

No less than 687 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in Syria in April 2018

Most Were for the Purpose
of Recruitment

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.



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I. Introduction and Methodology

Arbitrary arrests have been made in Syria on a daily basis since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011, as people have been arrested simply for exercising one of their basic rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as the freedom of opinion and expression, or because they were denied a fair trial for they were detained without a ruling by an independent judicial entity to detain them, or without being charged with anything, tried, or afforded an attorney, or because they were detained after their punishment had ended. In most cases, arbitrarily detained individuals are subjected to solitary confinement for several months or sometimes years if not indefinitely at official and non-official detention centers. In itself, detention is not considered a violation of human rights until it becomes arbitrary as international instruments state, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 9: **“No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”** while Article 9 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: **“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.”**

New incidents of arbitrary arrest are recorded almost every day. The Syrian regime was the first party to practice this violation in a systematic manner against the various segments of the Syrian people, as the Syrian regime used mafia-like methods, where most arrests are made without a legal warrant as the victim passes at a checkpoint or during raids. Torture starts the moment the detainee is arrested, and he is deprived of any mean to contact his family or attorney. Also, authorities deny making arbitrary arrests, and most detainees become forcibly-disappeared persons.



The Syrian regime is responsible for no less than 87% of all arbitrary arrests that we have recorded. In most cases, victims' families can't accurately identify the entity that made the arrest, considering that all of the forces that sided with the Syrian regime (Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, and others), aside from the four main security agencies and their many branches, have the authority to arrest, torture, and commit the crimes of enforced-disappearance.

Despite all the negotiations, agreements, and Cessation of Hostilities statements over the course of the Syrian conflict, it is clear that the detainees issue is almost the only issue that has yet to see any progress. In this regard, we recommend the following:

1- Arbitrary arrests must be ceased immediately as it is still an ongoing concern according to SNHR's monthly report. All detainees' fates must be revealed and their families' right to visit them must be insured immediately as well.

2- All detainees who were detained for merely exercising their political and civil rights must be released unconditionally. The use of women and children as war hostages must be stopped and they all must be released.

3- Grant the Independent international monitors of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which was established by the UN, and the International Committee of the Red Cross access to all official and non-official detention centers without setting up any prior arrangements or any restrictions or conditions.

4- A UN committee should be formed to see to the release of the detainees periodically and per a timetable that must be presented by all the detaining parties and mainly Syrian regime forces that are responsible for 87% of all the detainees.

5- Suspend and repeal all rulings issued by the field-military courts and terrorism courts, as they are non-compliant with the local and international legislations as well as guarantees of a fair trial.

Methodology

This report documents the toll of arbitrary arrests by the parties to the conflict in April. Additionally, this report monitors the most notable raid and inspection points that resulted in detentions, in addition to shedding light on the most notable individual cases and incident of arbitrary arrest that took place in April.

SNHR team abides by strict standards in order to determine an incident of arbitrary arrest and avoid recording any incidents of detention, imprisonment, or deprivation of freedom in accordance with the international laws and the aforementioned set of principles on arbitrary



trary arrest. The Detainee and Forcibly-Disappeared Department at SNHR records cases of arrest that they collect from various sources, such as: victims' families, SNHR members in Syrian governorates, cooperating local activists, and former detainees, before diligently working on contacting the families of the detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons, as well as people close to them and people who survived detention for the purpose of collecting as much information and data as possible, in light of extraordinarily and extremely complex challenges. We also record eyewitnesses' accounts and track cases of arrest to update it regularly in order to find out the fate of a detainee, their place of detention, and the circumstances of their arrest.

The ongoing and daily process of documenting detainees comes with additional challenges for SNHR that have been documenting detainees since 2011. One of these most notable challenges is the families' reluctance to cooperate and reveal and document any information on their family members' arrest even secretly and especially if the arrested individual was a female due to a prevalent notion among the Syrian society that doing so would result in more torture and danger. Instead, families try to negotiate with security forces that usually blackmail these families and demand a cash payment that can amount to thousands of dollars in some cases. Despite the fact that SNHR possesses lists of more than 127,000 detainees, including children and women, we can safely say that our estimations for the actual number of detainees have exceeded 215,000.

