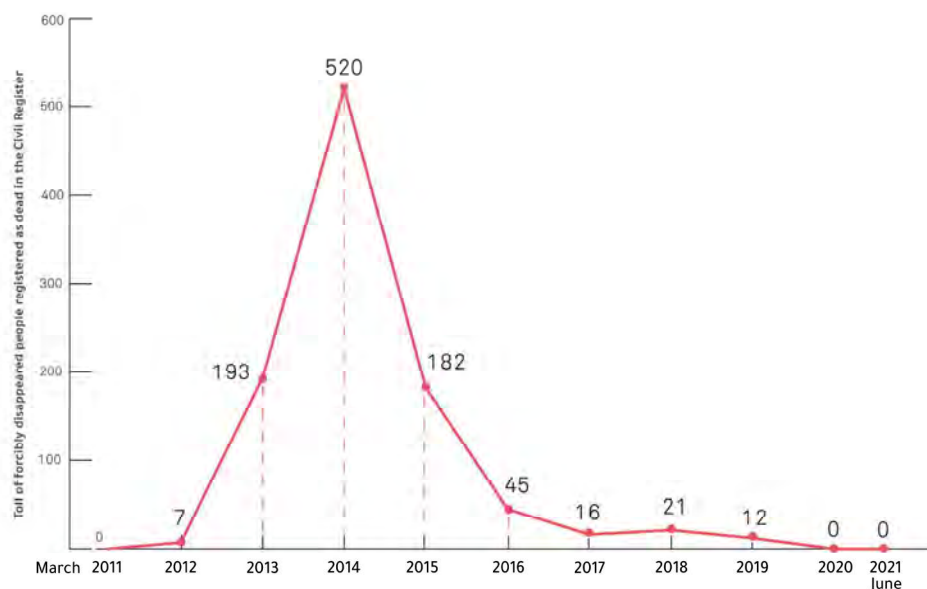
Record of the forcibly disappeared people registered as dead in the Civil Register departments



The chart shows that the great majority of the 996 cases that we have documented, were arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2012 then 2013, followed by 2014, which were the years that saw the largest wave of enforced disappearances into the Syrian regime's detention centers.

Record of the forcibly disappeared people registered as dead in the Civil Register departments

The 996 cases were distributed according to the years of death declared in the death notifications issued by the Civil Registry as follows:



This chart shows that the highest number among the 996 cases whose deaths was recorded was in 2014, according to the death notifications issued by the Civil Registry departments, followed by 2013 then 2015.

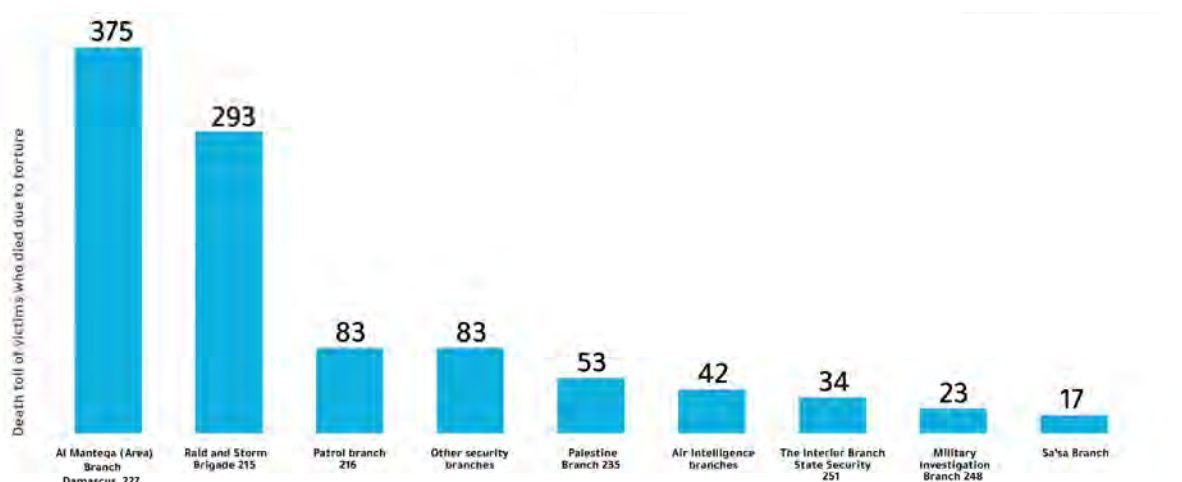
We have also been able to confirm the identity of around 1,003 Syrian citizens who appeared in the Caesar photos; we talked about our work in identifying the people who appeared in the Caesar photos in [previous detailed reports](#), and we confirm that we are still working on at least 560 cases of torture victims whose families submitted their photos to us, with SNHR still analyzing and cross-checking the information in these cases in which we have so far been unable to conclusively identify the victims.

This chart shows the distribution of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, whose identities have been confirmed by SNHR through leaked photos from the military hospitals, according to the years of the victims' arrests by Syrian regime forces:



This chart shows that the highest death toll of torture victims whose identities have been confirmed by SNHR through leaked photos from the military hospitals as having been arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2012, then 2013, which were the years that saw the largest wave of enforced disappearances into the Syrian regime's detention centers, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' database.

This chart shows the distribution of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, whose identities have been confirmed by SNHR through leaked photos from the military hospitals, according to the security branches in which they were killed:



The chart showing the death toll among torture victims whose identities have been confirmed by SNHR through leaked photos from the military hospitals shows that the majority were killed in Branch 227 'known as al Manteqa (Area) Branch' and Branch 215, known as the 'Raid and Storm Brigade'. This corresponds to the information we've catalogued on the SNHR database, which shows that these two branches are among the main security branches in which detainees and forcibly disappeared persons have died.

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

Bashar Qasem al Balkhi, from Nasib village in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, who was arrested in 2018 by Syrian regime forces and detained for about two years, was released on July 27, 2020, from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. These before and after photos taken prior to Bashar Qasem al Balkhi's arrest and following his release show the clear deterioration in his health and physical condition during detention.



On Wednesday, November 4, 2020, photos shared online showed detainees newly released by the Syrian regime from regime detention centers in Damascus governorate following the regime's release of about 62 detainees, all from Daraa governorate; among them were 22 individuals who had previously defected from Syrian regime forces. This release took place in the context of a special presidential pardon issued in relation to reconciliation agreements carried out by the regime in Daraa governorate, following the assassination of the prominent military leader, Adham al Karad. The Syrian regime gathered the detainees in the Daraa Governorate Building before their release. According to the families, relatives and friends of the released persons, and according to what we have registered in our database, the detainees had spent an average period of one to two years in the regime detention centers, suffering extremely poor conditions in terms of torture practices, medical negligence and an almost complete lack of healthcare, as well as severe overcrowding in the detention centers. The detainees were arrested without receiving any clarification of the reasons behind their arrests and without any arrest warrants being issued. The photo shows the poor health conditions of those released.



