

**Statement**

# **689 Media Workers Killed in Syria Since the Start of the Popular Uprising, and 418 Still Detained or Forcibly Disappeared**

**No One Has been Held to Account**

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, November 2, 2018

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.



On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, SNHR said that violations against Syria's workers in the field of media, whether journalists or other media workers, haven't stopped but continue to be perpetrated in the context of directly targeting their media activism in order to silence their voices and strike terror into the hearts of their colleagues, which further undermines the Syrian community and poses a threat to civil peace through crushing the authority and power of independent media outlets.

SNHR has, at the time of this writing, documented the killing of at least 689 workers in the field of media in Syria since the start of the popular uprising at the hands of the parties to the conflict, primarily the Syrian regime. This figure suggests that we lose a new worker in the field of media every five days. According to our database, 418 workers in the field of media are still either detained or forcibly disappeared, with all these individuals paying dearly to deliver facts and reveal the truth.

None of the parties to the conflict has launched any investigation, in any form, or addressed the crimes against workers in the field of media, or other crimes for that matter, with the Syrian regime being the principal offender among those parties via sponsoring and even legalizing a policy of impunity, whilst other parties to the conflict have subsequently followed in its footsteps. The Syrian Constitution contains articles which state clearly that no forces of the Syrian regime shall be held to account without the permission of their commanding officer; these articles accurately reflect the barbaric mindset of the ruling authority and its eagerness to enforce unrestricted authoritarianism upon the community.

We have monitored systematic, deliberate and continuous targeting of anyone attempting to film or document the peaceful demonstrations across the country by Syrian regime snipers. We've also documented that pro-regime photographers took photos of citizen journalists in order to have them arrested and prosecuted.



Since the start of the Russian forces' intervention on September 30, 2015, a series of brutal crimes have been perpetrated across Syria, resulting in the killing of 19 media workers, most of whom were killed as a result of the 'double-tap' policy adopted by Russian forces. With the emergence of extremist Islamic groups, citizen journalists and foreign journalists had to endure more persecution. Last year saw an escalation in the areas under the control of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in terms of assaults against the workers in the field of media, with the group raiding their offices and confiscating their contents. In addition, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has arrested media workers who oppose their policies or criticize their practices. Meanwhile, ISIS' violations against journalists and workers in the field of media have continued despite the group losing most of its previous territories, with SNHR documenting the killing of at least two media workers by ISIS last year alone.

Journalists and workers in the field of media in areas under the control of factions from the armed opposition have also faced killing and arrest, as those factions have used oppression and intimidation in dealing with journalists and others who criticize these factions. In northeast Syria, where Kurdish Self-Management forces are in control, many journalists and workers in the field of media have been victims of numerous patterns of violations, such as killing, arrest, enforced disappearance, and direct threats amid a state of media drought in those areas.

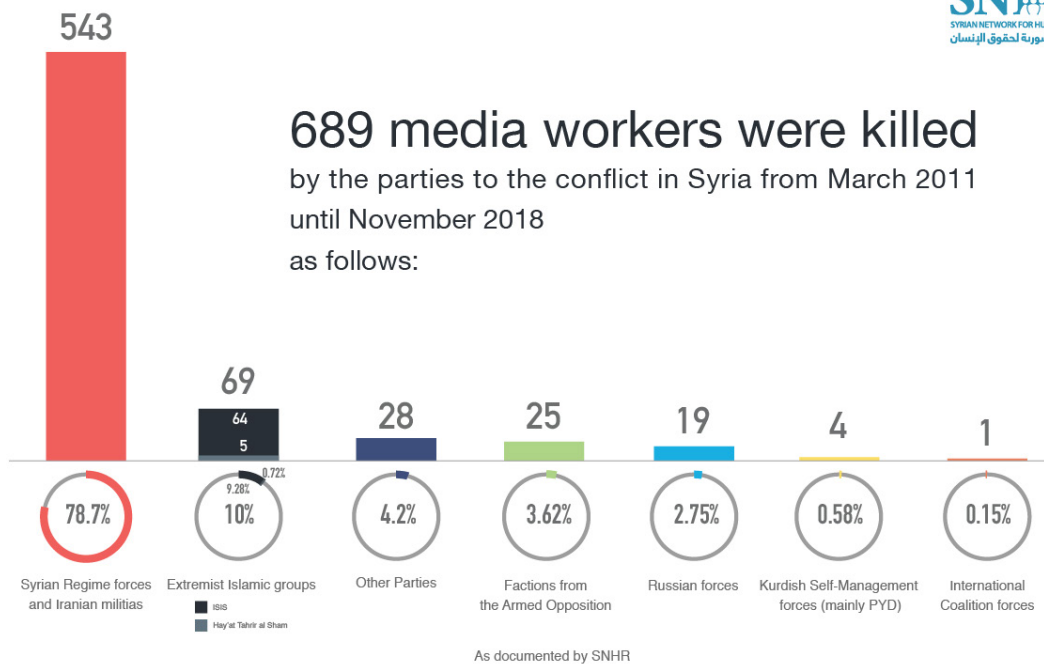
Each party has committed violations against journalists and workers in the field of media in Syria. However, the size and type of documented violations reflect that the Syrian regime's forces have been, beyond any doubt, the primary offenders, being responsible for nearly 90 percent of the overall toll of violations. Additionally, none of the parties distinguished between male and female citizen journalists, or even children, or Syrian and foreign journalists in their violations.