The international community's and the United Nations', in all of its organs, failure to apply pressure on the Syrian authorities to release even one case (including those whose sentences are over), and even prisoners of conscience, affirmed that convention within the Syrian society which believes that it is useless to cooperate in the documentation process. Most of the releases were part of exchange deals with the armed opposition.

The detainee figures included in this report don't include prisoners of a criminal background and include arrests cases that are based on the internal armed conflict and mainly due to the opposition activity against the ruling authorities. The mounting number of arrests is due to a number of reasons:

- Many arrested individuals weren't arrested because of a crime they committed, but because of their relatives' involvement with armed opposition factions or because they provided humanitarian aids.
- Most of the arrests are being conducted randomly and involve people who weren't involved in the popular protests, relief, or even military activity.



- Thousands of detainees are still being detained by the Syrian regime even though a judicial order for their release was issued despite the bureaucracy, corruption, slowness, and limpness that the Syrian judiciary suffers from.
- Syrian regime forces control densely populated cities such as the main central cities and it continue to practice its systematic policies of arbitrary arrests against the civilians of these areas.
- There are many Syrian regime forces-affiliated entities that are authorized to make arrests, many of these entities make arrests without checking with Syrian regime forces or the judicial authorities to which these entities are affiliated. Also, these entities have its own list of detention centers that are not subject to any judicial supervision. The detainees inside these detention centers are not being treated in accordance with the stated Syrian laws.
- A great number of cases are driven by blackmails or sectarian grudges especially in unstable areas that are not held by a specific faction or it is undergoing a power struggle. As a result, many armed militias that have emerged can't be monitored as they don't answer to any particular group.

II. April 2018 Outline

Arbitrary arrests in April were notable for Syrian regime forces' wide raid and arrest campaigns for the purpose of recruitment. These campaigns took place in city centers and population gatherings in their areas of control, particularly in Damascus, Damascus suburbs, Aleppo and Hama governorates. We've also recorded a rise in the rates of abductions that seek ransom money, which has been carried out by pro-Syrian regime forces local militias, and targeted mainly women and children at checkpoints in the areas between Syrian regime forces' areas of control and armed opposition factions' areas of control in Idlib and Aleppo.

On the other hand, Self-Management forces continued their arbitrary arrest and enforced-disappearances policies against political and media activists, as well as civilians who oppose their policies in their areas of control – mainly in Raqqa and Hasaka governorates.

Also, ISIS continued to enforce their arbitrary arrest and enforced dis-appearance policies against members of armed opposition factions and their families, as well as violators of their regulations. Those arrests were concentrated in Daraa governorate, as well as Damascus suburbs.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham carried out wide raid and arrest campaigns that targeted members of armed opposition factions, as well as activists in media and sports, and personnel of local councils, organizations, and charity groups. These arrests were concentrated in Idlib governorate, northern suburbs of Hama governorate, and western suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

