

No less than 13,197 Individuals Died due to Torture, including 167 Children and 59 Women

Out of Sight

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

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.



Report Contents

- I. Introduction and Methodology
- II. Toll of Deaths due to Torture According to SNHR's Database
- III. Torture at the hands of the Main Four Parties to the Conflict in Syria
- IV. Recommendations

I. Introduction and Methodology

Syria is still the world's leading country in rates of torture to death, as the Syrian regime remains responsible for the overwhelming majority of deaths due to torture with 99% while the rest of the parties are responsible for 1% according to SNHR's database. Torture has been used as a tool to establish dominance, crush the opposition, terrorize and shatter the society and drive it to submit and accept the one-family rule.

Torture occurs when an individual who is in power deliberately inflicts pain or suffering in order to achieve a particular goal, such as extracting confessions from a detainee, or punish, terrorize, or threaten them. Torture can be physical such as beating or by using pain-causing torture methods, or it could take a psychological form ranging from deprivation of sleep, food, or water, or public degradation to other forms of ill, cruel, or inhumane treatment against arbitrarily arrested detainees and forcibly disappeared persons.

The international law strictly prohibits torture and all forms of ill, degrading, and inhumane treatment. This is considered a customary rule where states are not to dispute or balance this rule with other rights and values, even in times of emergency or terror threats. Violating the prohibition of torture constitutes an international crime in the eyes of the international criminal law, as people who issued orders for torture or failed to prevent it shall bear criminal responsibility for such practices.

Despite the strictness of torture prohibition in international and regional instruments, the brutal practices that are taking place in Syria are utterly incomprehensible. Many other world countries dismiss these stories as unbelievable or unrealistic when reading or hear-



ing about them, considering that it is really difficult to fathom that a person is being starved or their health is being neglected to the point of death for a sensible person in the modern age. The Syrian security apparatuses' sadism has reached extreme levels of degradation and indignity.

In this annual report that SNHR releases regularly on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on June 26 of every year, we cover the new torture-related violations we've recorded, as everything included in this report are recent accounts that we've recorded over the course of one year. It is important to SNHR to commit to releasing this extensive report to emphasize that torture and other forms of ill-treatment have been going on since March 2011 using the most horrendous methods by the parties to the conflict at the official and non-official detention and interrogation centers, where many, many people have fallen a victim to torture or sustained physical and mental disfigurements and disabilities as a result of these practices that those who are in charge are using systematically in light of the absolute power afforded to them.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“The staggeringly large numbers of victims who died due to torture, particularly at the hands of the Syrian regime, is a sure reminder that these deaths have been for years one of the most horrendous national catastrophes to afflict the Syrian state. What is even more appalling is the fact that it is still going on with no treatment even for those who somehow survive the years of torture and enforced-disappearance. Donor states should secure and raise more urgent assistance in this regard specifically.”

Methodology

This report draws upon SNHR's archive that was started in 2011 and contains violations related to torture and arrest that were the result of the daily documentation and recording. Our archive is continuously and regularly revised and reviewed. All of the figures included in this report are drawn from that archive and are recorded with names, place, and date. All of this data is what we have been able to access which varies from one case to another. We also have all relevant documents and videos we have been able to find which we classify in a special archive. In light of the extraordinary challenges that SNHR team encounters in Syria, we have to stress that this report, as with past reports, is only the bare minimum of the violations that are being practiced in reality.



This report contains some interviews were conducted over the past year, between our last report on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, June 26, 2017, and June 2018, in order to establish and prove the continued patterns of torture. We've selected 13 accounts for this report that includes interviews with torture survivors and with families that lost one of their members to torture. Most of these interviews have been conducted by personally visiting the eyewitnesses either in Syria, or Turkey and Lebanon, or via phone or communicate software. These interviews were originally conducted in Arabic. We have concealed the real names of some witnesses per their request and out of fear for their safety and the safety of their beloved ones in Syria. The eyewitnesses didn't receive any promises for aids in return of agreeing to participating in these interviews. We have explained to them the purpose of this report and they gave us permission to use the information they provided.

II. Toll of Deaths due to Torture According to SNHR's Database

According to SNHR's database, a total of 13,197 individuals died due to torture, including 167 children and 59 women (adult female) between March 2011 and June 2018. The death toll is distributed by the main four parties as follows:

A- First degree: Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias): 99%

13,066 individuals, including 163 children and 43 women

B- Second degree: extremist Islamic groups: 0.4%

- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): 0.24%

31 individuals, including 1 child and 13 women.

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and other factions from the armed opposition): 0.16%

21 individuals, including 1 child.