Muhammad Muhsen Medlej, from An-adan city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, who lives in al Hol-lok neighborhood in Aleppo city, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on January 24, 2017, while he was passing through one of the SDF's checkpoints in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and taken to al Basouta police station in al Basouta village, which is administratively a part of Afrin



Muhammad Medlej after his release
in 2021

Muhammad Medlej before his arrest and
enforced disappearance in 2017

city. He was subsequently transferred in February 2017 to the Black Prison in Rajo town, which is administratively a part of Afrin city, where he remained until July 2017. After being sentenced to three years in prison by the Syrian Democratic Forces, he was taken to the Central Jandaris Prison, located in Jandaris district, which is administratively a part of Afrin city, where his mother was able to visit him. In March 2018, he was handed over to the Syrian regime's State Security Force branch in Aleppo city, from where he was taken to one of the regime's detention centers in Damascus city. Muhammad was transferred between several prisons during his detention in Damascus city, including the Military Investigation Branch, the last of which was Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Friday, June 11, 2021, he was released from Seydnaya Military Prison. These before and after photos showing him prior to his arrest and following his release show the clear deterioration in his health and physical condition during detention.

On Saturday, June 19, 2021, photos shared online show detainees released by the Syrian regime, when the regime released 32 detainees, all of them from Damascus Suburbs governorate, from its detention centers in Damascus governorate. The release was the result of the 'reconciliation' process carried out by the regime in Damascus Suburbs governorate. According to family members, relatives and friends of the released persons and to the details on SNHR's database, the released individuals had completed periods of detention ranging between one to three years, during which they were detained in dreadful conditions, being subjected to torture, denied any healthcare or medical treatment, and kept in overcrowded cells ever since their detention, which was carried out in all cases without any clarification or reasons being provided to the detainees and without any arrest warrants being issued. The photos also show the clear deterioration in the health conditions of the gaunt released prisoners.



Photo of Muhammad Serdar after his release in 2021



Photo of the released Muhammad Serdar before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2018



Photo of Abdullah Antar after his release in 2021



Photo of the released Abdullah Antar before his arrest and enforced disappearance in 2018

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

Nedal Mustafa Amoud, born in 1986, from Zamalka town in the Eastern Ghouta, east of Damascus Suburbs governorate, was a lawyer, as well as an international taekwondo referee and trainer. He was arrested on Tuesday, July 17, 2018, by Syrian regime forces, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints at the entrance of Adra city, northeast of Damascus Suburbs governorate. Almost since that day, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention while preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Monday, June 15, 2020, SNHR received information that he had died in regime custody. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



The SNHR spoke with Ms. Basma¹¹, the aunt of lawyer Nedal Mustafa Amoud, who told us: **"Nedal was an international taekwondo referee and trainer, and he was also a lawyer. Military Security personnel arrested him while he was trying to enter Adra city to inspect his house after he left as a result of the battles between the Armed Opposition factions and the Syrian regime for years, and his fate remained unknown despite the appointment of a number of lawyers to find out his fate. On June 15, 2020, the lawyer appointed in his case informed his wife that he had died in March 2020 as a result of tuberculosis, and his body has not been handed over."** Ms. Basma indicated that Nedal was able to enter Adra city several times previously and had not been subjected to any arrest on those occasions.

Wesam Fawwaz Mer'i al Haj Ali, a college student at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at al Ba'ath University in Homs city, came from Kherbet Ghazala town in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate. Wesam, who was born in 1994, was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Monday, January 21, 2013, at the university. Almost since that day, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention while preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Monday, June 29, 2020, SNHR received information that he had died in regime custody. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



¹¹ Via phone on June 17, 2020

Dr. Ibrahim Abdul Qader al Zu'bi, a cardiologist who was a Ph.D. graduate in electrocardiography from the British University of Leicester, came from al Yadoda town in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate. Dr. al Zu'aibi, who was born in 1964, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime's Military Security branch on Monday, June 22, 2020, during a raid on his home in Damascus city's Baghdad Street and taken to the '248' Military Investigation branch in the city. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him.

On Thursday, July 30, 2020, Syrian regime forces informed Dr. al-Zu'aibi's family that he had died in al Muwasa Hospital in Damascus city. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare.



Ibrahim Abdul Qader al Zu'bi

Madyan Abdul Mun'em al Fares, a laboratory technician from Arnaba village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested in 2012 by Syrian regime forces at his workplace in Tishreen Hospital in Damascus city. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Wednesday, September 9, 2020, SNHR received information that he had died in a Syrian regime detention center in 2018. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



Madyan Abdul Mun'em al Fares

Ismail Ahmad Ibrahim al Shamali, a Palestinian with Jordanian nationality, born in 1953, had been living in Tafas city in the west of Daraa governorate and worked in trading prior to his arrest. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 1995, and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Supreme State Security Court (an exceptional political security court that lacks the most basic principles of fair trials) for alleged possession of secret documents and confidential information,

supposedly to ensure the safety of the state, in accordance with Article 272 of the Syrian Penal Code. This sentence was subsequently commuted to 20 years.



Photo of Ismail Ahmad Ibrahim al Shamali's body after handing it over to his family



Photo of Ismail Ahmad Ibrahim al Shamali during his arrest in Suwayda Central Prison

Ismail was transferred between several prisons during the period of his detention, including Seydnaya Military Prison, where he was prevented from contacting his family, then Adra Central Prison, before being transferred to the last one, al Suwayda Central Prison. Ismail's health deteriorated throughout the time of his imprisonment, and he was denied essential medical care, up until Tuesday, December 22, 2020, when warders from al Suwayda Central Prison took him to the National Hospital in al Suwayda governorate, where he died two days later on December 24, with his body being handed over to his family on December 25. SNHR has received information confirming that he died due to the medical negligence he suffered in al Suwayda Central Prison.