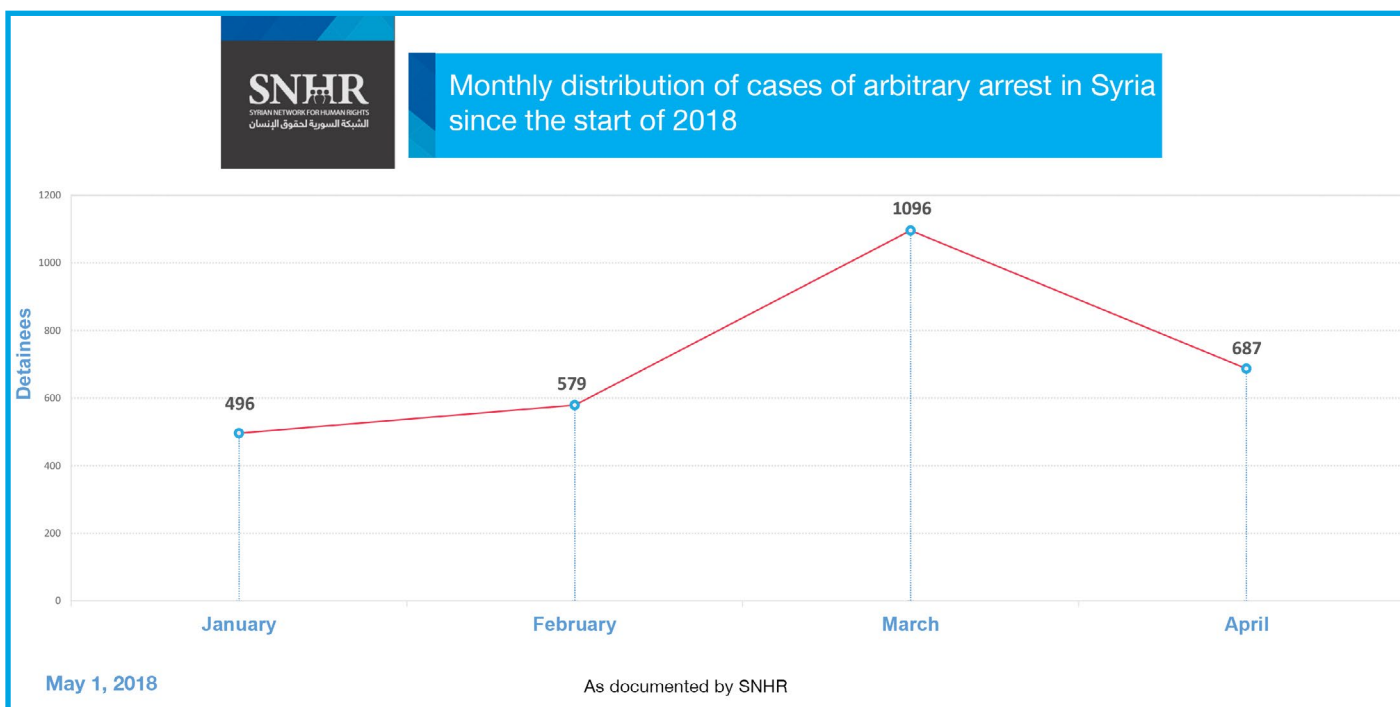


In addition, we noticed a rise in the rates of arbitrary arrests made by armed opposition factions in April, as April saw the highest rate in 2018. These arrests were concentrated in Afrin area. Women and children weren't excluded.

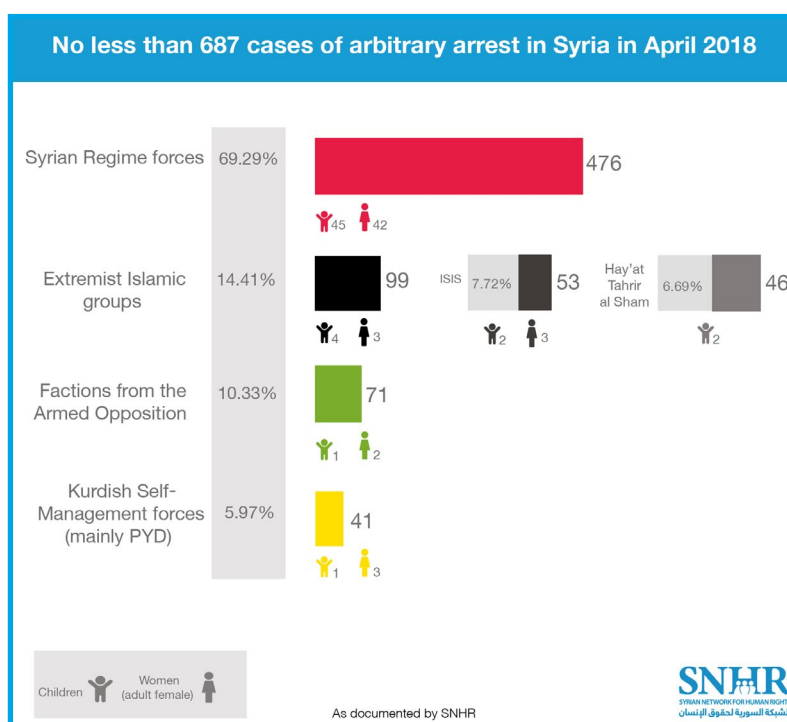
III. Toll of Arbitrary Arrests Made by the Parties to the Conflict