C- Third degree factions from the armed opposition: 0.27%

36 individuals, including 1 child and 1 woman

D- Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): 0.24%

31 individuals, including 1 child and 2 women

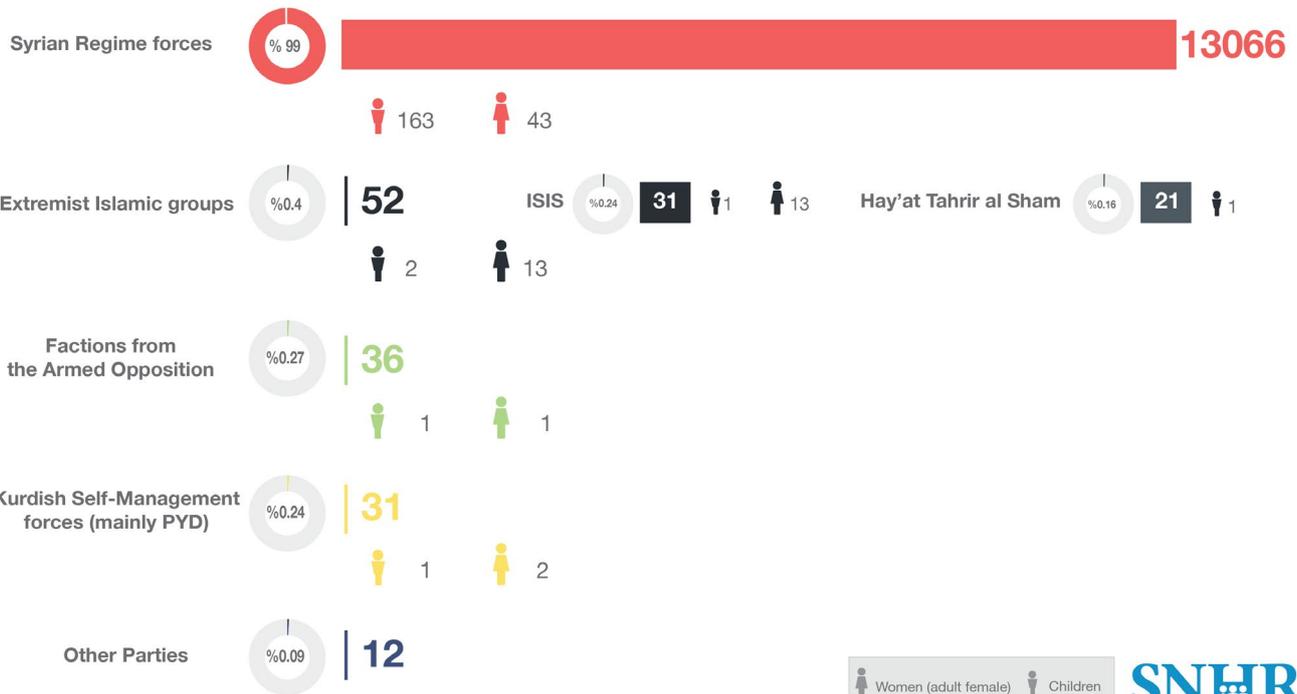
E- Lastly, other parties: 0.9%

12 individuals



13,197 died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria from March 2011 until June 2018

Distributed as follows:



As documented by SNHR



The effects of torture are certainly not limited to the appalling number of victims who lost their lives, but it extends to the ones they love as well. There are also the many people who were tortured and released and are still suffering from the effects of this experience whether mentally or physically. We, at SNHR, can confirm that there are no less than 121,829 individuals who are still under arbitrary arrest or enforced-disappearance since March 2011, at the time of this report, according to our database that includes names and data, approximately 87% of them are at the hands of the Syrian regime alone.

III. Torture at the hands of the Main Four Parties to the Conflict in Syria

A- Syrian regime forces

The Syrian regime has been using torture as an effective and reliable weapon against those who oppose it. Torture was closely connected with arbitrary arrests and enforced-disappearance as part of a complete cycle starting with an unlawful arrest, and goes through the brutal torture during the time of enforced-disappearance which usually ends with death due to torture. Consequently, it is very clear that crimes against detainees are part of a highly continuous sequence the most serious crime of which is torture, especially when it is being practiced in order to inflict serious harm upon the body or cause severe pains for any number of reasons, whether to extract information, vindicate, or spread fear among the



rest of the detainees. Given that the machine of torture is operated behind closed doors, the Syrian regime denies any acts of torture inside its detention centers despite issuing tens of death certificates for forcibly-disappeared persons who were previously detainees on the premise that they had died because of heart attacks or abrupt apnea. However, through our direct interviews with arrest and torture survivors, or the pictures we acquire or are sent to us, we can confirm that the injuries and wounds are the result of severe physical torture. There is no way the Syrian regime's narrative, which revolves around death of natural reasons or heart attack, can hold grounds in front of these evidences. For this reason, primarily, and other reasons, the Syrian regime refuses to give the residents any additional information about the circumstances of a person's death, provide them with a medical report, give the dead body, or even tell the victim's family where the victim was buried. On the other hand, families fear asking repeatedly in fear of being threatened or pursued, and are also deprived of the right to arrange funeral services or express their grief for the very same reason.

No one has been safe from the overextending reach of arrest and torture, including those who settled their security situation as part of what the Syrian regime called national reconciliations, particularly in the areas that Syrian regime forces take control of as a result of bloody offensives. We have recorded that many individuals were arrested during the time they were settling their security situation or shortly after, some of them are still forcibly-disappeared, while those who survived have assured us that they were tortured similarly to the rest of the detainees despite the guarantees they had to never having to experience torture during or after settling their security situation.

