



# Most significant violations against media activist in August

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### Summary

**Violations against media activists in August are divided as follows:**

- Killing: SNHR documented the killing of nine media activists in August as follows:
  - The Syrian regime killed seven media activists including media activist who died under torture.
  - The Islamic State killed two media activists
- Arresting and kidnaping: six kidnaping cases have been documented as follows:
  - PYD's Asayesh forces kidnaped one media activist while two foreign female journalists were kidnaped by unidentified armed groups. Also, two media activists were kidnaped by IS and one by armed opposition.
- Injuring: Five injuries were documented all of which were at the hands of the Syrian regime.
- Other violations: eight other violations were documented including properties and freedoms violations. Both of the Syrian regime and IS were responsible for four of these violations.

### Introduction

The ceaseless string of crimes against media activists continues for the fourth year in a row where more and more violations are being increasingly perpetrated by various faction amid an utter lack of accountability.

Syria became one of the most dangerous environments for journalists considering the size and type of the ongoing violations and crimes against Syrian, Arabic, and foreign journalists. The Syrian regime is responsible for most of the violations by far in size and type. The Syrian regime has been relentlessly pursuing, detaining media activists under inhumane conditions, and torturing some of them to death in the most horrible and brutal ways since the eruption of the Syrian revolution in addition to the killing and intimidation. IS has adopted the same policy where the faction, in addition to pursuing, arresting, and torturing media activists, used to publish video footages showing atrocious scenes of media activists being slaughtered as an attempt to intimidate and submit its enemies such as the video footage of the slaughter of the American journalist James Foley which IS published entitled "A message to America". Also, it threatened to kill the other American journalist it is holding as hostage Steven Sotloff.

Furthermore, YPG-affiliated Ashayesh forces' ongoing violations must be not overlooked. Ashayesh forces have been pursuing, kidnapping, harassing, and even exiling media activists for months in addition to torturing some of the media activists it detained to death which forced many media activists to flee from its areas or stop working. Kurdish areas have become a place where silence dominates, truth is distorted and hidden, and the news serve whoever is in control similar to the situation in IS-held areas such as Der Ezzor countryside, Ar-Raqqa, and some towns in Homs and Aleppo countryside.

Huda Al-Ali, a media researcher at SNHR, says: "the media scene has turned in Syria into a dangerous environment that is unsuitable for independent journalism of any political or military affiliation. This created a void in the media scene and caused the power of weapon to dominate over the power of word which, in return, undermined principles and ethics of journalism and affected credibility, accuracy, and impartiality in revealing the truth and facts which are distorted and difficult to find."

Media activist in Syria are facing the oppression machine and enduring the risks without anyone to protect them or put an end to these violations. They are facing these challenges alone and paying a dear price for their bravery and determination to cover events. Every day, new media activists get either killed, arrested, kidnapped, or voluntary and involuntary expelled. Additionally, some media activists are forced to flee out of fear for his own life or to provide for himself.

SNHR affirms the necessity of taking serious and immediate actions to save what could be saved of media activism in Syria and renews its condemnation of all the violations against media's freedom and truth-covering regardless of the involved parties and its kind or magnitude. SNHR also stresses the importance of respecting media work, insuring the safety of those who are working in that vital field, and paying them special consideration. The perpetrators of violations against journalists, activists, and media activists must be brought to justice and the International Community, represented by the Security Council, should shoulder its responsibilities to protect the civilians in Syria.

## Details

### A. The Syrian regime

We start with the most horrible crime; the media activist was torture to death inside the Syrian regime detention centers in Damascus on 3 August after he was arrested in Homs countryside, Der Ba'lba neighborhood – Al-Mazarea Ash-Sharqi area on 28 December, 2012.

Also, the Syrian regime killed the following media activist:

Ahmad Wahbi "photographer and camera technician" who was killed by the shelling of the Syrian regime warplanes that targeted a civilian gathering in Damascus countryside in Doma (3 August).

