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AMNESTY

INTERNATIONAL

REPORT 2021/22

**THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S
HUMAN RIGHTS**



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INTERNATIONAL

REPORT 2021/22

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS



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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AU

African Union

CEDAW

UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CEDAW Committee

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CERD

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

CERD Committee

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

CIA

US Central Intelligence Agency

COVAX

Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access, directed by the GAVI vaccine alliance, CEPI and the WHO

Covid-19

Coronavirus disease-19

ECOWAS

Economic Community of West African States

EU

European Union

European Committee for the Prevention of Torture

European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

European Convention on Human Rights

(European) Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom

GDP

Gross domestic product

ICC

International Criminal Court

ICCPR

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross

ILO

International Labour Organization

International Convention against Enforced Disappearance

International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

LGBTI

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex

MP

Member of Parliament

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO

Non-governmental organization

OAS

Organization of American States

OCHA

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PPE

Personal protective equipment

TRIPS

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property

UK

United Kingdom

UN

United Nations

UN Convention against Torture

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

UN Refugee Convention

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions

UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions

UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty

UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression

UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

UN Special Rapporteur on racism

UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

UN Special Rapporteur on torture

UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights

UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes

UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women

UN Special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

UPR

UN Universal Periodic Review

USA

United States of America

WHO

World Health Organization

7. "Switzerland: Dangerous "Yes" vote gives police sweeping powers to target people including children without charge or trial", 13 June
8. "Switzerland: No to facial recognition", 18 November (French and German only)

SYRIA

Syrian Arab Republic

Head of state: **Bashar al-Assad**

Head of government: **Hussein Arnous**

Parties to the conflict continued to commit with impunity serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and other gross human rights abuses. Government forces carried out direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and gas facilities, and indiscriminate attacks through aerial bombing and artillery shelling in Idlib governorate and western Aleppo countryside. They also besieged civilians in southern Syria and restricted and denied civilian access to humanitarian aid across the country. Security forces arbitrarily subjected refugees returning to their homes to unlawful detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and enforced disappearance. Government authorities continued to arbitrarily detain tens of thousands of people, including peaceful activists, humanitarian workers, lawyers and journalists, subjecting many to enforced disappearance. The Syrian National Army (SNA), supported by Turkey, continued to subject civilians in the northern cities of Afrin and Ras al-Ayn to arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and abduction. In the north-east, the Autonomous Administration led by the Democratic Union Party (PYD) arbitrarily detained children in al-Hol camp and transferred them to prisons where they were detained with adults. In the north-west, the opposition armed group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham arbitrarily detained and harassed activists and journalists. The government failed to provide a robust response to curb

the spread of Covid-19 and blocked access to medical care for thousands in south and north-east Syria. Tens of thousands of internally displaced people were at risk of contracting Covid-19 due to dire living conditions. Some European countries investigated and prosecuted individuals suspected of committing crimes under international law in Syria through their national courts under the principle of "universal jurisdiction". The death penalty remained in force and executions were reported.

BACKGROUND

On 12 April, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reported that there "were reasonable grounds" to believe that the Syrian government had conducted a chlorine attack on Saraqib city in Idlib governorate in 2018. As a result, the OPCW suspended "certain rights and privileges" of Syria's membership.

On 26 May, Bashar al-Assad was elected president for a fourth term. Only people living in government-controlled areas and the Syrian diaspora in some countries were allowed to vote.

In June, hostilities between the government, supported by Russia, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham escalated in Idlib governorate and Aleppo countryside as government forces tried to regain full control of the M4 and M5 highways. In July, the government launched a military offensive against armed opposition groups in Daraa al-Balad city, which ended with a ceasefire agreement around mid-September.

Between July and August, unidentified armed groups detonated improvised explosive devices in Afrin and Ras al-Ayn, two cities under the control of pro-Turkey armed groups, killing and injuring many civilians and damaging civilian infrastructure. In August, unknown groups shelled al-Bab, a city in northern Aleppo countryside controlled by pro-Turkey armed groups, causing civilian casualties and destroying homes.

Israel continued air attacks targeting Syrian government, Iranian and Hizbullah forces in Syria.

Factors including corruption, currency depreciation and Covid-19 measures increased food insecurity and poverty.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS

In early 2021, the government, supported by Russian government forces, intensified aerial and ground attacks on north-west Syria under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, including Idlib governorate and Aleppo countryside, according to the UN. The attacks targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure including hospitals on the UN deconfliction list, residential buildings and markets, killing and injuring several civilians.

According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UN Commission of Inquiry), the government launched guided missiles and artillery towards a hospital in Atareb in western Aleppo countryside early on 21 March, killing at least eight civilian patients and injuring 13 others, including five medical workers. The report added that later that day, the government launched air strikes at a gas facility, destroying 18 trailers parked near Bab al-Hawa crossing point. As a result, humanitarian organizations operating at the border area had to temporarily suspend their operations.

DENIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Government forces besieged civilians and blocked their access to food, water and essential services and continued to impede access to UN humanitarian agencies in the south and north.