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Mahmoud al Shamali¹², Ahmad's nephew, who told us: **"My uncle Ibrahim was working trading goods between Turkey and Damascus, and he'd written several political books that he could not publish because he lived and worked in Syria. After his arrest in 1995, one of the regime's officers informed us that my uncle was arrested on charges of distorting ideas against the Ba'ath Party in Syria, and we could not visit him, find out where he was detained, or verify the accusation against him until 2011 after he was transferred from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate to Adra Central Prison and then to Suwayda Central Prison. After communicating with him, he told us that he was sentenced by the Supreme State Security Court to life imprisonment, then his sentence was commuted to 20 years in prison on charges of possessing confidential documents and information that had to be kept secret for the sake of the state's safety; the Syrian regime did not release him despite the expiration of his sentence, although he had obtained a release from his main case in mid-December 2020, and obtained another release on December 20, 2020, according to another case filed against him by Suwayda Central Prison, and he was waiting for its arrival by mail at the prison to be released. On December 22, 2020, he was taken to the National Hospital in Suwayda governorate, after his health condition worsened greatly in Suwayda Central Prison, and we were not informed of this until after his death on December 24, 2020."**

Muhammad Hussein al Zu'bi, a former fighter with a faction of the Armed Opposition from al Mseifra town in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in January 2019, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoint in Homs city heading from Daraa city to an Armed Opposition- controlled area in Idlib governorate, despite being among those who previously settled their security status with the regime. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On February 17, 2021, SNHR received information that he had died in custody. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate.



Muhammad Hussein al Zu'bi

¹² Via phone on December 26, 2020

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Alaa¹³, a relative of Muhammad al Zu'bi, who told us: **"While Muhammad was heading with his pregnant wife and son to the Idlib region in northern Syria in January 2019, Syrian regime forces arrested them at a checkpoint in Homs city. A whole month later, and after paying a large sum of money, they released his wife and son from one of the branches in Homs city, while the fate of Muhammad remained unknown. On February 17, 2021, his family was informed by a person that Muhammad had died in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, that was after paying a sum of money."**

Alaa indicated that Mohammad had settled his security status before leaving Daraa governorate so that he would not be persecuted while passing through the security checkpoints.

Muhammad Abboud Mustafa al Shebli, from al Mayadeen city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, born in 1981, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime's Military Security Force in mid-August 2018 in the city; during his detention, his mother managed to visit him three times in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Tuesday, February 23, 2021, his family learned of his death in November 2019 in Seydnaya Military Prison. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



The SNHR spoke with Mr. Khalil¹⁴, Muhammad's brother, who told us: **"In mid-August 2018, my brother Muhammad went from al Derbasiya city in the northern suburbs of Hasaka to al Mayadeen city in Deir Ez-Zour suburbs, to check on his children. After he'd spent three days in the city, Military Security Force personnel arrested him and took him to a branch in Deir Ez-Zour and then to Damascus City. After paying large sums of money and appointing a lawyer, we received information that he was being held in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, where his mother was able to visit him three times, the last of which was in 2019, and my mother noticed that his fingernails and toenails had been pulled out. At the end of 2020, my mother went to Seydnaya Military Prison to visit him, and she was informed that he was in the Military Security branch in Damascus city for investigation. On February 23, 2021, the lawyer informed us that Mohammad had been dead since November 2019."**

Ibrahim Sayel al Ammarin, a former fighter with an Armed Opposition faction from Nawa city in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Saturday, November 3, 2018, despite being among those who previously settled their security status with the regime. His family managed to visit him for the last time on January 6, 2021, in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Monday, March 22, 2021, his family received information that the Syrian regime had executed him in the prison on February 22, 2021, after he was sentenced to death by al Midan Military Court in Damascus city.

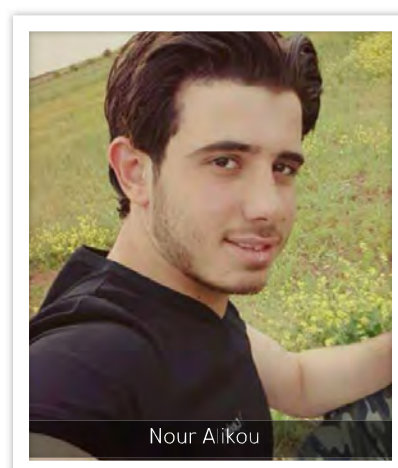


¹³ Via phone on February 19, 2021

¹⁴ Via phone on March 16, 2021

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Muhammad al Hourani¹⁵, a friend of Ibrahim and his family, who told us: “Ibrahim was previously a fighter in the ranks of the Armed Opposition factions. After Syrian regime forces took control of Daraa, he settled his security status, then Syrian regime forces arrested him in Nawa city. He was transferred between several security branches, the last of which was Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. His family learned that a death sentence had been issued against him by the al Midan Military Court in Damascus city, with the last visit by his family being on January 6, 2021, in Seydnaya Military Prison. On March 22, 2021, the lawyer informed Ibrahim’s family that he had been executed in Seydnaya Military Prison, but the death documents obtained by the family stated that he had died on February 22, 2021, as a result of a heart attack.”

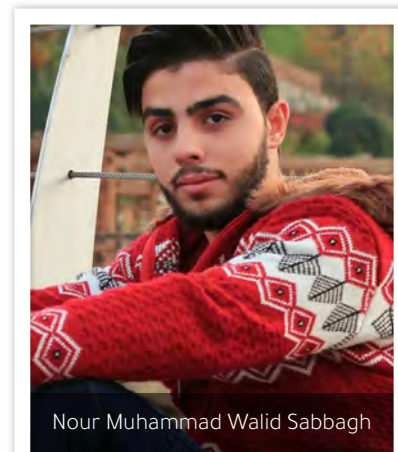
Nour Alikou, a fighter with the Ahrar al Sham Movement affiliated with a faction of the Armed Opposition, from Salqin city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1995, was arrested by members of Syrian Democratic Forces on Tuesday, June 6, 2017, in Afrin region in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. In January 2018, Syrian Democratic Forces handed him over to Syrian regime forces. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Sunday, March 7, 2021, his family learned from a former detainee released from the Syrian regime detention centers that Nour had died due to torture in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



Nour Alikou

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Saeed Alikou¹⁶, Nour Alikou’s cousin, who told us: “Nour was a fighter with the Ahrar al Sham Movement. Syrian Democratic Forces arrested him when he was in the Afrin area, and he remained detained for nearly six months, after which the SDF handed him over to Syrian regime force. Thereafter, no news was received about him at all, and we didn’t manage to obtain any information about him, until March 7, 2021, when one of the detainees released from Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs told us that he had been held with Nour, who had died as a result of torture and poor health. During their detention, the former detainee said, Nour told him that he had been transferred between several security branches in Damascus city before being transferred to Seydnaya Military Prison.”