Ziad al Ashi, a high school student, from Hama city, born in 2000. He was arrested by an Air Force Intelligence patrol in al Nasr neighborhood, Hama city on March 21, 2018. He was held at Hama Military Airbase for 20 days, during which he experienced various methods of torture. SNHR met him in his residence in Lebanon and he told us that he was arrested because of a verbal altercation between him and an Air Force Intelligence officer, **“I was beaten and arrested in front of my friends. The officer was telling is about how important it is to volunteer with the military and join the Syrian regime army. I told him that we are not interested in that. He took me to the Military Airbase and told that he will make me wish death. At the airbase, they placed me in a room that I think was for torture. They started hitting me with an electrical cord and a metal bar. I felt that my bones were shattering. I was then transferred to solitary confinement. Four hours later, they resumed torturing me, as they raised my foot and started hitting me on it (bastinado/falqa). I heard the officer telling the recruits to hit me whenever they feel bored.”** Ziad



said that torture never stopped all the time he was under arrest, and that he experienced all methods of torture, including whipping, beating, and dulab.¹ **“Things stayed like that for 20 days, and then I was released after the officer told me that I learned my lesson and there is no need for a trial. I left detention and my body was a living account of the torture I had to experience. In one-week time, I moved to Lebanon because I didn’t want this to happen again and I didn’t want to serve in the military. One word for which I paid the price in bitter beating, torture, and arrest.”** Ziad added.

Mr. Marwan² , from Irbeen city, was tortured and beaten after he was arrested by Syrian regime forces on May 28, 2018 even though Marwan went to settle his security situation in the wake of Syrian regime forces taking over his city after armed opposition factions withdrew in March 2018, **“No more than a month passed after I settled my security situation when Air Force Intelligence arrested me along with 12 others through a raid campaign in which they searched most of the houses in the neighborhood. At al Mazza Military Airbase, where I was taken, they put me in a room for interrogation and the officer started asking me about the time when the city was under the control of the rebels. He also asked me about some of my relatives who left with the civilian convoys to Idlib. I told him I settled my security situation, before they tossed me on the ground and one of the officers applied pressure on my neck and suffocated me before hitting me on the head and the chest with the back of his shotgun multiple times. The officer then came back and put his chair on my chest and sat on it and put his shoe on my face and told me, ‘we will spare no one’ and spit to my face.”** “I left three days later exhausted and tortured. I felt degraded and beaten and decided to leave the city and head for Idlib. They threatened to arrest me again. I didn’t feel safe there because settlement means nothing with a regime of criminals.”

The Syrian regime didn't spare any of its detainees the torture, as it was used against children, women, elders, the disabled, activists, students, and the people who settled their security situations in the areas that saw reconciliations after they were outside the Syrian regime's control even though the Syrian regime had made promises to the residents to not arrest and torture them.

¹ Al Dulab, or the wheel, is a torture method where they bring a small or medium-sized car tire and have the detainee bended from the knees and placed inside the tire on his back, where the detainees stays that way for hours as he is being hit on his feet.

² We met him in Idlib city on June 14, 2018



Most notable deaths due to torture at the hands of Syrian regime forces

Mahmoud Hayyo, lawyer, member of Aleppo City Council and member of the Legal Office at the Council of Aleppo Governorate, from al Myassar neighborhood, eastern Aleppo city, born in 1984. Mahmoud left the neighborhoods of Eastern Aleppo along with his family in November 2016 towards the Syrian regime-held neighborhoods in Aleppo.

We've recorded that the Syrian regime arrested Mahmoud in 2017, a few months after he left Eastern Aleppo, in Aleppo city. On Friday, April 6, 2018, we received information that he had died to torture at Adra Central Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate in July 2017.



Lawyer Mahmoud Hayyo

We contacted Mr. Brita Haj Hasan³, a friend of Mahmoud's, **“The Syrian regime arrested Mahmoud less than a year after he left the siege and the bombing in Eastern Aleppo’s neighborhoods. We haven’t heard anything about him and we haven’t been able to know anything about the whereabouts and conditions of his arrest until we learned that he was transferred to Adra Central Prison in July 2017.”** Brita said that he learned from other detainees and through mediators that Mahmoud had died only two days after he was transferred to Adra Prison.

Alaa Mohammad al Shawwaf, engineer, has a degree in communication engineering, from al Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Alaa used to work as a paramedic with al ‘Sakhour neighborhood’ dispensary in eastern Aleppo city (the neighborhood was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time). Alaa left in December 2016 through Jibreen crossing which the Syrian regime opened towards the western neighborhoods of Aleppo, which are under its control. He was arrested directly after he left. On October 19, 2017, we received information that he had died due to torture inside a detention center in the same month he was arrested.



