



Statement

On World Refugee Day: More Than Half of the Syrian People Remain Forcibly Displaced, Either as IDPs or Refugees, and Are Unable to Return

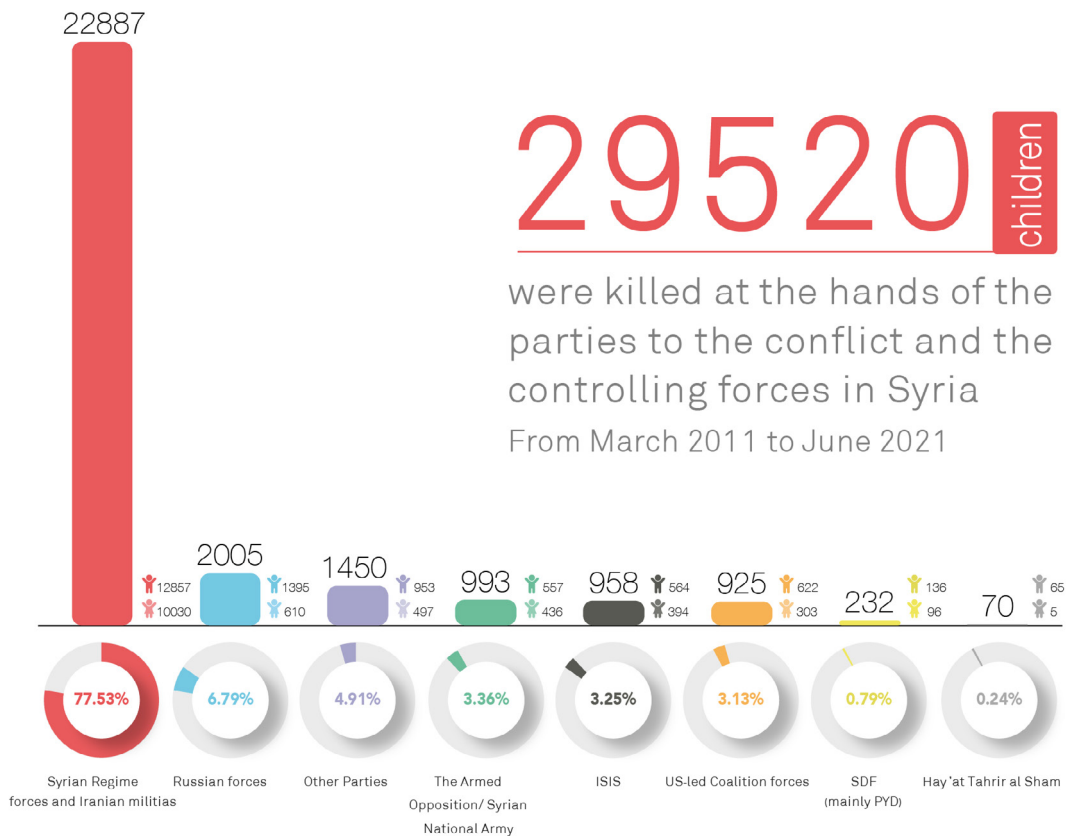
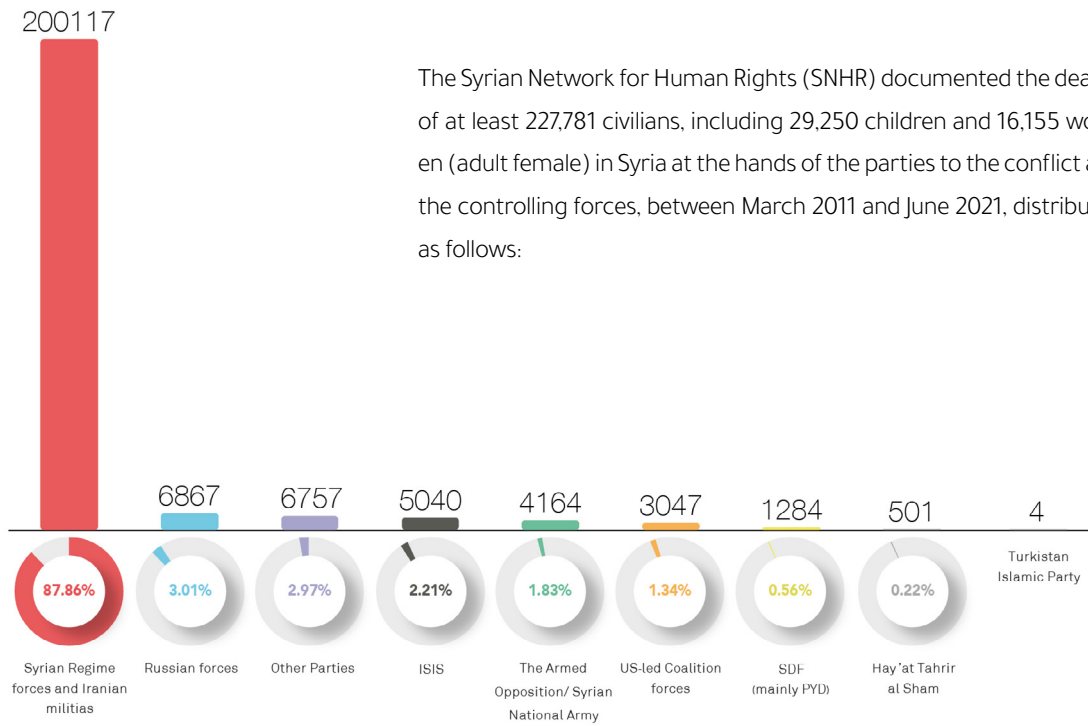
The Issue of Syrian IDPs and Refugees Cannot Be Resolved without Ending the Armed Conflict and Achieving a Political Transition towards Democracy and Human Rights