Nour Muhammad Walid Sabbagh, born in 1998, from al Itha’a neighborhood in Aleppo city, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in April 2018 as he was passing through a regime checkpoint in Aleppo governorate on his way back from Turkey. His family was able to visit him for the last time in 2019 in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. On Tuesday, March 30, 2021, Syrian regime forces informed his family of his death. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to lack of health care in Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



Nour Muhammad Walid Sabbagh

¹⁵ Via phone on March 23, 2021

¹⁶ Via phone on March 7, 2021

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Abdul Rahim Manafikhi¹⁷, a friend of Nour's, who told us that Nour was arrested after his return from Turkey, "Nour traveled in November 2017 from the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces in Aleppo city to Turkey through the Bab al Hawa crossing; six months later, he decided to return from Turkey to Aleppo city in April. After entering the Syrian territory from the Bab al Hawa crossing, he was heading to the areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, and while he was passing through the first regime forces' checkpoint, he was arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. A year after his disappearance, his family paid a sum of \$14,000 to a regime officer, who told them that he was being held in Seydnaya Military Prison. Then, his family was able to visit him for the first and last time in Seydnaya Prison and he was in poor health (with tuberculosis) and receiving no treatment. After that, his fate remained unknown until March 30, 2021, when an officer informed his uncle of his death and handed him his personal ID." Abdul Rahim added, "Nour conducted the military service deferral transaction by virtue of his being 'the only male member of the family', before returning to Turkey, and he had no participation in the revolutionary uprising in Aleppo city."

Muhammad Abdul Karim al Jundi, from Nawa city in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in April 2011 in Nawa city over his participation in a protest against the Syrian regime. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Sunday, April 11, 2021, his family was notified that regime forces had executed Muhammad on July 10, 2013, inside a regime detention center after a death sentence was issued against him by al Midan Military Court in Damascus.

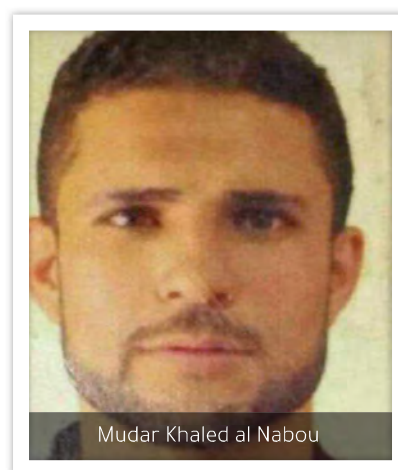


We spoke with Mr. Muhammad al Jundi¹⁸, a relative of the victim Muhammad al Jundi, who told us that Syrian regime forces had arrested Muhammad from his home in Nawa city, "The regime forces arrested him over his participation in the revolutionary uprising and anti-regime demonstrations in Daraa governorate, and they took him to one of the security branches in Damascus city. At the beginning of 2012, he was transferred from Damascus city to Suwayda Central Prison, without his family being able to visit him, and he remained in Suwayda Prison until the beginning of 2013, then he was transferred to the '215' Raid and Storm Brigade branch in Damascus city, after which there was no news about him at all." Muhammad added, "On April 11, 2021, Nour's family visited the Military Police Branch in Damascus city, where they were handed his identification documents, in addition to a paper confirming that he died on July 10, 2013, without his body being handed over."

¹⁷ Via phone on April 1, 2021

¹⁸ Via phone on April 11, 2021

Mudar Khaled al Nabou, from Ma'aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was a student at Damascus University's Faculty of Art when he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in August 2011 in Damascus city. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Thursday, April 29, 2021, his family was informed of his death. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture in one of the regime's detention centers. SNHR confirms that Syrian regime forces failed to hand over his body to his family.



Mudar Khaled al Nabou

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Moumen al Nabou¹⁹, Mudar's brother, who told us: **"My brother Mudar was an activist in the popular uprising in Damascus city. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces in August 2011 after one of his friends, an officer with the Syrian regime, lured him to the Political Security Branch in Damascus city, where he was held for nearly a year under investigation. After that, he was transferred between several security branches until 2014 when he was taken to Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, and was sentenced to death by al Midan Military Court."** Moumen added, **"My mother used to visit my brother regularly, and he was in good health, with his weight reaching 80 kg. In 2016, he was transferred to Seydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs, and after his mother visited him for the first time there, a month after he was transferred to Seydnaya Prison, his health condition was poor, his weight decreased to 35 kg, and he was subjected to torture before and after any visit by us. After several visits, the last of which was in 2017, we stopped visiting him for fear of torture, and he was sending us messages with detainees released from Seydnaya Prison on a continuous basis. In 2020, we appointed a lawyer to release him after the lawyer requested large sums of money, but all his attempts were unsuccessful. In April 2021, the lawyer told my mother to visit the Military Police Branch in Damascus city to receive his documents confirming that he died in April 2021, without his body being handed over."**

B. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham practices torture in a widespread manner in its detention centers, with the methods of torture it uses being very similar to those practiced by Syrian regime forces, while HTS has also devised methods of torture of its own such as the 'coffin'²⁰ and the 'scorpion'²¹, with SNHR documenting at least 15 methods of torture practiced systematically by HTS in its detention centers in a focused and deliberate manner against most of its detainees. The severity of torture that detainees are subjected to varies according to the charges against them, with the accused persons whom HTS considers its opponents, such as political activists, human rights defenders, foreign abductees, and members of the Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army, being subjected to more severe torture. The security wing of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham undertakes arrests, investigations and torture in secret detention centers it supervises, with the judiciary of the Salvation Government not interfering in these operations or knowing the fate of detainees held by the security wing, as it does not have the authority to obtain this information, unless the security wing transfers the detainee to the court for trial.

¹⁹ Via phone on May 10, 2021

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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'.

During its practice of torture, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham does not distinguish much between children, women, the elderly, the sick or the injured, while in many cases, the torture assumes a retaliatory nature. The detainee suffers throughout the period of his/her detention or his/her transfer between detention centers from dreadful conditions, including lack of hygiene and ventilation, being placed in solitary confinement for long months, and being deprived of sufficient food and water or clothes and blankets.

The SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 28 individuals, including two children, in HTS' detention centers since the group's establishment in early 2012 up until June 2021.

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

The SNHR spoke with Ahmad al Ma'ari²², a media activist from Talbisa town in Homs governorate, who had been living in Idlib city since 2014 at the time of his arrest after fleeing his hometown due to being persecuted by Syrian regime forces. On January 3, 2021, he was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel over criticizing Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in a channel on the Telegram app, and he was transferred between several detention centers until being released on April 8, 2021. He told us:

"Gunmen raided my house at dawn and I thought they were a gang of kidnappers, but then it became clear to me that they were the Hay'at Tahrir al Sham security body, who beat me and dragged me towards the car in front of my wife and children, then they took me to a place near Idlib city, which I think was a security headquarters, where they put me in a solitary cell. An hour later, someone they call 'the Sheikh' came and suspended me from both of my legs from the ceiling and started whipping me as he asked me for the names of those who support me to publish against Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, and accused me of being an agent one time for the US-led coalition and others for the regime; I remained suspended for three days before they put me in a very narrow room that I could not even stretch my legs in; I stayed like this for weeks before they transferred me to Idlib Central Prison, where the situation was no better except that I was in a group dormitory, not in a solitary cell."

