

Statement

SNHR Is the Third Most Cited Information Source in the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Report on the General Situation in Syria Issued in May 2020

We Welcome the Report's Findings, Which Confirm That the Situation in Syria Is Unsuitable for the Return of Refugees Due to Arrests, Torture and Confiscation of Property

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, June 8, 2020

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.



On Friday, May 15, 2020, the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs released its general report on the situation in Syria in relation to the evaluation of asylum requests from people coming from Syria in order to take a decision on the repatriation of rejected Syrian asylum seekers. The points addressed in the report cover several topics, primarily related to the human rights situation in Syria and political developments there.

The report relies on several sources, most notably, in order of the number of quotes included:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): 51 quotes.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): 30 quotes.

Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR): 29 quotes.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI): 24 quotes.

The report also cites other sources such as Human Rights Watch and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), in addition to the US State Department's reports on human rights in Syria, as well as other local and international organizations. We have reviewed the 86-page report, and here will briefly summarize the most prominent of its contents.

The report begins by detailing the political developments in the armed conflict in Syria, before moving on to focus on the military escalation in and around Idlib since December 2019, which has led to a significant increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons, many of whom have been subjected to forced displacement more than once. At this point, the report notes that the EU foreign ministers called on the Syrian government to initiate a ceasefire at the end of February 2020 and to end its violations of international law, primarily the targeting of vital facilities. The report then focuses on the security situation in Syria, highlighting the ongoing military operations and continuing fighting in the northeast, northwest and southwest of Syria, especially in Daraa governorate, where an increase in armed confrontations between government forces and armed groups has been documented.



The report also lists the most prominent difficulties facing the humanitarian situation in Syria with regard to living conditions and the conditions of forcibly displaced people and refugees, in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and Syria's ability to combat it; in reference to this, the report notes the fragility of the Syrian health sector, explaining the main limitations such as the massive displacement of the population, and the difficulty in obtaining the essential materials such as respirators, as well as the lack of the conditions necessary to observe social isolation, and the lack of protection for IDPs in densely populated areas, along with generally poor living conditions.

The report goes on to examine the human rights situation in Syria since mid-2019, primarily the situation of political dissidents, ethnic groups, human rights activists, journalists, medical personnel, women and minors, along with issues such as freedom of expression, religion, movement, and legal procedures, in addition to disappearance, kidnapping, and arbitrary arrest, torture, and execution.

The report emphasizes the prevalence of corruption and bribery in the government and judicial system in Syria, as well as the security forces' control of the proceedings and findings of trials in civil and criminal cases; the report also emphasizes lawyers' inability to successfully defend their clients' rights in any case where the other party is governmental or has links with and influence in the government.

The report notes that government forces and their allies (the Russian Federation, the Lebanese Hezbollah, and other foreign, especially Iranian, Shiite militias) have committed widespread violations including extrajudicial killings and massacres against civilians, stressing that hundreds of civilian casualties have been inflicted in deliberately targeted air strikes, in which internationally prohibited weapons (cluster munitions and incendiary weapons) were used, in addition to barrel bombs, which caused widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, mainly targeting hospitals, homes, schools, and other civilian facilities. In addition, the report also notes continuing arrests and confiscation of dissidents' property by government forces, even after settlements.

The report also refers to violations by other parties in addition to the Syrian regime and its Russian ally, citing violations in areas controlled by factions of the Armed Opposition, including killings, physical assault and arbitrary detention, with the report emphasizing that armed terrorist groups, such as Hay'at Tahrir al Sham and ISIS, have committed a wide range of violations, including unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, and severe physical assault.



The report also notes violations by Syrian Democratic Forces, including arbitrary arrests and unlawful attacks, which have resulted in civilian casualties, as well as the group's restriction of people's right to free movement, and refers to the involvement of the Syrian Democratic Forces in illegal corruption activities.

The report reveals that despite the claims of the Syrian government and its allies that the conflict has ended and refugees can return, in reality any such return is severely limited due to the policy of western governments which classify the Syrian government as illegitimate, and do not support the process of refugee return and reconstruction under the current conditions; the report adds that the Syrian government is not facilitating refugees' return, noting that there are credible reports of refugees and IDPs being detained by the security forces after their return even though they have settled their status through consulting the regime's security branches. The report also affirms that the laws issued by the regime allowing the confiscation of property specifically to punish any individuals considered to be opponents or activists who documented violations by government forces are a strong deterrent to the return of refugees, with the report noting that only 4.1 percent of the refugees who returned between 2016 and the end of 2019 can be considered to have done so voluntarily.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights stresses its willingness to contribute to all international reports on the human rights situation in Syria, and will make the greatest possible effort to provide any data and information required of it in this regard, in order to report the ongoing violations and incidents objectively and credibly to achieve the goal of protecting civilians in Syria, holding all perpetrators accountable, and helping to start the country along the path of positive change towards democracy.

To read the full report by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, please download the report via this [link](#)¹ :

¹ Note: The report is only available in Dutch.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

