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# Brief Report: On International Women's Day... Syrian Women Continue to Suffer from the Worst Types of Violations

**At Least 28,316 Females Have Been Killed and at Least 9,668 Females Are Still Detained or Forcibly Disappeared**



A displaced woman in a camp in Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate - 2019

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reveals in its report released today to mark the occasion of International Women's Day that Syrian women continue to suffer from the worst types of violations, and that SNHR has documented the deaths of at least 28,316 females since 2011, while at least 9,668 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared.

The six-page report reveals that the challenges accompanying the popular uprising that demands political change in a country like Syria, which is governed by a longstanding authoritarian regime,

are particularly severe for women in Syrian society, due to the economic and social norms that govern Syrian society. The report states that Syrian women participating in the process of political change have been exposed to the same types of brutal violations as the Syrian regime inflicted against their male peers since the earliest days of the popular uprising. Even in the face of these terrible abuses, Syrian women have continued to play a central and vital role in the uprising for freedom and democracy, paying a horrendous price for their participation in the march towards democracy, dignity and human rights.

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

“Despite the sensitivity of violations against women and the clear condemnation by the provisions of international law of these violations, we note a complete failure to implement protection for women in Syria, firstly by the Security Council, and, secondly, by the international community. Many of the violations against women, which amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, have barely received any censure, let alone sufficient levels of condemnation and denunciation, or at the very least any effort to exert economic and political pressure to alleviate them even if they cannot be immediately ended.”

According to the report, females in Syria – both children and adults – have also been subjected to various types of violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and executions, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, forced displacement, siege, and denial of healthcare and basic services, with many of these violations, particularly the killing, torture and enforced disappearance, being the worst in the world.

Syrian women and girls have not been accidental victims of the conflict, but have rather been directly and deliberately targeted; females have been targeted either because of their active contribution to social, humanitarian, political, human rights, relief, medical, and media work, or simply because they are females, with the aim of marginalizing and breaking them, as part of the regime’s efforts to suppress and intimidate society and deter any further opposition to the authorities, particularly since the status of women in Syrian society is still strongly linked to tradition, customs and beliefs.

Also, the report notes that the internal armed conflict has imposed onerous burdens and massive changes on Syrian women; the high death toll and the disappearance of large numbers of men from society has led to women bearing an additional burden, as the percentage of households headed by women increased. This has led to many women being forced to assume new roles in addition to their customary ones, subjecting them to stressful and complex living conditions that are difficult to cope with, often outweighing their physical and emotional capabilities, with the constant stress, lack of security and social care due to the loss of husbands or brothers, and the

paralysis of the educational process, amongst other challenges, having a catastrophic effect on their mental and emotional wellbeing. The lack of sufficiently competent organizations specializing in caring for and supporting Syrian women inside Syria or in countries of asylum has further aggravated this already intense suffering.

The report documents the deaths of at least 28,316 females at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria between March 2011 and March 2020; of this total, the Syrian regime killed 21,933, while Russian forces killed 1,578, ISIS killed 980, and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham killed 81. A further 1,307 females were killed the hands of factions of the Armed Opposition, while the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces killed an additional 250, the US-led coalition killed 959, and another 1,228 females were killed by other parties.

According to the report, at least 9,668 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared by the main perpetrator parties in Syria between March 2011 and March 2020, with 8,156 of these being still detained or forcibly disappeared by Syrian Regime forces, while at least 249 females are still forcibly disappeared after being arrested by ISIS. Another 29 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, and 851 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared by factions of the Armed Opposition. The report also records that at least 383 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared by Syrian Democratic Forces.

According to the report, at least 90 females died as a result of torture by the main perpetrator parties in Syria between March 2011 and March 2020, with 72 of these killed by Syrian Regime forces, 14 by ISIS, and one each by factions of the Armed Opposition and other parties, while two females died as a result of torture at the hands of Syrian Democratic Forces.

The report records at least 11,523 incidents of sexual violence between March 2011 and March 2020, of which 8,013 were committed by the Syrian regime; of this total, 871 occurred in detention centers. Meanwhile, ISIS committed 3,487 incidents of sexual violence, while at least 11 incidents of sexual violence were committed by factions of the Armed Opposition, and another 12 incidents by Syrian Democratic Forces.

The report stresses that the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977 clearly provide for the protection of women from attacks on their honor, personal dignity and from degrading and humiliating treatment. The practices of the Syrian regime and other parties to the conflict constitute a flagrant violation of the Geneva Conventions and the provisions of international law, the report adds, noting that the failure of the protective mechanisms established by international law mechanisms and consequently the loss of any protection for

Syrian women from atrocious violations is one of the worst betrayals that Syrian women have suffered.

The report calls on the UN Security Council to adopt a binding resolution on the fundamental rights of women, providing absolute protection for women from indiscriminate killings and any attacks on their honor, in particular against rape, forced prostitution and any defilement of women. The report also calls on the UN Security Council to provide urgent assistance for forcibly displaced females, in addition to demanding the immediate release of female detainees and taking real action to end the horrendous violations perpetrated against them.

The report also calls on the UN's Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences to intensify his efforts in Syria, given the horrendous level of violence committed against Syrian women, in particular by the Syrian government itself, which exceeds that shown by any other government in the world, most especially women in the detention centers of the Syrian regime and its security services.

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