Ahmad told us that he was referred to the judiciary in Idlib city, and his family appointed a lawyer for him and paid a sum of \$5,000 so that the HTS security apparatus agreed to release him on condition that he would not publish any posts at all, whether against or for Hay'at Tahrir al Sham. Ahmad left the areas controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham after his release and moved to live in the northern suburbs of Aleppo.

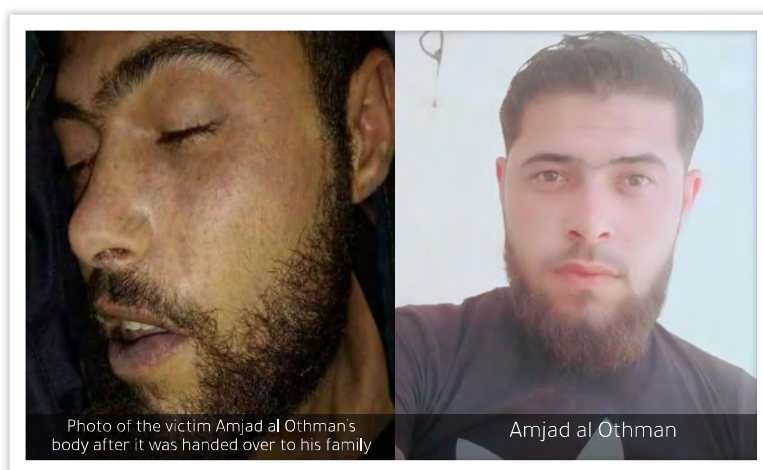
The most notable victims of death due to torture by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

Hussein Muhammad al Alloush, a 16-year-old child from Ebleen village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, who was living in Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of the governorate, was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, in Sarmada city, and taken to an HTS detention center, where he was tortured to death. On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, his body was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture.



²² Via phone on April 13, 2021

Amjad al Othman, a former fighter in the ranks of the Ahrar al Sham Movement, one of the Armed Opposition factions, from al Bara village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested in the village by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel on April 24, 2021, on charges of theft, with the HTS members taking him to their police station in Ihsem town in the southern suburbs of Idlib. On May 5, 2021, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel informed his family of his death, which occurred after he was transferred from the Ihsem town police station to a hospital in Idlib governorate, and handed over his body to his family.



C. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces:

Since the beginning of 2016, SNHR noted that torture at the hands of Syrian Democratic Forces began to be practiced on a widespread and focused manner inside their detention centers or while conducting raids, persecutions and arrests; we also recorded a noticeable increase in incidents of torture and in the death toll among the SDF's torture victims, with the SDF resorting to the use of various methods of torture somewhat similar to those practiced in the Syrian regime's detention centers, with the most common methods used being the shabeh, severe and injurious beatings, the tire, falqa, drowning, electrocution, and pulling out of fingernails or toenails as a means to extract confessions, with torture often carried out in a vengeful way and based on ethnic bigotry.

The conditions of detention by Syrian Democratic Forces are abysmal, with detainees being crammed into narrow spaces, and routinely subjected to periodic punishments, such as deprivation of food and medicine, or prohibited from going out for fresh air or family visits, in addition to often being held in solitary confinement for long days and months. The SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 67 individuals, including one child and two women, in the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers, since its establishment - since the establishment of the Self-Management Forces of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party - in January 2014 until June 2021. We recorded SDF handing over a number of the victims' bodies to their families, with the bodies bearing signs of torture.

We also note that Syrian Democratic Forces continue to detain tens of thousands of Syrian citizens and thousands of people of other nationalities in al Hawl desert camp without any legal basis and without judicial arrest warrants, some of whom have been detained for years. The harsh conditions of detention, the living conditions, and the lack of food and medical care constitute multiple types of psychological and physical torture. We previously issued an extensive report on [al Hawl Camp](#) and the conditions of families' detention there.

The most notable incidents of torture by Syrian Democratic Forces:

Muhammad al Mahmoud, a 32-year-old worker in a shop selling mobile phone accessories, from Deir Ez-Zour city, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on Tuesday, June 16, 2020, in a raid on his home in Deir Ez-Zour city, and was released on Sunday, July 12, 2020.

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Muhammad al Mahmoud²³, who told us: “A Syrian Democratic Forces patrol arrested me from my family’s home in Deir Ez-Zour city at five a.m. after they searched the house and the shop where I work, then they tied me up and covered my eyes with a piece of cloth; on the way, I was beaten and insulted by the personnel inside the car, and when we arrived at al Kasra Prison in al Kasra town in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, they untied my chains and put me in one of the prison cells, where there were about 30 detainees, with the cells measuring 4 by 3 meters. The situation inside the prison was very tragic in all respects, as they treated us like animals with insults, curses and beatings, and there was no health care at all, while there were many detainees who were suffering from diseases and the warden refused to bring them medicine, in addition to the fact that food was not sufficient, only two meals were provided to us (at eight in the morning and three in the afternoon) and many of the detainees’ health worsened due to the spread of diseases such as scabies and malnutrition.” Muhammad added that he was released as a result of tribal mediation and no specific charges were brought against him.

We also spoke with Mr. Muhammad al Mousa²⁴, a 33-year-old man from al Sh-heil city in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, who was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Wednesday, May 20, 2021, in al Sh-heil city on unclear charges, which are believed to have resulted from a security report in which he was accused of belonging to factions of the opposition, al Qaeda and ISIS, and he was tortured during his detention, before being released on Sunday, May 30, 2021, telling us:

“Previously, SDF arrested me on June 16, 2020, and released me on August 12, 2020. I was then arrested for about a month because of a malicious report against me; in April 2021, SDF raided my house again, and fortunately, I was not there; on May 20, 2021, my house was raided a second time and I was sleeping. One of the personnel asked me, ‘Are you an IDP or originally from al Sh-heil city?’ I said ‘I am from al Sh-heil and my name is Muhammad,’ then they handcuffed me and insulted me with profanity and severe beatings. I was taken to a vehicle in which there were seven other detainees, and we were taken to SDF’s main headquarters in al Bseira city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We were severely beaten without mercy all the way, until we reached al Bseira city. They wrote down our personal data and photographed us; an hour later, we were detained, 16 people in one small cell, and then I was interrogated, with the interrogators taking information about me since 2010 to date. Their questions were ‘With which party you were working and of which faction were you a member (al Nusra Front, the Free Army, or ISIS)?’ I am a civilian and I don’t have any affiliation with any party whatsoever. I was photographed several times and they were sending the photos to their other centers in order to identify whether I was wanted or not. When they received a reply to the photos, another person came and interrogated me and repeated the same questions, but with severe beatings, so I told him ‘You arrested me last year and released me and I had nothing to do with anything.’” Muhammad added, “We were 18 people in the cell, deprived of medicine, and the food was very poor; there were children between the ages of 11 and 15 in the cell; after 11 days in this cell and after they were sure of my innocence of any charges, I was released.”