Between 24 June and mid-September, the government besieged thousands of civilians in Daraa al-Balad to pressure armed opposition forces to surrender and evacuate. Throughout the siege, government forces prevented humanitarian organizations from delivering food, medical supplies and other life-saving aid.¹ A resident said that the only bakery in the neighbourhood had stopped working after the flour ran out and there was

no access to food, electricity and enough water for more than 60 days.

The government continued to block UN aid to Rukban camp in the isolated area between the Syrian and Jordanian borders known as "the berm", where tens of thousands of people still lived in harsh conditions without access to healthcare, sanitation or clean water. The government denied UN agencies access to Menbij and Kobani, towns in north-east Syria, forcing residents to rely mainly on support from international humanitarian organizations and the Autonomous Administration, which were unable to meet their needs.

On 9 July, the UN Security Council conditionally renewed for six months the authorization of Bab al-Hawa crossing point for the delivery of UN humanitarian aid from Turkey to north-west Syria.²

The closure of al-Yarubiyah border crossing in 2020, which ended UN delivery of aid from Iraq, exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in north-east Syria. Due to the government's bureaucratic impediments and restrictions on access, UN agencies and their implementing partners could not deliver enough aid, especially medical aid.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT

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

Between January and April, the government arbitrarily arrested 400 individuals, including judges, lawyers, journalists and public sector employees, for their online criticism of the government's handling of the economic crisis. In a rare move, on 11 May, two weeks ahead of the presidential election, the government released them.

Government forces subjected refugees, including children, who returned to Syria between mid-2017 and April 2021, to arbitrary detention; torture and other ill-treatment, including rape and other sexual

violence; and enforced disappearance – and interrogated them in connection with their perceived opposition to the government.³ Five refugees subjected to enforced disappearance died in detention.

SNA

The SNA, a pro-Turkey coalition of armed groups, continued to commit a range of abuses against civilians, predominately Syrian Kurds, in Afrin and Ras al-Ayn. The abuses included arbitrary detention, abduction, and torture and other ill-treatment.

According to the UN Commission of Inquiry, the SNA tortured detainees during interrogation to extract “confessions”. Detainees were also denied legal representation and access to their families while held in informal detention centres.

PYD-LED AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION

The Autonomous Administration continued to hold tens of thousands of people suspected of affiliation to the Islamic State armed group, including children, in al-Hol camp in squalid conditions and without access to due process. Women and children in the annex of al-Hol camp, where third-country nationals were held, were denied freedom of movement. This impacted their access to healthcare in the camp due to multiple checkpoints and security checks by the Asayish, the Autonomous Administration’s police force.

The Asayish arbitrarily detained boys as young as 12 in the annex, separating them from their mothers and caregivers, solely on suspicion of the boys’ potential future “radicalization” and without any evidence of wrongdoing. The Asayish transferred the boys to detention centres described as “rehabilitation centres” outside al-Hol camp, which lacked adequate access to food, water and healthcare and where diseases such as tuberculosis and scabies were rampant.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

HAY’AT TAHRIR AL-SHAM

Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, which controlled parts of north-west Syria, continued to repress

freedom of expression and assembly by arbitrarily detaining and harassing media activists and journalists for criticizing the armed group’s rule and ideology. For example, in September, it banned Orient News Channel from broadcasting.

PYD-LED AUTONOMOUS ADMINISTRATION

On 18 May, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Autonomous Administration’s military force, killed at least seven people while dispersing a protest in al-Hasakeh governorate against increased fuel prices. On 31 May, the SDF fired at a protest in Menbij to disperse protesters calling on the Autonomous Administration to end the forced military conscription of men aged between 18 and 21. One protester was killed.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

As in 2020, the government failed to provide a robust response to the spread of Covid-19, including by failing to provide transparent and consistent information about the outbreak in areas under its control. Public hospitals lacked sufficient beds, oxygen tanks, ventilators and PPE, putting hundreds of patients and health workers at risk.

As of November, only 4.2% of Syria’s population had received at least one dose of the Covid-19 vaccine through COVAX and bilateral donations across Syria, according to the WHO.

Due to the government’s restrictions on humanitarian aid delivery and lack of support to the health sector, people living in north-east Syria suffered the impact of severe shortages of testing products, oxygen tanks and ventilators as well as insufficient funding to humanitarian organizations supporting facilities treating Covid-19 cases. Aid workers said NGOs had been unable to ensure a continuous supply of critical medication to treat diabetes, cardiovascular disease and bacterial infections, as well as post-rape treatment and reproductive health kits – supplies had previously been provided cross-border by the WHO and the UN Population Fund.

One health worker in Menbij, where the Syrian government blocked UN access, said

they were unable to provide treatment for all those suffering from cancer, thalassemia and diabetes, and were forced to choose which patients to treat due to short supplies.

During the siege of Daraa al-Balad, government forces blocked medical evacuations of patients with chronic health conditions to hospitals in government-controlled areas. They also blocked the entry of medical aid and medication. According to health workers, these actions caused the death of injured and sick people.

REFUGEES' AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

By the end of the year, the number of people internally displaced in Syria since 2011 had reached 6.7 million, while 5.6 million people had sought refuge outside the country.

