

Joint Statement

On the occasion of the International Day of Victims of Enforced Disappearance

66 Syrian organizations: The
International community must
put an end to the enforced
disappearance in Syria.

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, August 30, 2017

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



[30 August 2017] – In a letter addressed and delivered today to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid bin Ra’ad Al-Hussein, local civil society and human rights organizations called for an end of the tragedy of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared people in Syria, and for the support by all possible means to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes committed in Syria since March 2011.

The letter signed by 66 Syrian organizations active in the fields of human rights and civil society, called on the international community to assume its responsibilities and take crucial steps towards reaching a just political solution for the conflict in Syria, stressing on the need for an immediate end to these practices, releasing all detainees and bringing those responsible for these violations to trial.

On the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearance, the letter highlighted part of the harsh suffering of Syrian families from abduction and arbitrary detention by the Syrian regime in particular and all parties to the conflict in general.

The Syrian organizations expressed their deep sense of pain and disappointment resulting from the international community’s neglect and disregard for these crimes that have been used to silence tens of thousands of voices in detention centers during the years of conflict in Syria.

The signing organizations demanded the cause of the forcibly disappeared and arbitrarily detained in Syria to be considered as a humanitarian crisis, and to be addressed as an indispensable part of the declared ‘Level 3’ humanitarian emergency in Syria. They also called for exerting all possible pressure on the Security Council to take all measures possible to stop all crimes and violations committed in Syria; as well as establishing a joint international committee of the United Nations and the Syrian civil society in order to uncover the fate of those who disappeared forcibly, and reveal the sites of mass graves and analyze the human remains in order to identify the victims.

Below you can find the full letter and the list of signatories:



**The High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations,
Prince Zeid Bin Ra'ad Al-Hussein**

Aug 30th, 2017

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, we, the undersigned Syrian human rights organizations, write to you today to express our profound sense of pain and disappointment at the international community's negligence and disregard for the enforced disappeared and arbitrarily detained in Syria despite declaring the conflict there as the "worst man-made disaster since World War II".

Tens of thousands of innocent people – and maybe more – have been forcibly disappeared in Syria since the conflict started. They are isolated from the outside world, without any legal control or health care. Today, as it is certain and well known, women and children, human rights activists, journalists and even relief and humanitarian workers are victims and systematically subjected to all kinds of abuses, including torture in public and secret detention facilities of the Syrian regime and its allied militias and the rest of the warring parties in the conflict.

This tragic reality is no longer a secret to anyone, as you have already stated "Today in a sense the entire country [Syria] has become a torture-chamber; a place of savage horror and absolute injustice". The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic declared in its report Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Deaths in detention in the Syrian Arab Republic published on 27 January 2016 "eyewitness accounts and documentary evidence strongly suggest that tens of thousands of people are detained by the Syrian Government at any one time. Thousands more have disappeared after initial arrest by State forces or while moving through Government-held territory, or have gone missing after abduction by armed groups". The same report mentioned the horrible conditions of detention, "Former detainees [in State-controlled facilities] detailed how cellmates were killed as they were beaten to death during interrogations in their cells, or died as a result of severe injuries sustained due to torture or ill-treatment. Others perished as a consequence of inhuman living conditions inflicted on the prison population".



However, this is only one aspect of this tragedy. Thousands of families and relatives of enforced disappeared suffer and they represent a much larger segment of the victims themselves. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, children and spouses live in severe anxiety and grief, with no information about their beloved ones who are enforced disappeared. They are harshly suffering to the extent that the news of the death of their beloved in prison can become a source of comfort – in place of facing an undetermined fate, they can at least hold the modest dream of having a grave they can visit.

The silence on such crimes and the acceptance of impunity – especially in this type of crime – is nothing but an explicit declaration of the death of human conscience and the end of the moral values on which human civilization is based. This silence will only result in further crimes and more extremism and terrorism.