²³ Via phone on August 10, 2020

²⁴ Via phone on June 5, 2021

On Saturday, August 15, 2020, Syrian Democratic Forces personnel raided a poultry house in al Hawayej village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate and arrested eight civilians working there, taking them all to one of the SDF detention centers in the village. We documented their release on the same day, after they were beaten and tortured with sharp implements, with Syrian Democratic Forces personnel also stealing the birds from inside the poultry house.

Photos showing the signs of torture on the civilians' bodies as a result of the Syrian Democratic Forces' assault on them



Ammar Sabbar al Nabboub, a person with special needs from al Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel near one of the irrigation canals in the city's al Hawi neighborhood on Friday, November 6, 2020. We documented his release on Thursday, November 12, 2020, with his body bearing signs of torture.



Signs of torture on Ammar al Nabboub's body after his release



Ammar al Nabboub before his arrest

Nayef Abdullah al Hasan, aged 70 from al Kasra town in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was assaulted and robbed in his home on Monday, November 23, 2020, by gunmen affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces who raided his home in the town, beat him, stole a sum of money, and confiscated some mobile phones.



Photo showing Nayef Abdullah al Hasan with signs of torture on his body

Photos of civilian Ahmad Al Matar showing the signs of the assault on his body



Ahmad Fawaz al Matar, a barber from Mara'et al Assadiya village, north of Raqqqa governorate, who was beaten by Syrian Democratic Forces on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, on charges of practicing the profession of barber without a license.

On Wednesday, January 27, 2021, personnel affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces, led by an individual named as Rayyan al Shnani, raided a house in al Tayyana village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, and arrested a civilian and his son, taking them to one of SDF detention centers in al Shnan village in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We documented their release on Tuesday, February 2, 2021, with [the father](#) bearing [signs of torture](#) on his body, indicating that he was subjected to torture during his detention.

Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil, from al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in November 2019, with his detention lasting for nearly 20 months, before being released on Sunday, May 23, 2021, from one of the SDF's detention centers in Hasaka governorate. The comparison between the photos of Hussein before and after his release clearly shows the signs of the healthcare neglect he suffered during his detention.



Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil after his release from the Syrian Democratic Forces' detention centers in Hasaka governorate in 2021

Hussein Thabbah al Dakhil before his arrest and enforced disappearance in the detention centers of Syrian Democratic Forces in 2019

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

Muhammad Mahmoud al Ahmad, a graduate of Damascus University's Faculty of Civil Engineering, was a former member of ISIS, from Hammadi Omar village, which is administratively a part of Eqerbat town in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate. He was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in 2018 in al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Monday, August 3, 2020, the SNHR received information that he had died due to torture in an SDF detention center. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture. SNHR confirms that his body hasn't been handed over to his family.



Muhammad Mahmoud al Ahmad

Muhammad Muhsen al Ibrahim, from al Hajna village, which is administratively a part of al Bseira district in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in March 2019, in a raid on his home in the village. For almost 18 months thereafter, he was classified as being forcibly disappeared, with Syrian Democratic Forces preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or revealing his fate. On Sunday, September 20, 2020, his family learned of his death in an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate. On September 22, 2020, his body was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture.



The body of victim Muhammad Muhsen al Ibrahim

Muhammad Khalil Khalaf al Samhi, a person with special needs from Mouhasan city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested in October 2019, by Syrian Democratic Forces in the city. On Monday, November 16, 2020, his family learned from a former detainee of his death in the SDF's Ghwayran Prison in Hasaka city. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare. SNHR confirms that his body hasn't been handed over to his family.



Muhammad Khalil Khalaf al Samhi

Hassan Abdul Aziz al Ajrawi, an Arabic teacher, from al Tebni town in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel on February 2019, near al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Wednesday, November 25, 2020, the SNHR received information that he had died due to torture in an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture.



Hassan Abdul Aziz al Ajrawi

Ayyash Eleiwi al Najm, known as Jamil, from al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, who was aged 95 at the time of his arrest, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in February 2019 while he was passing through an SDF checkpoint near al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of the governorate as he was leaving the town along with his family. He was then taken to an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate. On Sunday, December 27, 2020, SNHR received information indicating his death in an SDF detention center. Our data from numerous sources confirms that since he was in a good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare.



Ayyash Eleiwi al Najm

Naser Muhammad al Akleh, from Hasaka city, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces in September 2020 in a raid on his home in al Salehiya neighborhood in the city and taken to an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate. On Thursday, February 18, 2021, SDF handed his body over to his family bearing signs of torture.



Naser Muhammad al Akleh

Khaled Khalaf Saleh al Ramadan, from Mouhasan city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces personnel in October 2018. Almost since that time, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the SDF denying his detention and preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him. On Sunday, April 4, 2021, his family was informed by a former detainee released earlier from an SDF detention center in Hasaka governorate that Khaled had died there due to torture and the deterioration of his health.



Khaled Khalaf Saleh al Ramadan

[Hussein Hasan Abbas](#), aged 53, from al Bouraz village, which is administratively a part of Ein al Arab area in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested/ detained along with his wife and his two sons, Dalil and Hasan, in January 2021 by members of Syrian Democratic Forces, with his wife being released in May 2021; all were taken to an undisclosed location, being held hostage to pressure Hussein's son, Shukri Abbas, to surrender. On June 24, 2021, Syrian Democratic Forces informed Hussein's family of his death in one of the SDF's detention centers, handing over his body to his family. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare in one of the SDF's detention centers.

D. The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army practices torture in its detention centers to extract confessions from its detainees, with torture often carried out in a vengeful way and based on ethnic bigotry, as we detailed extensively in a previous report about the Armed Opposition factions' methods of torture in their detention centers entitled '[Awaiting Justice](#)'. It also practices torture against those it kidnaps, taking photographs of them to force their families to pay ransom money in exchange for their release, and using torture 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, or in the event that they are suspected of cooperating with the Syrian Democratic Forces or with ISIS.