Mohammad Ar-Refa'ie who was killed by the Syrian regime while covering the clashes in Damascus countryside – Al-Mlieha town (4 August). Omar Al-Hathawi “Mohammad Abu-Hamza” who was killed by a Syrian regime airstrike while covering events in Doma (6 August). Abdurrahman Al-Wayyes who was killed by a barrel bomb that was dropped on Aleppo – Houmad neighborhood (6 August). Osama Adnan Al-Abbas who was killed while documenting the shelling that targeted Aleppo – Qadi Asskar neighborhood in Aleppo (10 August). Osama Abbas “Abu-Adnan Al-Halabi” (10 August) who was killed by the shelling that targeted Aleppo – Qadi Asskar neighborhood while he was covering events.

### **Arresting and kidnapping**

Orient TV channel reporter Sa'doun As-Sinou was kidnapped for the tenth time in Al-Hassaka – Ad-Darbasiya by YPG's Asayesh forces the military wing of PYD (8 August) Sa'doun camera was confiscated and he was released after two days.

Also, Al-Asayeh forces assaulted Orient TV channel reporter Farouj Tkhoubi and the cameraman Nayef Bashir while they were recording footages for a report in Admouda (6 August). Farouj was assaulted, insulted, and threatened.

### **The following media activists were injured**

Mohammad Allwa, a reporter Smart News agency while covering the clashes in Al-Manshiya neighborhood in Daraa Al-Balad (9 August), Mohammad was later transferred to a hospital in Jordan. Ibrahim Fhieli, a Naba, a reporter for Nab'a media organization while covering the clashes in Daraa Al-Balad, he was later transferred to a hospital in Jordan (9 August). Eyad Saryoul who sustained a leg fracture and was wounded by some splinters after the Syrian regime shelling on the city (3 August). Beshr Ahmad, a reporter for Shada Al-Hurraiya Tv channel while covering the clashes in Dael near Daraa countryside (23 August). Abu-Dabbak Al-Hur while covering the clashes in Idlib countryside – Jabal Az-Zawiya (19 August).

### **Other violations**

The media office in Aleppo countryside – Tal Ref't was shelled and all of its equipment were destroyed. (5 August). The Syrian regime confiscated the assets of 51 Syrian media activists, intellectual, and dissident as they were charged with threatening the state security, writing posts that affects the Syrian regime and publish news that would affect the country security. The resolution confiscated all the moveable and immovable properties as those individuals were accused of insulting Syria, publishing opposing articles, and encouraging terrorist acts. The Syrian regime's ministry of media ordered the TV channel in Damascus to stop covering any conferences for the opposition without a written consent. The resolution didn't include the entity that would grant these permissions. It should be noted that this resolution was issued in conjunction with a SRGC's conference that was planned to be held on Monday 11 August, 2014.

Additionally, PYD forces raided the media activist Sewar Hathoufi's house which is located in Al-Hassaka countryside – Amouda (25 August). Sewar left the country on 17 June, 2013 after he was injured. PYD forces arrested his brothers Taysir and Yasser after they raided and searched the house. They also confiscated mobiles, books, and papers and informed his parent to leave the house within four days to Turkey under the threat of confiscating all their properties.

### **Groups working against the government**

The most notable violation was the slaughter of James Foley at the hands of IS (19 August) after he was kidnapped on 22 November, 2012 near Taftnaz city in northern Syria. IS kidnapped James after the American airstrikes that targeted IS areas in Iraq according to a video footages that was published entitled: “A message to America”. It is worth noting that James's family thought that he was arrested by the Syrian regime. The allegations suggest that he was arrested by Al-Mujahdiden Shura Council who joined IS later.

The faction threatened in the same video to kill also the American journalist Steven Sotloff whom IS is holding too. Steven was kidnapped in Syria on 4 August, 2014 in Aleppo near the Turkish borders. His kidnapping remained a secret until IS announced that they have him.

Also, the media activist Mohammad Bassel Al-Iran was executed at the hands of IS in Der Ezzor countryside – Al-Mayadien city after he had been imprisoned for a week (11 August).

### **Kidnapping**

The two Italian journalists Vanessa Marzullo and Greta Ramelli were kidnapped in western Aleppo countryside – Al-Abzamou town (1 August) by unidentified armed groups while their friend the Italian journalist (Daniel Ranieri) managed to escape after the three were held at the Revolutionary Council leader's house in Al-Abzamou where they were supposed to reside during their stay. Also, Abu-Karn Al-Harrani was kidnapped by an armed opposition group in Damascus countryside – Eastern Ghouta (31 July) and Khaled An-Naklawi who was kidnapped for one day by IS in eastern Der Ezzor countryside – At-Tayyana city (2 August).