Today, on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, and with the failure of the Security Council and the international community to uphold its responsibilities, Syrian civil society is addressing you, and raising the voice of the victims of enforced disappearance and their families, calling on you to:

1. Declare the issue of the enforced disappeared and arbitrarily detained in Syria as a humanitarian crisis, and to be addressed as an indispensable part of the declared 'Level 3' humanitarian emergency in Syria and to act accordingly;
2. Pressure the Security Council to carry out its responsibilities and take all measures to stop all crimes and violations by the Syrian regime in particular and by all parties to the conflict;
3. Pressure to open all prisons all public and secret prisons and detention centers to international bodies, missions and commissions of inquiry, and ensure the security and safety of all detainees and enforced disappeared held by the Syrian regime in particular and by all parties to the conflict;
4. Establish a joint international commission comprising both the United Nations and Syrian civil society in order to uncover the fate of the disappeared. And to uncover mass graves and analyze the human remains in order to identify the victims; and
5. Provide all possible means of support to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes committed in Syria since March 2011 under international law. And, urge states to open their national courts to cases related to Syria under universal jurisdiction, and thus ensuring that criminals do not escape punishment.



Signatories:

1. Al-Kawakibi Organization For Human Rights
2. Aleppo free lawyers for state of law
3. Aljmhoria Center for Studies and Human Rights
4. Amals Healing and Advocacy Center
5. Arab organization for Human rights in Syria
6. Basmeh & Zeitooneh Organization
7. Baytna Syria
8. Bercav Center
9. Coordination of supporting Syrian revolution in Ankara
10. Damascus Center for Media Freedom
11. Dawlaty
12. Documenting Violations Center in Deir Ezzor
13. Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights-Birañi
14. Free Syrian Lawyer Association
15. Freedom Jasmine for Human Rights and Advocacy
16. Geroun Media Network
17. Human Rights Guardians
18. Justice For Life Organization
19. Justice for Detainees in Syria – JDS
20. Kawakibi Center for Transitional Justice and Human Rights
21. Kesh Malek
22. Kurdish Committee for Human Rights – Observer
23. Komîtya kurdî ya berevaniyê di ber tundlêbuyan de
24. Local Development & Small-Projects Support (LDSPTS)
25. Minber Al-sham Organization
26. Mouwatana For Civil Action
27. Musawa-Women's Studies Center for Equality
28. Najda Now Organization
29. National Group for Transitional Justice in Syria
30. PÊL- CIVIL WAVES
31. Rethink Rebuild Society
32. Revolutionary Youth Coalition in Syria
33. Rewsen Bedirxan Association for Kurdish Women in Afrin
34. Sanad Organization for people with special need
35. SHAML coalition of civil society organizations



- 36.Solidarity Organization For Syria
- 37.Sound and Picture
- 38.Syrian Archive
- 39.Syrian activists monitoring organization
- 40.Syrian British Medical Society
- 41.Syrian Center For Journalistic Freedoms
- 42.Syrian Center For Legal Studies and Researches
- 43.Syrian Center For Media and Freedom of Expression
- 44.Syrian Center for Policy Research
- 45.Syrian Center for Statistics and Research
- 46.Syrian Center for Studies and Human Rights
- 47.Syrian Center for Women's Issues
- 48.Syrian Forum
- 49.Syrian Journalists Club – Gaziantep
- 50.Syrian Feminist Lobby
- 51.Syrian League For Citizenship
- 52.Syrian Lights Organization
- 53.Syrian Network for Human Rights
- 54.Syrian Observatory for human rights
- 55.Syrian Press Center
- 56.Syrian Social Club in Ankara
- 57.Syrian Women's Network
- 58.Syndicate of Free Lawyers of Aleppo
- 59.The Syrian Democratic Gathering
- 60.The Syrian Commission For Releasing Detainees
- 61.The Working Group for Syrian Detainees
- 62.The Working Group for Syria
- 63.Union of Revolutionary Bureaus- URB
- 64.Urnammu Organization
- 65.Violation Documentation Center in Syria – VDC
- 66.Women Now for development





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