Members of the Armed Opposition practice beating and dragging civilians, including children and women, in public places or inside their shops and homes, with the aim of spreading fear and terror or forcing them to carry out their orders. We have many photos and videos in our archives that show the assaults and the signs of torture on victims' bodies.

As of June 2021, the SNHR's team has documented the deaths of at least 47 individuals, including one child and one woman, in the detention centers of the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army. We have documented the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army handing over a number of the victims' bodies to their families, with the bodies bearing signs of torture.

The most notable incidents of torture by the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

Hasan al Askar and Yousef al Askar, from al Sfirra city, southeast of Aleppo governorate, were arrested by gunmen affiliated with the Lions of the Sunna faction, one of the factions of the Syrian National Army, on Tuesday, July 28, 2020, on charges of theft - namely, stealing diesel from the fuel company vehicles - and were taken to one of the faction's detention centers in al Bab city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We documented their release the next day after they were beaten and tortured.

Signs of torture on the bodies of Hasan and Yousef al Askar:



Hussam al Hamada, nicknamed Abu Ra'ed al Homs, is an activist in the popular uprising, from al Ashrafiya village in the suburbs of Homs governorate, currently living in Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. He was assaulted by members affiliated with the Syrian National Army's Military Police branch on Saturday, November 7, 2020, at the headquarters of the Military Police branch, where a verbal altercation took place between him and the head of the branch called "Abu Riad", after he visited the headquarters of the Military Police branch to inquire about two detainees from the Eastern Ghouta, Damascus Suburbs governorate, who were being held there. As a result of being severely beaten, he was transferred to Afrin Hospital.

Photo shows signs of assault on Hussam al Hamada



On Wednesday, February 3, 2021, the Syrian National Army forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, in connection with the explosion of two IEDs of unknown source in Ras al Ein city center on the same day. SNHR documented the detention of 10 civilians, including three children and five women, over their appearance in video footage recorded by surveillance cameras while they were passing through the area at the time of the explosion, with all those arrested being taken to one of the Syrian National Army's detention centers in Ras al Ein city. The three children and the five women were released the next day, Thursday, February 4, 2021. Among those released later was Saleh Izzo al Mustafa, from al Rehaniya village in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate. We documented that he was released on February 11, 2021, with his body bearing signs of torture that he was subject to during his detention.

Signs of torture on the body of the civilian Saleh Izzo al Mustafa show



We Spoke with Mr. Abdul Aziz al Khalifa²⁵, an activist and friend of a number of detainees, who told us: "On February 3, 2021, an explosion occurred near the post office roundabout in the center of Ras al Ein city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, so the civil police reviewed the footage from the surveillance cameras in this area and arrested everyone who appeared in the recording during the period of the explosion, including children and women; among the detainees were three children and five women who were released the next day, as well as Saleh Izzo al Mustafa, who was released a number of days later bearing signs of torture on his body. The civil police had taken him to a hospital in Ras al Ein city after he fainted due to the severity of torture, and when he was released, he would not have known that he was in the hospital had it not been that one of the people saw him in the hospital; all these detainees were on their way to get identification cards from the local council for them and their children." Abdul Aziz added, "The area where the explosion occurred is the center of Ras al Ein city and extends from the al Jouz roundabout to the post office roundabout, and it is impossible for anyone visiting Ras al Ein city not to pass through this area. They arrested a large number of people."

Photos showing the assault on the body of the civilian, Myassar al Abdullah

Myassar al Abdullah, a worker at the electricity department for Ras al Ein city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, from Ras al Ein city, was beaten by a leader of the Badr Martyrs faction, which is affiliated with the Syrian National Army's Hamza Division, on Wednesday, April 28, 2021, in al Raweya village, which is administratively a part of Ras al Ein city, over his refusal to work on electrical maintenance for one of the homes of a member of the Hamza Division.



Signs of the assault on the body of the civilian, Nammour Ajaj

Nammour Ajaj, from Anadan city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, is currently living in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Monday, May 17, 2021, members of the Syrian National Army's Military Police raided his home in Afrin city, under the pretext of searching for one of his sons wanted by them, and they beat him using military rifles, in addition to verbally assaulting women in the home before they left.



²⁵ Via phone on February 12, 2021

The most notable victims of death due to torture by the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

Mahmoud Hasan Awmari, a person with special needs, from Ras al Ein city in the west northern suburbs of Hasaka, born in 1992, was arrested by members of one of the Armed Opposition factions on Sunday, November 24, 2019, in a raid on his family's home in Ras al Ein city. On Thursday, July 16, 2020, his family learned of his death due to torture in one of the faction's detention centers in Ras al Ein. His body has not been handed over to his family.



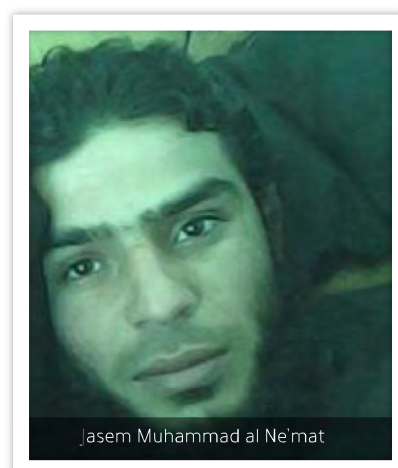
Fares Karraf al Hamidi, a 43-year-old man from Hawija Abdi village, which is administratively a part of Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqqa governorate, was arrested by Military Police personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army forces on Monday, June 1, 2020, after being summoned to one of their detention centers in Tal Abyad city. For two months after that date, he was classified as forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian National Army preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or revealing his fate. On Saturday, August 1, 2020, his body was handed over to his family bearing signs of torture that he was subjected to in one of the Military Police personnel's detention centers in Tal Abyad city.



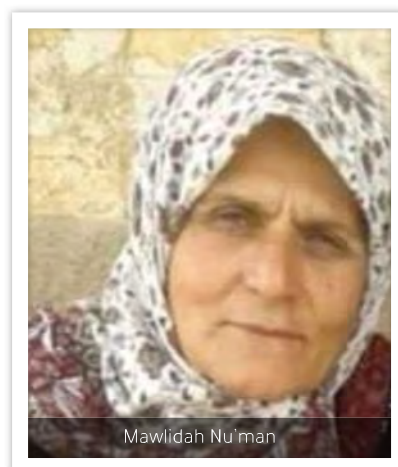
Luqman Mustafa Yousef, a 35-year-old man from Tirmisha village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by Military Police personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army on Thursday, September 3, 2020. For the next two months he was classified as forcibly disappeared, with the forces preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or revealing his fate. On Tuesday, November 10, 2020, the Military Police personnel informed Luqman's family of his death in one of their detention centers in Ma'rata village of Afrin city and handed his body over to family members. Our data from numerous sources confirms that he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare.