According to SNHR's database, at least 689 journalists and workers in the field of media (locals and foreigners) have been killed, at the time of this writing, since March 2011. The death toll is distributed according to the perpetrators' party involved in the conflict in Syria as follows:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 543, including five children, one woman, and five foreign journalists.
- Russian forces: 19



- Extremist Islamic groups: 69, including one child, two women, and three foreign journalists, divided into:
  - ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): 64, including one child, two women, and three foreign journalists
  - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and factions from the armed opposition): 5
- Factions from the armed opposition: 25, including one child and three women.
- Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party): 4
- International coalition forces: 1
- Other parties: 28



We've also documented approximately 1,131 cases of arrest and abduction of journalists and workers in the field of media by all parties. At the time of this writing, 418 journalists and workers in the field of media are still missing or forcibly disappeared since March 2011. These are distributed according to the perpetrator party involved in the conflict as follows:

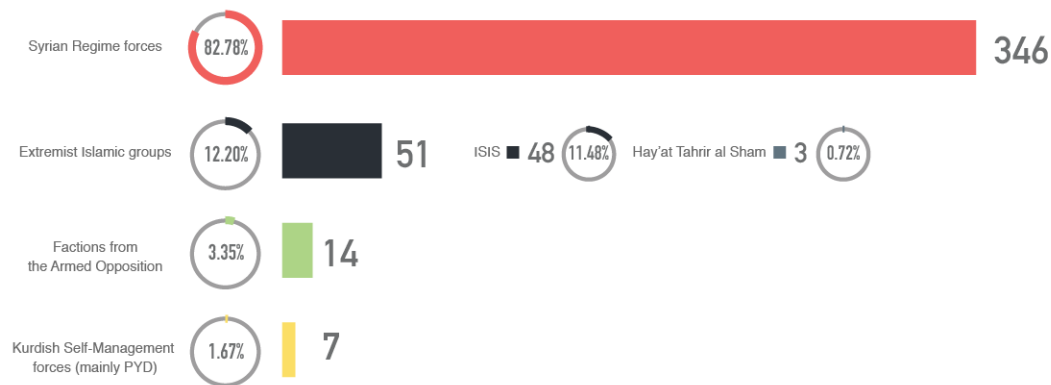
- Syrian regime forces: 346, including two women and four foreign journalists.
- Extremist Islamic groups: 51, including one woman and nine foreign journalists.
  - ISIS: 48, including one woman and eight foreign journalists.
  - Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 3 including one foreign journalist
- Factions of the armed opposition: 14, including 1 woman and 5 foreign journalists.
- Kurdish Self-Management forces: 7



## No less than 418 media workers are still under arrest or enforced disappearance

by the parties to the conflict in Syria from March 2011 until November 2018

as follows:



As documented by SNHR

The Russian-Chinese UN Security Council veto has hindered the referral of the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court on three different occasions, which has encouraged the criminals, including the Syrian regime and its accomplices in its crimes against humanity, to inflict levels of violence and torture unprecedented in the modern age.

SNHR calls on the Security Council to contribute effectively to the fight against impunity through working with the UN General Assembly to establish a special tribunal that would address the crimes that have been perpetrated in Syria, and to do its utmost to fight violence against journalists and workers in the field of media, as well as to hold the perpetrators of these violations to account.

The OHCHR should condemn all attacks and acts of violence against journalists.

The Commission of Inquiry should launch investigations into the incidents where media workers were specifically targeted, given these workers' vital role in exposing the violations that are being perpetrated against Syrians.





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