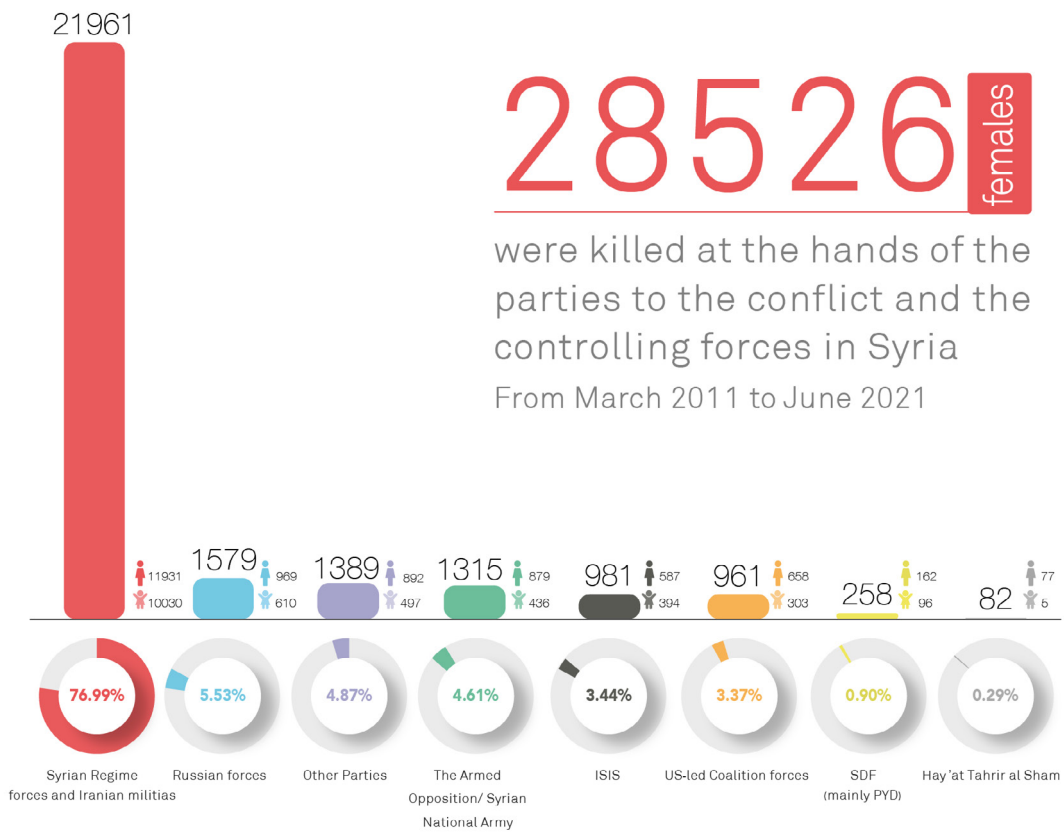
June 20 of each year marks World Refugee Day, with the symbolism of this day having a painful and harrowing effect on the Syrian people for nearly ten years now, as millions of Syrians have fled the decade-long internal armed conflict, forcing increasing numbers of citizens to seek asylum.

The egregious violations committed by the Syrian regime, some of which amount to crimes against humanity, have been the primary driving force behind Syrians' quest for asylum, with the other parties to the conflict also practicing various types of violations against each other and within their areas of control, albeit to a far smaller degree.

