

Press release

New York: On the Sidelines of the UN General Assembly Session, SNHR Takes Part in a Side-Event on the Issue of Releasing Death Certificates for Forcibly-Disappeared Persons

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.



New York, September 27, 2018: SNHR participated in a side-event on the sidelines of the meeting of the UN General Assembly. The event focused on the Syrian regime's acknowledgment of death of hundreds of forcibly-disappeared Syrian citizens. Being a matter with dangerous implications, SNHR has already released two reports on this issue, while 41 states have sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General in this regard. This event comes as a result of the international attention and follow-up, as well as a coordination and collaboration with the US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, under the sponsorship of the US, the UK, and France, as the event was also attended by a wide range of state representatives and expert international groups.

H.E. Ambassador Michel G. Kozak, US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Senior Bureau Official, started the event and gave the floor to the participating Syrian groups, where Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, opened his statement by stressing that the Syrian regime has, for the first time since the start of the popular uprising, revealed the fate of tens of forcibly-disappeared persons the regime itself was responsible for their disappearance as dead. SNHR was able, Abdul Ghany revealed, to record 836 cases according to the report, copies of which were distributed among the attendants. Abdul Ghany raised the question that how did the Syrian regime know the fate of those given that it has always denied forcibly disappeared any Syrian citizens and why now. Abdul Ghany presented two possible answers – either the Syrian regime is hoping to show that it has achieved victory on the ground and is now bringing the issue of detainees to a close so the people and society can submit and accept that going back to a state where the present Syrian regime is in power is their only choice, or it is the Russian regime who may have been the one who instructed the Syrian regime to do so, in order to end the file which impedes wrapping up the Syrian catastrophe from a Russian standpoint.



Abdul Ghany stressed that the Syrian regime has used enforced-disappearance as a weapon of war, causing a state of prevalent panic and terrorization in the Syrian society, especially that 85% of the people detained by the Syrian regime becomes forcibly-disappeared persons. According to SNHR database, the Syrian regime has been responsible for the enforced-disappearance of approximately 82,000 Syrian citizens. In addition, Abdul Ghany noted that around 14,000 victims have died due to torture in Syrian regime detention centers.

Finally, Abdul Ghany said that while the Syrian regime did acknowledge the death of a number of forcibly-disappeared persons, the Syrian regime has never revealed the cause of death or delivered bodies, stressing that this does not constitute a true revelation per the international law. As such, Abdul Ghany inferred, the fate of those individuals is still unknown and the Syrian regime is responsible for their enforced-disappearance.

Abdul Ghany called on the states in attendance to work on holding a Security Council meeting and demand that the UN General Assembly releases a statement addressing this critical issue. Additionally, Abdul Ghany called on the UN General Assembly to form an alliance that would cooperate with the Syrian civil society groups and handle the issue of enforced-disappearance.

A text version of the speech can be found [here](#).

Mohammad al Abdallah, director of Syria Justice and Accountability Center (SJAC), and Rajaa Altalli, director of the Center for Civil Society and Democracy (CCSD), spoke next, followed by Families for Freedom's two survivors Dr. Hala Ghawi and Amina Khoulyani, recounting their own detention experiences and their relatives' arrest, where the two women talked about how the fate of some of their relatives is yet to be revealed, while others have faced a painful death due to torture.

Afterwards, the floor was open for discussion, as H.E. Ambassador François Sénémaud, Personal Representative for Syria of the French President, chaired the discussion, while Mr. Staffan de Mistura, UN special envoy to Syria, and Neil Crompton, Director for Middle East and North Africa for the United Kingdom, both spoke, in addition to a number of inputs from state representatives and international expert organizations on issues related to arrest, women, and enforced-disappearance.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

