

Statement

Condemning Syrian Regime Forces' Arrest of Writer and Journalist Bassam Safar for the Second Time in a Month, and His Enforced Disappearance

At Least 131,178 Citizens Arrested Since March 2011 Are Still Detained/Disappeared in Syrian Regime Forces' Detention Centers

On Thursday, June 24, 2021, Syrian regime forces arrested journalist Bassam Safar, as he was passing through a regime checkpoint at the entrance to al Dwail'a neighborhood in Damascus city while returning to his home. The arrest was carried out without any legal arrest warrant being issued, which is a general rule in the vast majority of arrests carried out by the regime's security services and at its army checkpoints. Since his arrest, Bassam has also been prevented from communicating with his family or a lawyer and has been taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR).

We at the SNHR confirm that Bassam was also arrested by Syrian regime forces in early June 2021, while returning from al Qamshli city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate to Damascus city via Damascus International Airport, with the reasons for that arrest also unexplained and no clear charges being brought against him.

Bassam had conducted an interview with the General Coordinator of the National Coordination Committee, Hassan Abdul Azim, in which he talked about the committee's position on the recent 'presidential elections' in Syria, and we believe that this interview may be the reason behind his arrest and enforced disappearance.

Journalist and writer Bassam Safar, from Salamiya city, east of Hama governorate, who lives in Damascus, was born in 1962. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts' Department of Dramatic Studies, he has been working as a journalist since 1992. Safar is a member of the Executive Office of the National Coordination Committee for the Forces of Democratic Change, and an editor with the cultural section of the [North Press Agency](#). He is also a former political prisoner during the reign of Hafez al Assad, and was imprisoned in 1986, being detained for nearly five years in connection with his political activity and his affiliation with the Communist Action Party.



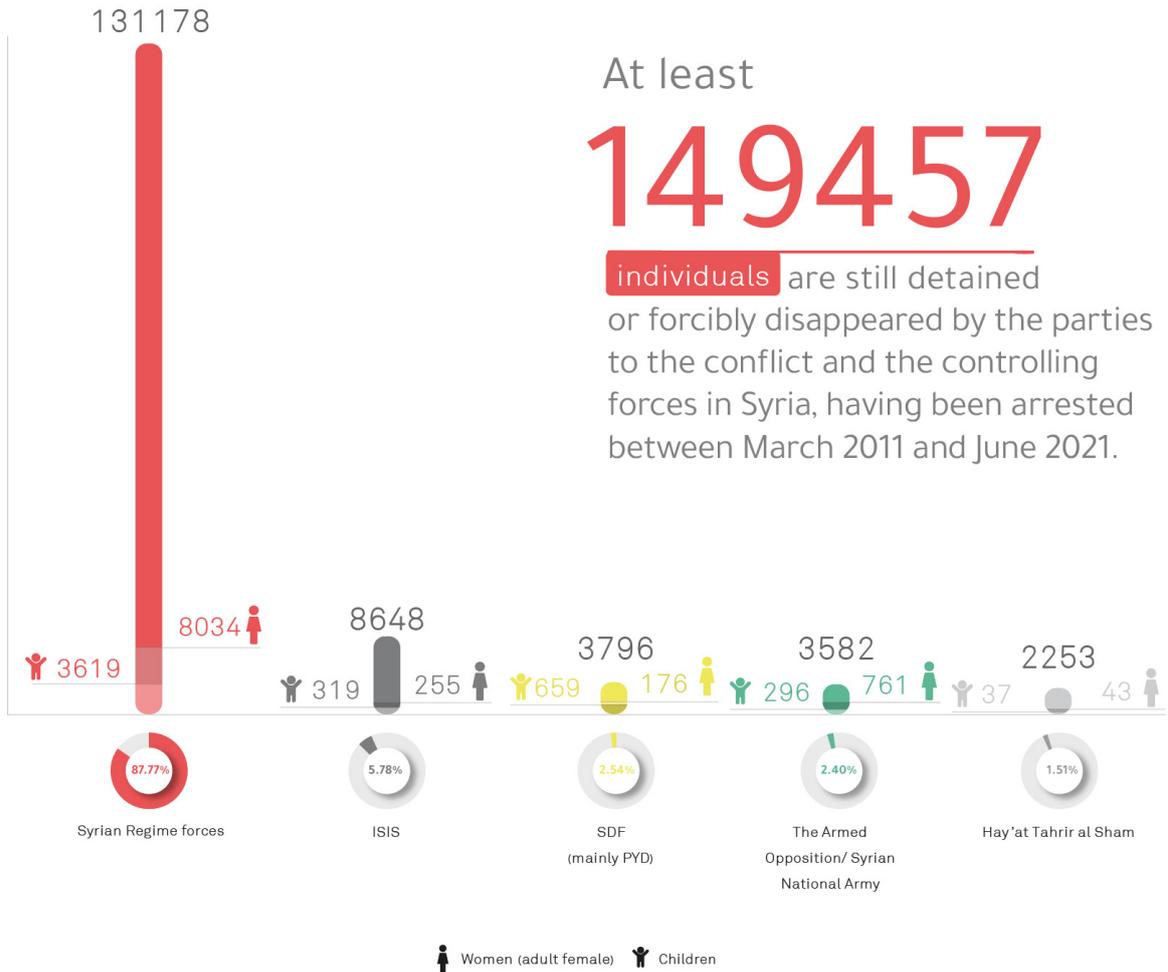
[The International Federation of Journalists](#) had condemned the Syrian regime's arrest of journalist Bassam Safar, while the Syrian regime has issued no comment or reaction to Bassam's disappearance up until the publication of this statement.