The following is the record of the most notable violations by all the parties to the conflict:

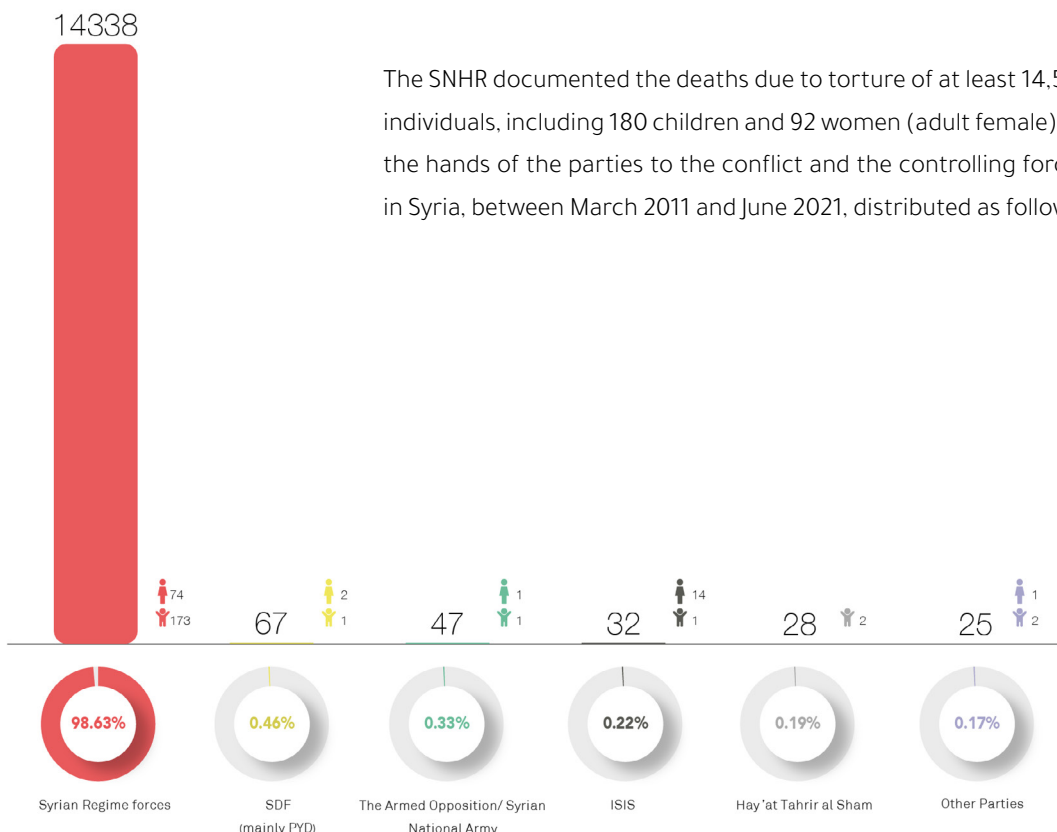
A. Extrajudicial killing:



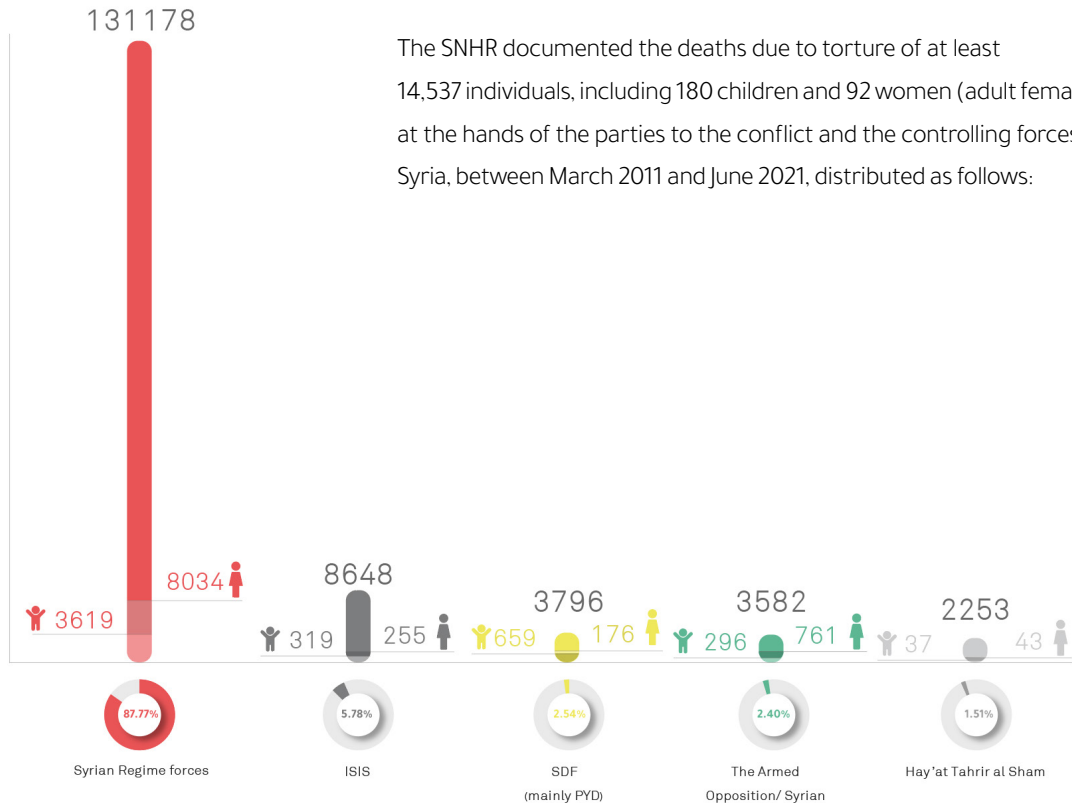


It is noticeable that the Syrian regime is the main cause of the vast majority of violations, and is by far the most prolific killer of civilians in Syria, accounting for nearly 88% of the total death toll, followed by the Russian forces who are responsible for nearly 3%, meaning that the Syrian regime/ Iranian militias, and the Russian regime are responsible for nearly 91% of civilians killed since the start of the popular uprising in March 2011.

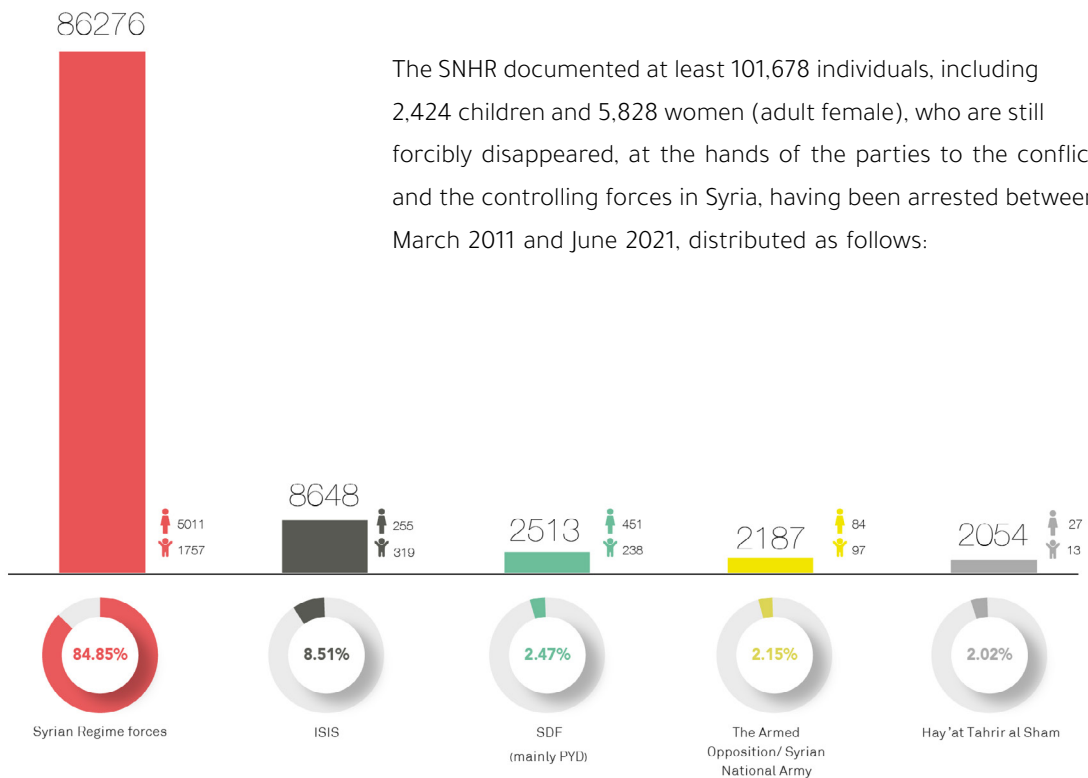
B. Death due to torture:



C. Arbitrary arrest:



D. Enforced disappearance:



We confirm that these types of violations are still taking place to date, with SNHR issuing a [monthly report](#) showing the record of these and other major violations in the preceding month.