The American journalist Peter Theo Curtis was released by An-Nusra front (24 August) after he was kidnapped about two years ago near the Turkish borders.

John Kerry, the United States Secretary of State, announced in an official statement that he was released and he was delivered to UN peacekeepers in Al-Julan heights which is under Israel control.

### **Other violations**

Hamza Al-Jouja was assaulted by unidentified armed groups (4 August) who assaulted him and stole his camera, two mobile phones, and a portable hard disk that contained his archive of pictures that he took to document the Syrian revolution in addition to some money before they left him handcuffed and unconscious on Aleppo Highway.

IS sentenced Talal Al-Khlaf, a media activist and head of the Thwwar Der Ezzor movement's media committee to life exile after he was accused of deserting Islam (8 August). Ahfad Al-Hamza coordinate issued a statement to announce that it sopped working because of IS's restrictions against its activists and media workers which forced some of them to flee (4 August).

The Islamic State confiscated and claimed Al-Ma'refa library in Aleppo countryside – Minbij city for



itself. The library was for the poem and political activist Hassan An-Naifi, who was a former prisoner in the Syrian regime detention centers. The library was a cultural and political forum for many intellectuals. The Islamic State also closed Der Ezzor TV channel office in Der Ezzor under the threat of weapon (31 July) and confiscated its equipment which forced the staff to resign. Furthermore, IS enforced new regulations for media work in the city such as:

- 1- To recognize “Caliphate State”. IS said that anyone who want to continue to work in the media field to declare his loyalty to the faction.
- 2- To acknowledge the expression “The Islamic State” and abandon any other names such as “The State”, “The so-called State”, or “Daesh”.
- 3- To abstain completely from working with TV channels.
- 4- Pictures, and breaking news are allowed to be sent to news agencies immediately. However, any photographed reports, video footages, or written reports must be sent first to the media office for permission.

## Appendixes and Attachments

### Pictures and video footages of the media activists included in this report

#### A. The Syrian regime



Anas At-Taleb



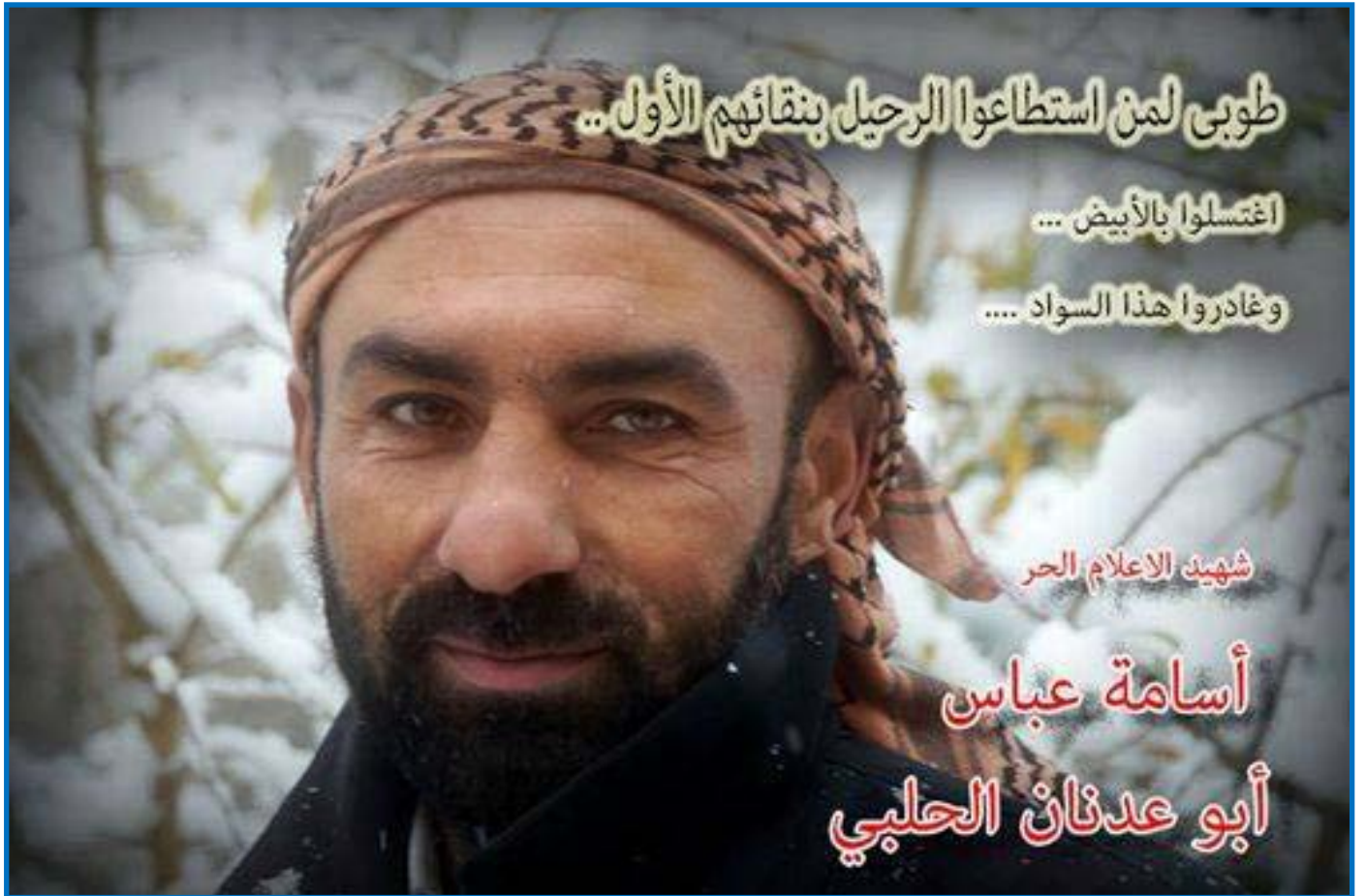
Ahmad Wahbi “photographer and camera technician”