We at the SNHR confirm that the Syrian regime has used arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances in a widespread manner against all segments of society, especially against activists in the popular uprising, including journalists and media workers, in a systematic attempt to stifle freedom of opinion and expression completely.

Our continuous daily monitoring of arrests and enforced disappearances carried out by Syrian regime forces for ten years to date provides further evidence that the mindset of the Syrian regime's security services has not changed, and that no Syrian citizen can feel safe from arrests, even if he/she is simply exercising rights guaranteed by international human rights law and the 2012 constitution established by the current Syrian regime, since all arrests are carried out without any basis in law or any oversight by any independent judiciary, and are perpetrated by the security services with no involvement by the judiciary. Following these arrests, detainees are routinely classified as forcibly disappeared persons, demonstrating that the areas under the control of the Syrian regime cannot be considered to constitute any sort of safe haven for residents there; all this underlines that regime-controlled areas of Syria are very definitely not a safe environment for the return of refugees or IDPs. We at the SNHR have documented at least 384 cases of arbitrary arrest at the hands of Syrian regime forces in the first half of 2021, including 11 children and 10 women; we reviewed the background of the arrests in our [semi-annual periodic report issued in early July 2021](#).

The detention of Bassam Safar is, in reality, more like a kidnapping than a legitimate arrest, and violates a large number of his basic rights; his enforced disappearance also follows a cruel pattern of brutal torture, and enforced disappearance carried out by the Syrian regime against its opponents, which is widespread and systematic and constitutes crimes against humanity.

As the SNHR's database shows, at least 131,178 individuals, including 3,619 children and 8,034 women, arrested by Syrian regime forces between March 2011 and June 2021, are still detained or forcibly disappeared, with the Syrian regime being responsible for 87.77% of all arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances in Syria.



The UN Security Council should hold a special session to discuss the issue of the forcibly disappeared in Syria, and to condemn the Syrian regime's strategy of terrorizing and intimidating Syrian society by practicing a policy of arrests which are more like kidnappings, and of torturing and disappearing Syrian citizens. The UN Security Council should also emphasize that the Syrian regime is not amenable to any kind of reform, and must move towards a political solution towards democracy and respect for human rights, foremost among which are freedom of opinion and expression.

All press and human rights bodies and organizations worldwide must give attention to and follow up on the case of their colleague, journalist and political activist Bassam Safar, and expose the Syrian regime's brutal practices in murderously crushing freedom of opinion and expression.

Solidarity

We emphasize our heartfelt solidarity with the writer and journalist Bassam Safar and his family, and underline the need for a continuous struggle for human rights and social justice until all detainees are released and the fate of the forcibly disappeared is revealed.