Alaa Mohammad al Shawwaf

³ Via phone on April 8, 2018



Mustafa Bathish⁴, Alaa's cousin, told us, **“Alaa was forced to leave with his family via Jibreen crossing after the Syrian regime imposed its siege on the eastern neighborhoods. Alaa's intention was to head for the cities in Aleppo suburbs but he was released on the same day. We haven't known anything about him ever since, until we learned that he died due to torture, only about 25 days after he was arrested, through the way of an employee at a government department who was strong connections with security branches.”**

Saeed Khaled al Abrash, local media worker, who works with Ugarit News Network as a reporter, and a photographer with Bab al Qebli neighborhood coordination, born in 1987, from Bab al Qebli neighborhood, western Hama city. On Wednesday, February 8, 2012, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in Bab al Qebli neighborhood after he was shot in the leg as he was covering Syrian regime forces' raid on the neighborhood. On Sunday, June 3, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture in 2017 at Saydnaya Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate.



Saeed al Abrash

SNHR met with Mr. Abdul Rahim al Abrash⁵, Saeed's brother, **“For two years, we haven't received any news about Saeed. After I was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2014, I was transferred to branch 215 where I met my brother and fate have it that we were in the same cell. Signs of torture were visible on him, his teeth were broken and his fingernails were removed, but he was relatively in good health. I was released a month later. Since then, we haven't heard anything about him again.”** Abdul Rahim added that he met two detainees who were released in 2017 and they told him that Saeed is at Saydnaya Prison and his health is getting worse. In June 2018, he learned that Saeed died after his family went to the Civil Registration department in Hama city and found his name on the lists of deceased detainees.

⁴ Via a phone call on October 19, 2017

⁵ Via phone on April 8, 2018



Nayef al Athab, from al Ashara city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, born in 1943. In 2017, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint on the road between Deir Ez-Zour governorate and Damascus governorate. On Tuesday, January 23, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture inside a detention center in Damascus city.

Belal Yasin Tabajo, university student at the faculty of electrical engineering, from Douma city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1991. On Wednesday, January 1, 2014, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in al Wafideen Camp near Douma city. On Tuesday, April 24, 2018, we received information that he died due to torture inside a detention center.



Belal Yasin Tabajo

Jasim Mustafa Jasim, university student at the faculty of English literature at al Baath University in Homs city, from Jarables city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, born in 1991. On February 6, 2013, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces from his university in Homs city. On June 18, 2018, we received information that he died due to torture on February 25, 2018, at Saydnaya Prison in Damascus suburbs governorate.



Jasim Mustafa Jasim

Mohammad Hammoud Eisa al Mabrouk, elder, from al Suwaydiya village, eastern suburbs of Raqqqa governorate, born in 1958. On Wednesday, April 24, 2017, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces. On Friday, April 27, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture inside a detention center in Damascus city.



Mohammad Hammoud
Eisa al Mabrouk



Rami Hannawi, member of the National Coordination Commission, from al Suwayda city. On Sunday, August 5, 2012, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in Sehnaya town, southwestern Damascus suburbs governorate. On April 30, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture on Monday, December 27, 2017, inside a detention center.



Rami Hannawi

Ali Omar Shamma, child, from Salamiya city, eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1994. On Saturday, July 30, 2011, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in Salamiya city. He appeared in a recorded confession that was aired on the official TV channel on Saturday, September 10, 2011, in which he said that he carried out acts of terrorism. He was forcibly disappeared afterwards at a detention center. On Thursday, May 10, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture.



Ali Omar Shamma

Legal conclusions

The Syrian regime has violated the Syrian constitution that was established by the regime itself in 2012. The constitution states clearly in the second paragraph of Article 53: “No one may be tortured or treated in a humiliating manner, and the law shall define the punishment for those who do so;” as well as Article 391 of the Syrian Criminal Law that establishes that torture is a prohibited and punishable act. In addition, the Syrian Constitution guarantees protection and impunity for the security apparatus through a law that legalizes the crime in Article 16, of Law 14 of 1969 which grants security affiliates impunity in case they committed a crime, as they shall not, according to that law, be prosecuted unless with the approval of the official in charge of them. Thanks to this impunity, which is still in effect to this day, no conviction ruling has ever been issued against any security affiliate for practicing torture throughout the history of Syrian courts. This article is a blatant violation of the most basic principles of human rights and the international law, as well as the Convention against Torture which the Syrian government ratified.



Moreover, the Syrian regime has perpetrated the crime of torture against its foes during an armed internal conflict as part of a widespread and systematic assault, and against civilians and its detainees in a deliberate manner. According to this report and past reports, these acts qualify as a crime against humanity and a war crime in accordance with Article 7 and 8 of the International Criminal Court's Rome Statute.

B- Extremist Islamic groups

- ISIS

Since it emerged on April 9, 2013, ISIS has established numerous detention centers in all the areas it took over as part of a policy the group adopted to enforce its extremist ideals and ideology which punishes anyone who violates it. ISIS made sure to keep all of their detention centers secret under the supervision of the group's security apparatus and leader figures. Those detention centers contained activists, journalists, foreigners, humanitarian group workers, abducted captives of religious and ethnic minorities, and captives who were armed opposition factions' fighters, as well as other detainees who are of value to the group. On the other hand, ISIS dedicated public central detention centers under the supervision of al Hesba, or Islamic Police, to imprison individuals who were accused of violating the regulations imposed by the group such as clothes, prayers, taxpaying and others.

