

Statement

The Release of Roughly 107,000 Detainees Must be Included in the American-Russian South Syria Agreement

Failing to Include the Detainees Issue Will Kill any Hope for the Agreement and Geneva Talks

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



After extensive talks in May 2017 in the Jordanian capital Amman between Russia, USA, and Jordan, the American and Russian presidents announced that a ceasefire agreement has been reached in southwest Syria -Daraa, Quneitra, and al Suwyada governorates- following the 2017 G20 summit. This agreement comes in a series of agreements that sparked in February 2016, and then May 2016, which were followed by Ankara and Astana agreements. All of these agreements share one trait, namely, the absence of an impartial mechanism that is independent from the parties to the conflict for monitoring the breaches, given that Russian is a partner in all of these agreements even though it is a primary party in the conflict, and had even aligned itself with the Syrian-Russian alliance, while it is widely irrational to separate Iran from the Syrian regime in the first place. The lack of said monitoring mechanism has completely eliminated any chance to hold anyone who breaches the agreements accountable, which, in most of the periodical reports released by SNHR, was the Syrian-Iranian alliance – the party that would gain the most from sabotaging the agreements.

SNHR stresses that it will monitor the breaches of this agreement as it monitored the breaches of previous agreements, and will send reports to the relevant and concerned groups regardless of the monitoring mechanism that was established by the sponsoring states, which we believe will be prone to political influences, undermining its credibility and objectivity.

Undoubtedly, some accomplishments have been made in terms of reducing the killings and destructions at some stages. However, no mentionable progress has been made with respect to the detainees issue, even though, at least, all of the past agreements have mentioned this issue and some of them emphasized the necessity to find a solution to this problem that affect wide segments of the Syrian people. Unlike the previous agreements, the most recent agreement didn't tackle or mention the detainees issue, which is, from our point of view, a fatal flaw and an utter disregard for an issue that is by no means less important than ceasing the bombing and killing or delivering humanitarian aids. The travesty of the Syrian detainees must be on top of any political talks' agenda.



If the agreement was partial and limited to specific Syrian governorates and areas, where it is expected that it will expand to include other governorates, it would have been possible for the sponsoring parties to demand the release of the detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons in the three governorates included presently in the agreement, which are, according to SNHR's records, around 21,000. However, it seems that the detainees issue hasn't been even addressed and wasn't a priority for the sponsoring states, which undermines the credibility and seriousness of the agreement in the eyes of the Syrian people. This is another reason why this agreement will collapse and fail on top of the pile of other reasons.

We hope that South Syria agreement expands so the ceasefire applies to all the Syrian governorates, and works on delivering humanitarian aids to disaster areas, especially the besieged areas, and also includes the release of all Syrian citizens -most importantly women and children. SNHR possesses list of approximately 107,000 citizens who are still under arrest or forcibly-disappeared, including about 93,000 at the hands of Syrian regime forces, while the remaining 14,000 are scattered across the rest of the parties (extremist groups, Democratic Union Party, and armed opposition factions). As always, we assert that we are fully willing to cooperate and coordinate regarding this incredibly sensitive and important issue to the Syrian people.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“The bombing and torturing of detainees under the ground, where no one can see, must be stopped in parallel with the bombing above the ground which everyone can see.”

All previous statements have failed, as well as Geneva Talks, to release even one detainee, so how can one fathom that a comprehensive, fair political settlement is achievable? This reflects the lack of true seriousness in finding a true solution to the Syrian disaster, and amplifies our already-immense fears for the safety and lives of this huge number of detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons amid a blatant disregard and dishonesty on the Syrian regime's part regarding their lives, considering what we record every day and release in monthly reports on the [toll of arbitrary arrests](#) and [deaths due to torture](#) inside detention centers, as our half-annual report for 2017 records that 108 individuals have died due to torture.



SNHR calls on the sponsoring states to:

First: Re-include the detainees issue as a primary item in the agreement next to the cease-fire, and deliver humanitarian aids.

Second: Establish a work team and a work mechanism to tackle this important issue, and apply pressure on the Syrian parties, most importantly the Syrian regime, to start releasing detainees and most urgently women and children.

Third: While all of this is being prepared, the governments of the sponsoring states must apply pressure on all parties to immediately grant international monitors access to every official and non-official detention center.





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