A. Arbitrary arrests since the starts of 2018

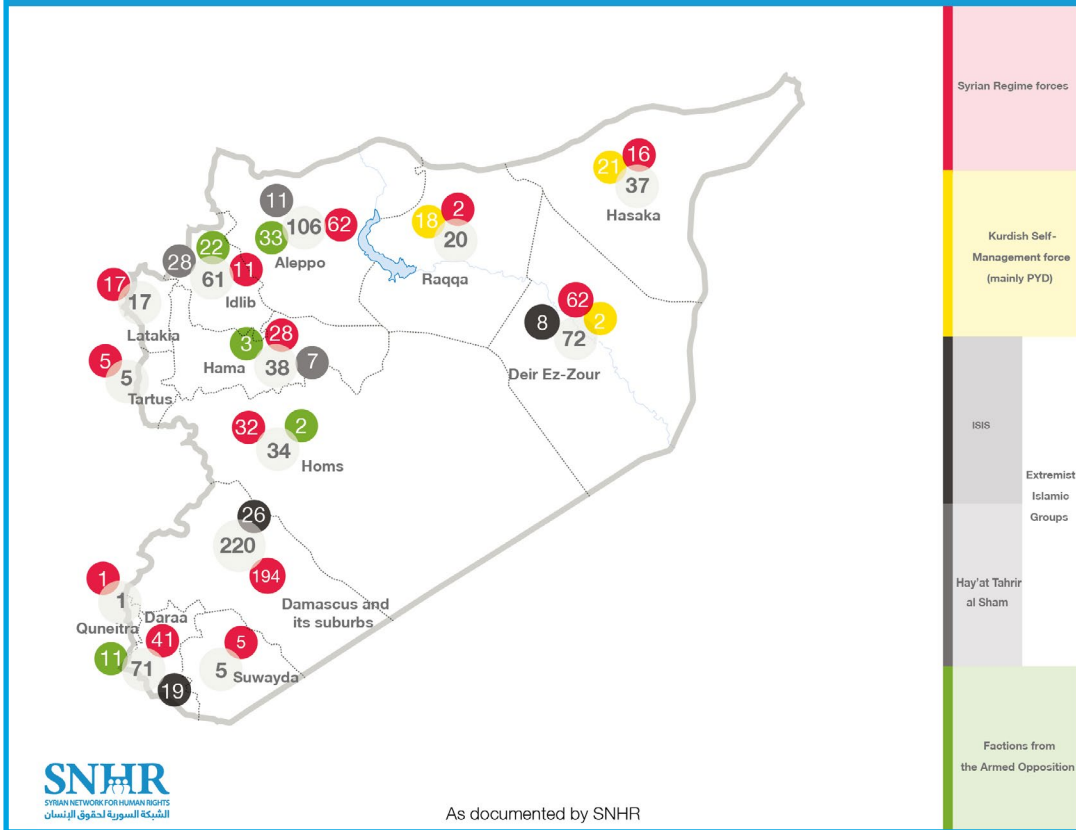
SNHR team has documented that parties to the conflict in Syria have arrested 2,858 individuals between the start of 2018 and May of the same year. The arrests were distributed by month as follows



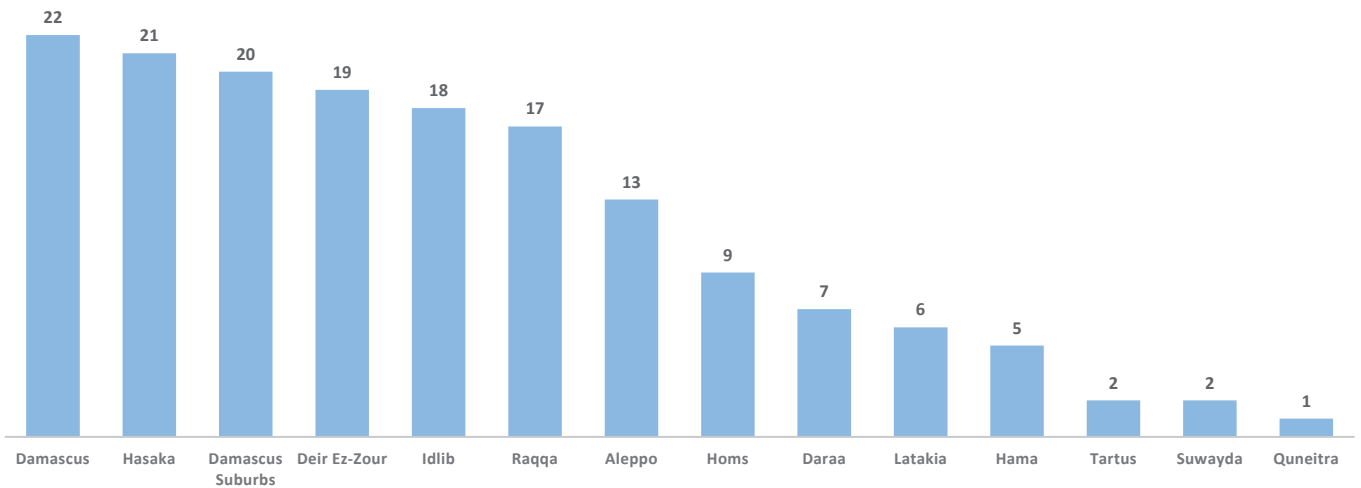
B. Arbitrary arrests in April were distributed as follows