According to the accounts collected by SNHR detainees team, methods of torture used by ISIS on detainees and disappeared persons vary according to the charges leveled against them and the detention center they are being kept at. Detainees held at secret detention centers which are made for people with charges related to opposing the group suffer from severer torture compared to the others who were arrested over what ISIS's extremist mindset sees as violations. The formers saw torture methods such as pretended drowning, slaughter, suffocation using gas, beating on the bones to break it, electrocution, fingernail removal, and burning, as torture usually lasts for days and weeks which may result in death or the group itself sentences the detainee eventually to death, where the sentence is carried out in different way, and might be publicized in the group's video productions. The latter category, on the other hand, experience lighter forms of torture such as severe beating, whipping, dulab, shabah (ghosting) which lasts for hours or a few days.



SNHR contacted the media worker A.A.⁶, aged 28, from al Mayadeen city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour. A.A. was arrested by ISIS on November 13, 2017, and managed to escape imprisonment on January 21, 2018. A.A. said that he suffered continued torture where ISIS used methods such as shabah and beating. The torture would start everyday at 1 a.m., **“I was arrested in front of an internet café by ISIS members who escorted me first to my house and confiscated my phone and about 500,000 Syrian pounds I had. They transferred me to the prison for security matters who is headed by ISIS leader figures in charge of security. The prison was located in the vicinity of al Mayadeen city. My charge was that I was still working in media and was in contact with foreign groups even though I have completely stopped working in media since the Syrian regime took over the city. One month later, we were transferred to one of al Hesba prisons that is managed by the Islamic Police. The prison was located in al Shnan village, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. I remained there until I managed to escape.”**

Mustafa Mohammad al Hmoud⁷, from Akkash village, eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, works as a sheep merchant. Mustafa told us about his arrest and torture at the hands of ISIS. Mustafa said that he was arrested on August 1, 2017, after he was invited by the village’s prominent figures to a meeting with ISIS who were in control of his village, where they were hoping to negotiate with the group over leaving the village as the regime was using ISIS’s existence in the village as an excuse to shell it, **“Before the meeting time, I was arrested by ISIS members from my house, and they accused me of negotiating with the regime. They left me at an armory, then I was tortured using the ghosting method, as I was left hanging from the ceiling by my hand and they poured hot tea on my back, before they whipped me tens of times. I was left like that until night, and then their leader came to me and threatened to kill me, and told me they will record my execution as they do usually.”** Mustafa told me that he was released on the next day after his village paid a ransom of \$7,500 to the group’s leader in the village.

SNHR contacted Mr. A.S.⁸, 23-year-old, from al Hawayej village, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour. A.S. said that he was arrested by ISIS members on November 10, 2017, when he headed for al Hesba Center to perform what was called a “repentance” which is effectively an acknowledgment of guilt and a pledge to adhere to the group’s regulations and to not oppose it, **“As soon as I arrived to al Hesba Center with my friends, the members there arrested me and blindfolded me, before I was transferred to a prison I didn’t know its name. I was interrogated by a person of a Tunisian nationality who accused me of treason and diverting from Islam.”** A.S. told us that he was severely beaten all over his body in the first three days. He was then transferred to a school where he underwent a 40-day Sharia course before he was released on January 5, 2018.

⁶ Via phone on April 6, 2018

⁷ We’ve met him personally in the camps in northern suburbs of Idlib on May 23, 2018

⁸ Via a phone call on February 4, 2018



Legal conclusions

ISIS conducts show trials for their detainees based on laws that usually leads the detainee to sentences of death under torture, or field-execution through inventive, brutal ways. None of this abides by the principles of the international human rights law or the international humanitarian law which constitutes a war crime.

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has been working towards expanding its territories and take over areas that were under the control of armed opposition factions. In July 2017, the group took over the majority of Idlib and parts of western suburbs of Aleppo. The group carried out a wide arrest campaign that targeted individuals who criticized its policies, such as media workers or individuals who refused to cooperate with it such as workers in the humanitarian field. The group also arrested affiliates of the armed opposition factions it fought and ambushed some of them. In some cases, the group also resorted to arrest their relatives in order to force them to surrender themselves.

Detainees and abductees are subjected to a number of torture methods that include mainly severe beating, whipping, ghosting at the hands of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham who also use psychological methods such as pretended execution or death and assassination threats in case a detainee was accused more than once. Detention lasts usually from weeks to years, and usually the group releases detainees after paying large ransoms that can amount to \$200,000 in some cases. In order to force them to pay the ransom, detainees may be subjected to brutal methods of torture such as whipping, ghosting, burning, breaking teeth, fingernail removal. They also experience psychological torture methods that include death threats, forcing them to confess to acts they never committed, and filming them in video recordings and send those recordings to their families which was the case with the captain Saeed Naqresh which we had released a statement about. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham tends to deny abduction, hide individuals, and take hostages. However, we have spoken to a large number of people who were released over the past two years, and they confirmed to us that they were indeed detained at Hay'at Tahrir al Sham prisons despite the group's denials. SNHR met with Mr. Samer at his residence in Idlib governorate⁹. He is from Ma'aret Misreen city, suburbs of Idlib governorate, and he is the owner of a currency exchange shop. In May 2018, he was arrested by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham members from his house and they held him at a prison in Sarmin town, suburbs of Idlib governorate. Samer told us about the torture and beating he had to experience, **“I was tied to a chair and electrocuted multiple times, before they flipped the chair and hit me on my feet. They left me in a completely empty room for two days. On the third day, they asked for a large ransom, approximately**

