

INVITATION

Syria: A Decade of Impunity and The Need for Accountability for Ongoing Human Rights Violations

An Event Marking the Tenth Anniversary of the Start of the Popular Uprising in Syria, with Participants from a Number of Leading Global Nations, on the Sidelines of the Fifth Brussels Conference

Ten years ago, the popular uprising began in Syria, as people peacefully took to the streets demanding their government respect their human rights, fundamental freedoms, and dignity. The Syrian regime met these basic demands with bullets, launching a vicious campaign of arbitrary arrest and torture. After several months of brutal repression, the demand of the people progressed from the need for reform to calls for change from nearly 50 years of rule under the iron grip of the Assad family toward a democratic system which respects citizens' human rights.

Over the ten years of the ensuing, now-armed conflict, the Syrian people have paid a heavy price that nobody could have foreseen, simply in retaliation for their just demands for freedom, none of which the Syrian regime accepted. The root of the Syrian issue is a struggle between a long-repressed people and a brutal dictatorial power ready to kill hundreds of thousands, displace millions, and destroy tens of thousands of homes, as well as expending the entire capabilities of the Syrian state and its cash reserves, and far more, simply in order to thwart any form of political transfer of power, as though Syria were a private family farm.

It's been a bloody decade by every measure, during which the most egregious violations have been practiced, including the use of chemical weapons, extrajudicial killings, arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, displacement and forced displacement, the use of barrel bombs, and cluster munitions, and the deliberate bombing of hospitals, with the Syrian regime being the perpetrator of the vast majority of these violations, some of which amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database, since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, at least 227413 civilians have been killed in Syria, including 29457 children, 16104 women, and 14506 victims who died due to torture, in addition to at least 149361 persons who are still arbitrarily arrested/ detained or forcibly disappeared. The High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that, to date, nearly 13 million Syrians have been displaced, either as IDPs or refugees, in addition to noting other violations such as widespread destruction, sexual violence, and millions of children being left out of the educational process, along with other issues.

Despite all these violations, the desired political transition has not yet been achieved, and the main perpetrators of the violations have not been held accountable. At this event marking the tenth anniversary of the outbreak of the popular uprising, we believe that it is more important than ever that we all consider what we can do to stop the violations, to hold those involved from all parties to the conflict to account, to achieve a just solution for the victims, to accelerate the political transition towards democracy, and to launch the process of transitional justice.

The online event will focus on the following questions:

- What can the international community learn from the mistakes made over the last ten years of devastation and suffering in Syria?
- How can the international community support Syrians in their struggle towards democracy and the evolution of Syria from dictatorship to liberalism and respect for human rights?
- How can the international community better ensure the release of detainees held by the regime and support for survivors and detainees' families is prioritized as part of a strategy for promoting an end to the conflict and sustainable peace in Syria?
- What are the most effective accountability measures available to hold perpetrators of atrocities accountable and pressure the Syrian regime and all parties to the conflict in Syria to end their horrific violations against civilians?
- In light of Bashar al Assad's insistence on proceeding with presidential elections and obstructing the political process, what can the international community do to pressure the Syrian regime and its allies to achieve a political transition?
- What are the next stage strategies to end the Syrian conflict, achieve stability, the return of refugees and IDPs, and reconstruction, none of which is possible without a political resolution in line with UN Security Council Resolutions 2118 and 2254, and achieving accountability?

Speakers:

Mr. Christopher Le Mon

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State.

Mr. Emiel de Bont

Special Envoy for Syria, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Dr. Troels Gauslå Engell

Senior Stabilisation Advisor on Syria to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Antoine Alhéritière

Deputy Consul General, Syria adviser, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Kristyan Benedict

Amnesty International UK Campaigns Manager: Crisis & Tactical, Syria.

Ms. Naama al Alwanni

Journalist and survivor of arrest in the Syrian regime's detention centers.

Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany

Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights.

Moderator:

Ms. Emma Beals

Senior Advisor at European Institute of Peace and Editor of Syria in Context.

Online event (via Zoom)

Thursday 25 March 2021 at 10:00-11:30am EDT
(3:00-4:30pm CET – 4:00-5:30pm Syria Time).

To participate directly on Zoom, please sign up using this [link](#).

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the event.

The event is in English – there will be direct translation to Arabic.

To watch the live broadcast on social media platforms:



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