Worsening humanitarian conditions in neighbouring countries, leading to administrative and financial obstacles to obtaining or renewing residency permits, continued to drive refugees back to Syria where some of them faced detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and enforced disappearance.

In July, the military offensive on Daraa al-Balad displaced at least 36,000 civilians. Most of them were hosted by friends and relatives but some lived in collective shelters such as mosques and schools with insufficient access to food and medical aid. Between June and August, the escalation in hostilities in north-west Syria led nearly 100,000 people to flee their homes, the largest displacement since a ceasefire was agreed in March 2020. Most displaced people lived in overcrowded, makeshift camps and collective shelters with inadequate access to aid, essential services, clean water, hygiene, food, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities.

Al-Hol and al-Roj camps in al-Hasake governorate continued to host more than 60,000 people, including refugees and internally displaced people from Syria and Iraq, the majority of them women and children. The camps were overcrowded and did not provide an adequate standard of

living. The camps' populations had limited access to humanitarian aid, especially food and water, and health services. Children continued to face inadequate access to education and healthcare.

All displaced people in camps across Syria were at increased risk of contracting and being severely affected by Covid-19 due to the lack of precautionary measures such as social distancing, sufficient water and sanitation facilities, and access to healthcare, as well as underfunded humanitarian organizations.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

While the failure of the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC continued, at least four European states investigated and prosecuted individuals suspected of committing war crimes or other crimes under international law in Syria through their national courts.

On 24 February, the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, sentenced a former Syrian security officer to four-and-a-half years in prison for crimes against humanity for his role in aiding and abetting the torture of detained protesters in Damascus.

On 15 July, the German federal prosecutor's office charged a Syrian doctor, who fled Syria to Germany in 2015, with crimes against humanity, for torturing people in military hospitals in Homs and Damascus.

On 16 July, a court in the Netherlands sentenced a former commander of an armed opposition group, who sought asylum in 2014, to 20 years in prison for committing war crimes in Syria.

On 26 August, the Higher Regional Court of Düsseldorf, Germany, sentenced two Syrian nationals. One, a media activist, was sentenced to nine years in prison for filming the execution of a Syrian government soldier by al-Nusra Front, an armed opposition group. The other was sentenced to life imprisonment for "shielding the execution" and membership of a "foreign terrorist organization".

DEATH PENALTY

The death penalty remained in force for many offences. The authorities disclosed little information about death sentences passed and rarely provided information on executions. However, on 21 October, the Ministry of Justice announced the execution of people accused of involvement in igniting the wildfires that ravaged Syria in 2020.

1. "Syria: Government must lift deadly siege of Daraa al-Balad and allow humanitarian aid to flow", 27 August
2. "Syria: Russian threat to veto renewal of last aid corridor leaves millions at risk of humanitarian catastrophe", 25 June
3. Syria: "You're Going to Your Death": Violations Against Syrian Refugees Returning to Syria (Index: MDE 24/4583/2021), 7 September

TAIWAN

Taiwan

Head of state: **Tsai Ing-wen**

Head of government: **Su Tseng-chang**

Certain restrictions on Indigenous peoples' hunting rights were found to be unconstitutional. Legal protection for Indigenous peoples remained inadequate, including against mining and other commercial operations. Despite a court ruling permitting the marriage of a Taiwan-Macau same-sex couple, limitations on same-sex marriage remained in place. Covid-19 orders discriminated against migrant workers.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In May, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Controlling Guns, Ammunition and Knives Act and the Wildlife Conservation Act were partly unconstitutional as they disproportionately restricted the cultural and hunting rights of Indigenous peoples. However, the court found that other restrictions on hunting were constitutional, such as the requirement that Indigenous people obtain approval from the authorities days before any hunting activities.

In September, the Supreme Administrative Court revoked the extension of the Asia Cement Corporation's mining permit in Taroko people's traditional territory. After litigation lasting four years, the court found that the Taroko people living near to the mining site had not been adequately consulted on the project. However, concerns remained that existing legislation provided inadequate protection for Indigenous peoples against mining and other commercial activities. Among the problems was Article 13 of the Mining Act, under which existing mining permits remained valid and mining could continue while mining companies applied for permit extensions.¹

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The Taipei High Administrative Court issued a judgment in May on transnational same-sex marriage that allowed a Taiwan-Macau same-sex couple to marry in Taiwan. However, the judgment only applied to same-sex couples where the Macau citizen is a long-term resident of Taiwan. In the meantime, the Ministry of Interior's interpretation of the relevant article in the Act Governing the Choice of Law in Civil Matters Involving Foreign Elements remained valid. Under this interpretation, transnational same-sex marriage between Taiwanese citizens and foreigners was only permitted where the spouse was from a country where same-sex unions had been legalized.²

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In June, following an outbreak of Covid-19 cases among migrant workers, the Miaoli County government issued an order confining all migrant workers in the county to their dormitory buildings except during working hours. The order, which affected more than 22,000 people, discriminated against migrant workers by severely limiting their freedom of movement. It was lifted after three weeks.³

DEATH PENALTY

In September, the Prosecutor-General made an extraordinary appeal against a court decision not to sentence convicted arsonist