⁹ We've met him personally in the camps in northern suburbs of Idlib on May 23, 2018



\$20,000, to keep me alive. After negotiations, I managed to reduce their demands to \$8,000. They let me contact my family to secure the money. I was released about a week after I was arrested.” Samer told us that Hay’at Tahrir al Sham accused him of transferring money to relief groups in Idlib.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018, we recorded that Mr. Mohammad, an Arabic language teacher, was arrested from his place of residence in Ihsim town, southern suburbs of Idlib by Hay’at Tahrir al Sham members. He was taken to a detention center for the group in Kensafra town, southern suburbs of Idlib. Mohammad told us that he the arrest was made in a savage manner, as a number of masked gunmen from the group raided his house and started shooting randomly to terrorize the residents, before they tied his hands and blindfolded him and took him to a detention center that took them 20 minutes to arrive to according to Mohammad, **“I was left in solitary confinement. At evening, the interrogation started and I was accused of having an allegiance to the Euphrates Shield factions. I denied that, and that is when the torture started which was more psychological than physical. They kept threatening to slaughter and kill me, and sharpened a big knife in front of me, and they told me that they will slaughter me. A few days later, the torture grew more brutal and the ghosting and beating with thick cables and sticks started. They would torture me in a space for torture. I was then transferred to a solitary cell under the ground, and I didn’t see the sun for a week.”**

Most notable incidents of torture at the hands of Hay’at Tahrir al Sham

Known under the name Abu Na’im Tharifa, from Irbeen city, Damascus suburbs governorate, 60-year-old. On Thursday, July 6, 2017, he was arrested by Hay’at Tahrir al Sham gunmen in Irbeen city. He was released on Friday, July 7, 2017 after he was beaten.



Signs of torture on the hands of the victim Abu Na'im Tharifa



Legal conclusions

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has blatantly violated Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. According to Rome Statute, "taking hostages" during armed conflicts constitutes a war crime, while torture constitutes a crime against humanity in accordance with Article 7 of the same document.

C- Self-Management forces

Since 2016, we have monitored a notable escalation in the severity of the torture methods used by Self-Management forces in parallel with a rise in rates of torture deaths. Some of these exhibited an ethnic nature. Similarly, we noticed a notable rise in the rates of torture use in 2018 following Self-Management forces taking over new areas in Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour governorates which was followed by arresting civilians over charges of being associated with ISIS. Those individuals experienced severe methods of torture such as fingernail removal, whipping, and ghosting. Also, activists and political figures suffered from beating, deprivation of food and medical care, and solitary confinements for periods of times exceeding two months.

Nayef Khaled al Mahamid, from Raqqa city, retired government employee, 65-year-old. Nayef fled his city after ISIS took over in 2014 to Homs city. When the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) seized control of Raqqa city, Nayef decided to come back in February 2018 to check on his possessions and visit his relatives. However, he was stopped by an SDF checkpoint near Raqqa city and he was detained for hours, during which he was beaten in order to intimidate him. He was prevented from going back to his home. Nayef told us¹⁰, **"They checked my papers and asked me why I am coming back to Raqqa. They asked to see papers proving that I am the owner of my house, and then the officer in charge there asked me about relatives from my tribe, some of them are affiliates of ISIS while others are affiliates of armed opposition factions. I told him that I have no contact with them and I don't know anything about them. He then got angry and started shouting and beat me with a belt and I fell on the ground. He started kicking me all over my body and broke one of my teeth."** Nayef said that his dentition lasted for three hours in a room near the checkpoint. They refused to give him his medication or water to drink. They released him under the condition that he goes back to Homs city without entering Raqqa city, **"The officer told me 'if you come back to Raqqa, I will kill you.'"**

¹⁰ Via phone on March 26, 2018



Most notable incidents of torture at the hands of Self-Management forces

Mohammad al Bakkar, from al Jat village, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Tuesday, May 29, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Jat village. They took him to one of their detention centers. He was released on Saturday, June 2, 2018, after he was beaten.



Signs of torture on the victim
Mohammad al Bakkar's face

Ahmad al Bakkar, from al Jat village, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Tuesday, May 29, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Jat village. They took him to one of their detention centers. He was released on Saturday, June 2, 2018, after he was beaten.



Signs of torture on the victim
Ahmad al Bakkar's face



Abdul Salam al Hafni, from al Jat village, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Tuesday, May 29, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Jat village. They took him to one of their detention centers. He was released on Saturday, June 2, 2018, after he was beaten.



Signs of torture on the victim Abdul Salam al Hafni's face

Most notable deaths due to torture at the hands of Self-Management forces

Saleh Ahmad al Yasin, pharmacist, from Mohasan city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, 55-year-old. In April 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces from his place of work in Jazrat al Bo Hamid in western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Thursday, June 7, 2018, we received information that he had died due to torture and negligent health care inside a detention center. His dead body was delivered to his family.