Jasem Muhammad al Ne'mat, a former member of ISIS, from Ma'dan town in the eastern suburbs of Raqqah governorate, was arrested by Military Police personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army on Tuesday, February 16, 2021. Almost since that date, he has been classified as forcibly disappeared, with the forces preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting him or revealing his fate. On Sunday, May 16, 2021, the Military Police personnel informed his family of his death in one of their detention centers in Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqah governorate, without handing over his body to his family. Our data from numerous sources confirms that Jasem was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating that he probably died due to torture and lack of health care.



Mawlidah Nu'man, a 62-year-old woman who came from Bouzikah village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. She was arrested by members of the Syrian National Army's al Hamzah Division in April 2019, during a raid on her home in the village on accusations of colluding with Syrian Democratic Forces. For over two years, she was classified as forcibly disappeared, with the forces preventing anyone, even a lawyer, from visiting her or revealing her fate. On Wednesday, May 30, 2021, al Hamzah Division personnel informed her family of her death in al Ra'ie Prison in al Ra'ie village in northeast Aleppo governorate, handing over her body to family members. SNHR data from numerous sources confirms that she was in poor health at the time of her arrest, as she suffered from chronic diseases of hypertension and diabetes and needed medication permanently, indicating that she probably died due to torture and lack of healthcare in the prison.



VIII. Welcoming the Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, and the Dutch, Canadian and German Steps to Hold Perpetrators of Torture in Syria Accountable:

In most of its reports on Syria, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry has accused the Syrian regime of committing the crime of torture, stating and emphasizing that this amounts to crimes against humanity as well as war crimes. The most recent of these reports, issued on March 11, 2021, is a special report on imprisonment, arbitrary arrest, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, sexual violence, and death in detention, covering the period from March 2011 to December 2020; the Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to this report through extensive sharing of a large quantity of data and information, and we believe that this report is of great importance and constitutes important material to hold the Syrian regime accountable and to help in obstructing all efforts aimed at rehabilitating it after it lost any legitimacy at the political and human rights levels among the most prominent and important countries in the world.

On September 18, 2020, the Netherlands [announced](#) that it had informed Syria of its decision to hold the regime responsible for gross human rights violations and torture, in particular under the Convention Against Torture; this means that the Syrian regime could be prosecuted before the International Court of Justice under the Convention against Torture, since Syria is a party to this legislation. Canada [announced](#) on March 3, 2021, its decision to take similar steps; on March 12, 2021, [a joint statement](#) by the Netherlands' and Canada's governments affirmed their joint cooperation in this context; SNHR has welcomed this step and expresses its constant willingness to contribute to holding the Syrian regime accountable.

On December 16, 2020, the German Federal Prosecutor's Office [issued](#) an extended arrest warrant for a Syrian doctor, Alaa al Mousa, in the German state of Hesse, on the grounds of charges against him for committing crimes against humanity while practicing his work in the Homs Military Hospital before he obtained asylum in Germany.

On February 24, 2021, a court in Koblenz in Germany [issued](#) a ruling, subject to appeal, sentencing a former regime official, named as Eyad Gh. to four-and-a-half years in prison for being an accomplice to and facilitating the commission of crimes of torture against nearly thirty detainees. We believe that the importance of the trial stems from the court ruling, which clearly stated that torture is carried out in Syria according to an integrated system and that it is a central decision by the Syrian regime. We believe that although the ruling issued only targeted dissident Eyad Gh, it is a blatant condemnation of the Syrian regime's systematic practice of torture in all security branches, with what is happening in al Khatib Branch being similar to the crimes perpetrated in the Syrian regime's other security branches.

IX. 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 under 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, with these actions also 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 86,000, 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 14,000 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 a political transition towards freedom, to a degree where these violations constitute crimes against humanity; the participation of several state institutions also underlines that this is a deliberate strategy of the ruling class in the Syrian regime and further demonstrates its central role in these crimes.

- None of the parties to the conflict have opened any investigations into the practices of torture, with none of their members suspected of being involved in committing this violation being held accountable, and no apology or compensation being offered to the victims; instead, any effort to hold those responsible to account is met with denial and persecution, with anyone exposing these practices being slandered and attacked.
- The Syrian regime has clearly violated the provisions of the Syrian constitution and the provisions of the Convention against Torture which Syria ratified in 2004²⁶, 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. While the practices of torture against the group's opponents in the context of non-international armed conflict constitute war crimes²⁷, these have not amounted 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 torture²⁸, with the execution of detainees in accordance with illegal courts, amounting to a war crime²⁹.
- Acts of torture practiced by the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army 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 crime³⁰.

Recommendations:

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

- Condemn the Syrian regime's practices involving the crime of torture and work seriously using all possible means to stop it, in order to save tens of thousands of detained Syrian citizens from death due to torture.
- The UN General Assembly must seize 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.
- Demand that the Syrian regime reveal the locations of its victims' bodies and hand them over to their families, and that it reveal the fate of nearly 100,000 forcibly disappeared persons.
- Russia must stop using its veto at the Security Council due to the Syrian regime committing crimes against humanity and war crimes, and 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 due to 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.
- Join the Dutch, Canadian and German efforts to hold the Syrian regime accountable for the crime of torture.

²⁶ UN, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-9&chapter=4&clang=en

²⁷ UN, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-9&chapter=4&clang=en

²⁸ See *ibid* 17.

²⁹ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 8.2 (c-iv), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/add16852-ae9-4757-abe7-9cdc7cf02886/283503/romestatuteng1.pdf>

³⁰ See *ibid* 17.

- 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, and make a real effort in order to achieve a halt to the Syrian regime's continued violation of them.
- 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.
- Impose sanctions on individuals and entities involved in torture acts and deaths due to 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 report issued in March 2021.
- Disclose the names of individuals involved in the egregious violations against the Syrian people, as was done by many other UN investigation committees, as it was long overdue in disclosing them.

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 terrorizing Syrian society.
- Investigate all torture acts and deaths due to torture, and compensate families and victims.
- Immediately allow access to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all objective human rights organizations to all regime 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 since these 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.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

- 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.

The Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army:

- 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 their 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 and to many of the victims' family members for their gracious and valuable contributions to this report, and to offer our sincere condolences to the victims' families and to all their loved ones and friends.



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