Omar Al-Hattawi



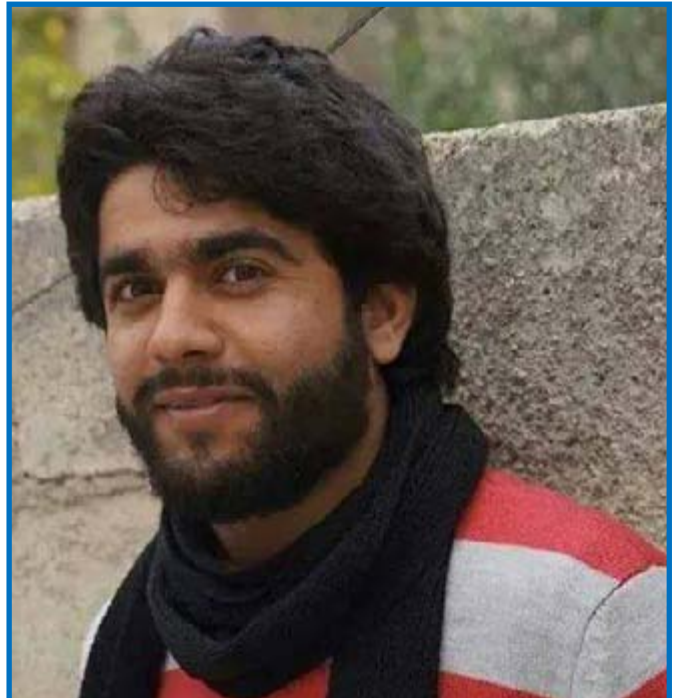
Mohammad Allawa







Sa'doun As-Sinou



Ibrahim Fhieli



Orient TV channel reporter Farouj Tkhoubi and cameraman Nayef Bashir



Orient TV channel reporter Farouj Tkhoubi





Abu-Dabbak Al-Hurr, a photographer



Beshr Ahmad

## **B. Groups working against the government**

[James Foley](#)

[Mohammad Bassel Al-Arran](#)

[Talal Al-Khalaf](#)

[Steven Sotloff](#)

[Vanessa Marzullo and Greta Ramelli](#)

[Peter Theo Curtis](#)

[Hamza Al-Juja](#)

### **Acknowledgment**

Our thanks and appreciations go for the victims' families and relatives and for all media activists in all fields. We wouldn't have been able to finish this report on this level without their help.



Sewar Hattou's house