Saleh Ahmad al Yasin

Fahd Ammash al Nayef, petroleum engineer, from Sbeikhan city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. In May 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in Sweidan village, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On Thursday, June 7, 2017, we received information that he had died due to torture and negligent health care inside a detention center. His dead body was delivered to his family.





Signs of torture on the media worker Omar Jijo's body

Fahd Ammash al Nayef

Legal conclusions

Kurdish Self-Management forces didn't respect the principles of the international human rights law or the international humanitarian law in this regard. The acts of torture practiced by them against their enemies during the non-international armed conflict constitute war crimes.

D- Armed opposition factions

Between the start of 2017 and June 2018, we recorded that some factions from the armed opposition are resorting to using torture methods more heavily, resulting in higher torture death toll. Armed opposition factions used methods such as ghosting, dulab, whipping, electrocution against individuals who criticized their policies, mainly against local media workers. We have recorded a large number of incidents where a faction arrests a local activist and tortures him and releases him a few days later without leveling any charges. Also, armed opposition factions used severer forms of torture against captives from Syrian regime forces.

Friday, April 13, 2018, around 22:00, a group from Lewa al Shamal, a sub-faction affiliated to Failaq al Sham who is an armed opposition faction, raided the house of the media worker Omar Jijo, known as Abu al Abd, in Kafra village, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The group severely assaulted Omar and his son while insulting and humiliating both of them. The group took Omar back to their base in Kafr Kalbin village, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, over an accusation of posting a video showing civilians who were shot. The video also shows the shooter which was a member of the same group. Omar was released on the same day after they threatened to kill him.





Signs of torture on the media worker Omar Jijo's body

Media worker Omar Jijo

Omar Jijo¹¹ told us about the circumstances of his arrest and the torture and beating he endured, **“They raided my house and started beating and insulting my son and me. They took me in their car back to the group’s base. On the way, they kept threatening to kill me and continued to vulgarly insulting me. They left me in a small room and left me until night when they released me after I pledged to never do what I have done again. I was subjected to all that beating and torture just over a video I posted online that shows civilians who were shot by one of their members.”**

Mr. Jehad Suleiman, paramedic and civil activist, from Izaz city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. He was arrested by a group from an opposition faction on April 4, 2018, from his house in Izaz city after he written a post on his Facebook page in which he criticized the group. Jehad told us in a phone call , **“They tied my hands to the back, and tied me to a post and beat me with an electric cord on my chest, abdomen, and leg while vulgarly insulting me. They confiscated my phone and broke it in front of me. Two hours later they set me free and threatened to kill me and burn my house if I criticized their acts again.”**

Most incidents of torture at the hands of armed opposition factions

Mohammad Ma'moun, from Izaz city, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. On Wednesday, July 12, 2018, he was arrested by gunmen from Ahrar al Sharqiya, an armed opposition faction, at a checkpoint in Jarables city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. They took him to one of their detention centers in Jarables city, and was released on the same day after he was beaten and assaulted.

¹¹ We contacted7 him via phone on April 14, 2018

¹² On April 17, 1





Signs of torture on Mohammad Ma'moun's body

Farah al Din Mohammad Othman, civilian, from Afrin city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, 34-year-old. On Thursday, April 12, 2018, he was arrested by gunmen from Ahrar al Sharqiya, an armed opposition faction. He was released on the same day after he was beaten and assaulted.



Signs of torture on Farah al Din Mohammad Othman's body

Farah al Din Mohammad Othman

Most notable deaths due to torture at the hands of armed opposition factions
Eisa al Mhamid, child, from Daraa al Balad city, Daraa governorate, 16-year-old. He was arrested by gunmen from Lewa al Tawhid, an armed opposition faction, who took him to one of their detention centers in Daraa al Balad. On Tuesday, November 7, 2017, we received information that he had died due to torture at one of their detention centers.

Abdulla Nabil al Nasr Askar, from Jasim city, northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 2002. On Wednesday, April 25, 2018, he was arrested by armed opposition factions in Jasim city. They took him to Jasim city police station. We received information that he had died due to torture. His body was delivered to his family with signs of torture on it.





Abdullah Nabil al Nasr Askar

Ahmad Mohammad Shikho, vice president of the Council of Sheikh Hadid al Mahli County, had a degree in geography, from Sheikh Hadid town, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, 53-year-old. On Thursday, June 7, 2018, he was arrested by gunmen from al Lewa Suleiman Shah, an armed opposition faction, in Sheikh Hadid town. He was released four days later. On Tuesday, June 12, 2018, he died on account of the torture he was subjected to during his detention.



Ahmad Mohammad Shikho

Legal conclusions

The acts of torture carried out by armed opposition factions constitute an explicit violation to the international human rights law when they are being practiced against residents in their areas of control, and to the international humanitarian law when practiced against their enemies in the non-international armed conflict and qualify as a war crime.

IV. Recommendations

Security Council and United Nations

- Protect the civilians who are being detained by the Syrian regime from being tortured to death, and save whoever left of them.
- The United Nations General Assembly should take charge in the Syrian case and work towards implementing the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution in light of the Security Council's utter idleness on account of the Russian-Chinese veto.



