

Statement

Prolonged Enforced Disappearance and then Torture to Death: The Fate of the Peaceful Political Activist Yahya Sharbaji

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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.



SNHR has learned that Yahya Sharbaji's family was shocked to find out that Yahya is dead as they were going through the process of obtaining a family statement from the civil registry department in Darayya city, Damascus suburbs governorate. Yahya's family were informed by an employee that he is recorded as dead in the civil record. The family was surprised that his dead date was listed as January 15, 2013 in civil records, with no details on place or cause of death. SNHR, who learned of Yahya's death through contacting his family, managed to acquire a copy of the family statement that we have stored in our records. As with tens of thousands of Syrian families, Yahya's family was unable to take any legal action to find out the cause of death or even receiving his dead body as the Syrian regime strictly refuses to hand over dead bodies. SNHR has no knowledge of the fate of the hundreds of thousands of dead bodies or where they are being kept.

Yahya's family told SNHR that Air Force Intelligence officers arrested Yahya's brother Mohammad, whose family learned of his death the same way they learned of Yahya's through the civil registry department. However, Mohammad died on December 13, 2013. According to Yahya's family, the Air Force Intelligence forced Mohammad to call Yahya and tell him that he is injured in Sehnaya area, Damascus suburbs governorate, and that he has to come to his aid. As soon as Yahya arrived at the location described by his brother, he found out that he has been ambushed as the Air Force Intelligence arrested him along with the activist Ghiath Matar who was with him. This was on September 6, 2011. While Ghiath Matar was killed shortly after his arrest and his dead body was delivered to his family with signs of barbarian torture on it only four days later, Yahya's fate has been unknown ever since.

Yahya Taha Sharbaji is a Syrian citizen who was born in Darayya city in 1979. He studied business administration at Damascus University, and he was unmarried. Yahya was arrested previously by the Syrian regime in 2003 for his involvement in starting the group Shabab Darayya (Darayya's Youth) which launched community initiatives such as cleaning streets and disseminating posters to raise awareness on fighting corruption. Yahya remained imprisoned for two and a half years before he was released.



As the popular uprising broke out in March 2011, Yahya was known for his political and peaceful activism where he launched initiatives about citizenship, freedom of expression, avoiding trashing government buildings, non-violence, and gifting flowers and water for security members who came to oppress demonstrations in Darayya city. He also partook in political and awareness dialogues on peaceful popular movements on many occasions before his local community in Darayya city. He was one of the most prominent peaceful movement leaders in Syria. For these reasons specifically, he, like many figures similar to him, was a strategic and important target for the Syrian regime who dedicated all of its resources to take them down.

Since May 2018, SNHR has been recording cases where forcibly-disappeared persons are being recorded as dead at civil registry departments. We have highlighted these incidents in [a past report](#) as families of forcibly-disappeared victims are still receiving the news of their beloved ones' death through civil registries to this day. We have documented 343 cases, including eight children, as of this writing, and we are going to update our past report in the few next days.





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