



Joint statement:

**Fears of the life-threatening situation in As-Suwayda prison
The international community must meet its responsibilities
and investigate the current events in As-Suwayda Central
Prison**

The Central Prison of As-Suwayda (an official civil detention facility) has witnessed a protest against the mistreatment of the prison administration to the inmates on Thursday 4 August. Around 1280 inmates are held in As-Suwayda Prison, 743 of whom are detained for cases related to expression and participation in the civil popular movement in the country. Detainees are from the different Syrian provinces. The protest of detainees in As-Suwayda prison was preceded by unjust death sentences that were issued by the military field court against at least seven detainees in As-Suwayda prison. The issued rulings created to a state of anxiety and fear amongst the detainees, amid complete lack of fair and independent judiciary in the Syrian Judiciary system.

On Thursday, 4 August, a verbal dispute erupted between the detainees and the prison officers and personnel following a search campaign of the dormitories by the prison personnel and officers who verbally abused the detainees. That incident led to a fist fight between the detainees on one side and the prison officers and personnel on the other. The fight led the prison personnel and officers to leave the detention area. Calm was restored in the prison after interference of the warden and the head of the political security branch who calm the enraged detainees down promising them that such mistreatment will not happen again. However, detainees' disobedience inside the prison continued.

On Friday 5 August, detainees were taken by surprise when government forces started shooting and throwing tear gas bombs at random towards the prison buildings. The building then was stormed by the anti-riot police amid direct fire at the detainees. As a result, at least two detainees were killed and 27 others were injured, some with serious injuries. Detainees were surrounded in one of the prison towers. The situation developed following the excessive use of force and direct shooting at the unarmed detainees. A number of notables and Sheikhs of As-Suwayda tried to mediate to solve the problem. So the Syrian regime halted storming the prison and asked the detainees to bring the wounded out to receive medical treatment at hospitals and for the rest of detainees to return to their dormitories. Yet, the threat for





detainees to forcibly disappear or to be tortured remains an issue.

Until the moment of issuing this statement, the regime has refused to disclose the fate of the wounded who were supposedly transported by regime forces to receive medical treatment under vague circumstances and amid fears of depriving them of medical treatment or putting them under torture and interrogation.

Due to the rapid development of the bloody events in As-Suwayda Central Prison and the regime's resort to cutting off all communications in an attempt to prevent leaking the violations perpetrated against the detainees there, we, the undersigned, demand the following:

1. An emergency visit to be paid by the International Committee of the Red Cross to investigate the death of unarmed detainees and reveal the fate of the wounded without waiting for the approval of the Syrian regime, to deprive the regime the chance to hide the evidence of its crimes.
2. Putting a pressure on the Syrian regime to disclose the names of the wounded detainees and the names of the personnel who fired at detainees, and providing assurances concerning the safety of the rest of detainees in As-Suwayda Central Prison.
3. In accordance with several UNSC resolutions concerning detainees in Syria, specifically resolutions 2041, 2042, 2139 and 2254, the Syrian regime shall be demanded to immediately stop using a humanitarian issue such as the issue of detainees as a negotiating card. In addition to that, prisoners of conscience must be released immediately.
4. We demand the ISSG, the office of Mr. Staffan De Mistura as well as all international human rights agencies to immediately interfere and put an international pressure on the Syrian regime to open an independent investigation on the events of As-Suwayda prison, insure the safety of inmates there, meet their rightful demands in putting an end to the unjust trials, and the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience.

Monday, 8 Aug, 2016

Signatories:

Syrian Center for Legal Researches and Studies

Democratic Republic Studies Center

Masar Center

al-Kawakbi Human Rights Organization

Syrian Network for Human Rights

Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

The Syrian Kurd Journalists Union





Syrian Activists for Monitoring
The Syrian Press Center
Justice for Detainees in Syria Organization
Syria Solidarity Organization
The Commission for Releasing Detainees
Syrian Commission for Detainees
Kawakbi Center for Human Rights
Free Syrian Lawyers Aggregation
Detainees Voice Organization
Starting Point Organization
Syrian Women Network
BAHR Organization for Political Development
al-Amin Foundation
al-Ihsan Charity
Local Coordination Committees
Damascus Rose Team
Souriyana Organization - Austria
al-Maara Now Network
Lilit Organization
Syrian Family Care Organization - Turkey
Guardians of Human Rights
Save the Rest Campaign
The Syrian Commission For Releasing Detainees
Syrian Media Center
Naba Media - Dara
Dara Media Center
Yakeen Media - Dara
Jasmine Institution - Jordan
Free Lawyers Syndicate – Dara
National Campaign to Save Detainees in Syria
Asi Press Center
Hussam Ayash Center for Documentation in Dara