The main cause of death is by bombardment using various types of weapons, particularly by the air forces deployed by the Syrian regime and by its Russian ally since its illegitimate military intervention in September 2015; both the indiscriminate and deliberate attacks are carried out using an intensive scorched earth approach with the aim of killing and injuring the largest possible number of the local population, causing the people to flee and then to seek refuge, knowing from experience that there is no other option since this relentless aerial bombardment will lead to death or injury for those who remain, as well as destroying homes, shops and infrastructure, leaving no choice but to flee. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database, aerial bombardment is responsible for 70 % to 75% of the total killings and destruction, and therefore for the ensuing displacement.

The next greatest cause of death and displacement is persecution by regime security forces involving the arbitrary arrest and detention of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, with SNHR's figures suggesting that at least 1.2 million Syrian citizens have been subjected to detention at some point since 2011 to date, with 131,178 of these being still either under arrest or forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime, and at least 14,338 of them dying as a result of torture. This trilogy of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture is the second most common reason behind Syrians' asylum and their unwillingness to return so long as the regime's security services control Syrians' lives.

The third primary factor driving displacement is the regime's siege of entire areas during which it prevents aid from entering these areas as a form of collective punishment; this is followed by regime-imposed compulsory 'reconciliation' agreements aimed at displacing these areas' people.

These primary factors have contributed to continuous forced displacement of millions of Syrians over the past decade. As a result of all this, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that nearly 13 million Syrians are now either internally displaced or refugees, distributed as follows:

- Nearly six million internally displaced persons (IDPs), some of whom have been displaced more than once.
- Nearly seven million refugees, the vast majority of whom are in neighboring countries.

The Syrian regime and its allies have not stopped at displacing the population, however, with their violations against citizens also extending to pillaging and [looting the homes, which their victims were forced to flee](#), including the confiscation of property or stealing even the structural and cladding materials, in addition to seizing their victims' agricultural lands through [public auctions](#). SNHR has issued a number of [reports on the issue of looting and seizure](#) of property. We have also documented reprisals bearing a sectarian character, including exhuming the graves of IDPs' and refugees' family members, removing the bodies and disposing of them in unknown locations.

All of these violent practices, which are still continuing to the present day, prevent the displaced (IDPs and refugees) from returning to their areas of origin. It must be noted that although the harsh conditions in the countries of asylum force some Syrian refugees to return to the unsafe areas of the Syrian regime, it is estimated that the total percentage of refugee returnees from all countries of the world does not exceed 7% of all those who have fled, with the majority returning from Lebanon and then Jordan.

The vast majority of the displaced are from areas controlled by the Syrian regime, as it is by far the most heinous perpetrator of violations compared to the other parties, a point made clear in all SNHR's previous charts reflecting the data we have documented. In this context, we do not believe that the Syrian regime cares about the return of refugees or IDPs; on the contrary, it puts obstacles in the way of their return, including a condition requiring the payment of \$100 per person upon entry to the country, a blatant act of theft legitimized by the enactment of an unjust law mandating it.

The party wishing to encourage refugees to return to Syria is Russia, which drives and exploits the 'refugee crisis' as a means to put pressure on European countries and to encourage the extremist reaction of the far-right, with the aim of destabilizing Europe and creating unrest, allowing Russia to blackmail European governments and to request that funding assistance be provided to the Syrian regime for reconstruction or under the pretext of humanitarian aid, with the great majority of these funds going to the regime's security services, local militias and regime loyalists as a form of compensation. We at the Syrian Network for Human Rights confirm that the conditions for the voluntary safe return of Syrian refugees set by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have not yet been fulfilled, and we stress that they will not be achieved as long as the Bashar al Assad regime and its security services continue to rule large areas of Syria, with Bashar al Assad being involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Recommendations:

- The High Commissioner for Refugees should notify refugees of the dangers of return in the absence of any change to the ruling regime in Syria, periodically alert refugees to this, and monitor the situation of refugees who have returned to Syria, reporting on the violations they have suffered.
- The High Commissioner for Human Rights should condemn the arbitrary decisions issued by the Syrian regime which impede the return of Syrian citizens and aim to loot their money, and should expose the practices of the government and the current regime in such organized looting activities and the regime's normalization of such behavior with laws that legitimize these crimes.
- The UN Security Council and the United Nations should make real efforts to implement the political transition laid out in resolution 2254 within a strict timetable that does not exceed 12 months at the latest, thus achieving the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Syrian citizens.
- All the countries in the world where Syrian refugees are living should not withdraw their residency permits, send them to unsafe and unstable areas, or return them to Syria, but should rather help them integrate into society, be reunited with their families, and give them all their rights in implementation of international human rights law.