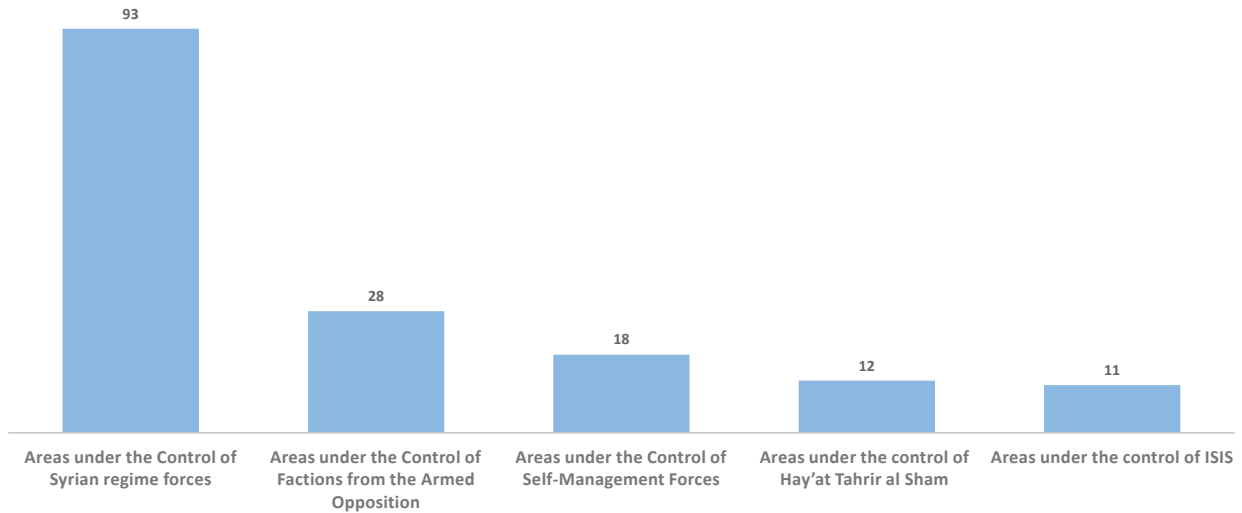
No less than 687 cases of arbitrary arrest in Syria in April 2018



Raid and inspection points that resulted in detention:



Parties responsible for raids



IV. Most Notable Cases and Incidents of Arbitrary Arrest in April

Syrian regime forces

Most notable incidents of arrest

Wednesday, April 18, 2018, Syrian regime forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in al Qouriya city, eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We recorded that eight civilians were arrested. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Wednesday, April 18, 2018, Syrian regime forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Khsham town, eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. We recorded that 10 civilians were arrested. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Wednesday, April 4, 2018, Syrian regime forces arrested three women from Inkhel city, northern Daraa governorate, at a checkpoint in the city.

Most notable cases

(Name is concealed for security concerns), woman, 32-year-old, from Janoub al Mal'ab neighborhood, southern Hama city. On April 5, 2018, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces who raided her place of residence and took her to the Military Security Intelligence branch in the city. Her fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as her family.