- Find a mechanism to bind the Syrian regime to cease torture practices and reveal the locations where the dead bodies were buried and deliver them to their respective families.
- Russia should stop hindering the referral of the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- All of the UN's relief organs should research the families that have lost their provider or one of their members to torture, and ensure the delivery of aids to the people who are truly in-need and launch the rehabilitation efforts.
- Immediately punish all the individuals who are involved in the machine of torture.

International community

- State parties to the Convention against Torture should act to establish their jurisdiction over the perpetrators of torture crimes and take every possible action to achieve so on the material and security levels.
- Enforce serious punitive actions against the Syrian regime in order to deter it from killing Syrian citizens under torture.
- Provide more finance, support, and funds for the local groups who are working on taking care and rehabilitating the victims of torture and their families.
- Provide more support for the individual activists and local groups who are working on documenting violations without imposing their influence or any political directions.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

Syrian regime

- Immediately end all torture practices and abstain from consuming the Syrian state's resources to terrorize and torture the people of Syria.
- Immediately grant access for the Commission of Inquiry and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as impartial human rights groups to all detention centers.
- Shoulder the legal and historical responsibility over this extensive national catastrophe.
- Immediately, and unconditionally, release all arbitrarily arrested detainees, particularly children and women, and reveal the fates of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons.

Extremist Islamic groups

- The international human rights law should be respected in the areas and prisons under these groups' control. All forms of torture inside detention centers should be ended.



Armed opposition factions

- Respect the rules of the international human rights law, cease conducting unlawful trials, and end all forms of torture inside detention centers.
- Immediately allow the International Committee of the Red Cross and the impartial human rights groups to access all detention centers, and abstain from placing detainees in secret detention centers.
- Hold all individuals involved in torture practices accountable and discharge them directly.
- The factions who joined Fateh al Sham Front should detach them as soon as possible.

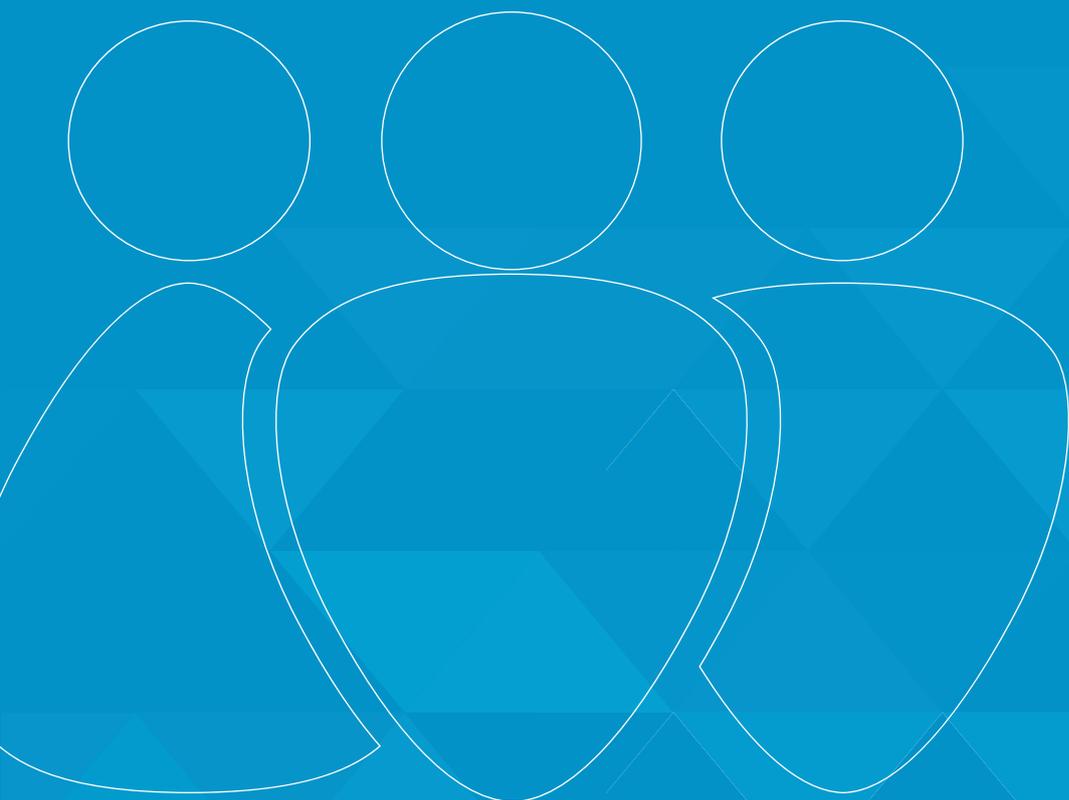
Kurdish Self-Management

- Respect the standards of the international human rights law and cease using torture against political or military foes, and launch investigations to expose the individuals involved in those crimes and hold them accountable.
- Reveal all detainees, publish lists of their names, make the locations and whereabouts of the secret detention centers public, and allow families and human rights groups to visit them.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We would like to sincerely thank the torture survivors who contributed effectively to this report. Our most heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and friends.





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