Mohammad al Khaled, engineer, from al Dahriya neighborhood, northern Hama city. On April 7, 2018, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in the city. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of Democratic Union Party forces – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party)

Most notable incidents of arrest

Thursday, April 5, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Um Khief village, northern Hasaka governorate. We recorded that 20 civilians were arrested. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Wednesday, April 15, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Ein Eisa town, northern Raqqa governorate. We recorded that three civilians were arrested. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Saturday, April 21, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign for the purpose of conscription in Ghwairan neighborhood, southeastern Hasaka city. We recorded that four civilians were arrested. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Most notable cases

Faisal Yousef, from al Qameshli city, northern Hasaka governorate, general coordinator of the Kurdish Reform Movement and member of the presidential body of the National Kurdish Council. On Monday, April 1, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Qameshli. He was released on Saturday, April 28, 2018.



Ne'mat Dawood, from al Qameshli city, northern Hasaka governorate, secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Equality Party and member of the presidential body of the National Kurdish Council. On Friday, April 13, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Qameshli city. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Fadi Mar'e, from Ma'bada town, eastern Hasaka governorate, head of the public relations office at the Kurdish Future Movement in Syria. On Thursday, April 26, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Malkiya city, northern Hasaka governorate. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Khader Khalil, from Hasaka city, chairman of Sanabel al Amal Charity Association. On Thursday, April 12, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in Hasaka city. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Khalaf al Hmoud, from al Rmiela neighborhood, northwestern Raqqa city, 70-year-old. On Sunday, April 29, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Rmiela neighborhood. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Extremist Islamic groups

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions from the armed opposition)

Most notable incidents

Thursday, April 5, 2018, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arrested two civilians from al Atareb city, western Aleppo governorate at a checkpoint in Deir Ballout town, northern Aleppo governorate. They were taken to an undisclosed location. Their fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as their families.

Most notable cases

Ibrahim Sanada, from Aleppo city, former footballer for the Syrian Football National Team and member of the executive committee of Aleppo governorate. He is also co-founder of the Women's Commission for Sport and Youth. On Monday, April 16, 2018, he was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham gunmen in Idlib city. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Raji Nedal Asali, child, from al Rami village, southern Idlib governorate, 16-year-old. On Saturday, April 28, 2018, he was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham gunmen in al Bara town, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Hussein Mohammad al Jaber, child, from al Rami village, southern Idlib governorate, 15-year-old. On Saturday, April 28, 2018, he was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham gunmen from al Bara town, southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Factions from the armed opposition

Most notable cases

Zouzan Bashir Suleiman, woman, from Kafr Safra village, northern Aleppo governorate born in 1988, graduated from the Institute for Artistic Education, and works as a physical education teacher. On Friday, April 20, 2018, she was arrested by armed opposition factions gunmen at a checkpoint in Ternadda town, northern Aleppo governorate. She was taken to a detention center in Izaz city, northern Aleppo governorate. She was released on Friday, April 27, 2018.



Zouzan Bashir Suleiman

Abdul Majid Izzat Sheikho, from Jalbal village, northern Aleppo governorate, born in 1951, has a doctorate in journalism, and head of the media department at Afrin University. On Wednesday, April 4, 2018, he was arrested by members of Ahrar al Sharqiya, an armed opposition faction, from his place of residence in Afrin city, northern Aleppo governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Abdul Majid Izzat Sheikho



V. Recommendations

Security Council

Monitor the implementation of Resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012, Resolution 2043, adopted on April 21, 2012, and Resolution 2139, adopted on 22 February, 2014 which demands the immediate end of the crime of enforced-disappearance.

Human Rights Council

- Follow on the issue of detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons in Syria and shed light on it in all of the annual meetings.
- Cooperate and coordinate with all active local human rights groups in Syria.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

The United Nations and the guarantors in Astana talks

- An impartial special committee should be formed to monitor enforced-disappearance cases, and make progress in revealing the fate of nearly 86,000 missing persons in Syria, including 87% at the hands of Syrian regime forces.
- Immediately start applying pressure on all parties in order to immediately reveal their detention records per a timetable. In the meantime, detention places should be revealed immediately, and humanitarian organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross should be allowed to visit them directly.
- Release children and women, and stop holding families and friends as war hostages.
- We call on the official who was newly appointed in charge of the detainee file at the UN special envoy office to include the detainees issue in the upcoming rounds of Geneva talks, as this issue is of a greater importance to the Syrian people than other far-term issues that can be jointly addressed later by the parties after a political settlement is reached, such as the constitution.





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