

Press release

Washington, D.C.: SNHR Holds a Number of Meetings with the US Government

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.



Washington, D.C., October 3-5, 2018: The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) held a number of meetings at the United States Department of States headquarters with senior officials from various US government departments, including the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SCFR), the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the Office of Global Criminal Justice (GCJ), the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance (AVC), and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). The meetings were also attended by a representative from the office of the US ambassador to the Security Council, and the director for Syria at the White House.

In the meetings, SNHR chairman Fadel Abdul Ghany touched upon a wide range of topics. He first talked about the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons and the US's response in the wake of the recent chemical attack on Douma, before focusing on the subject of the Syrian regime's and Russia's control over southern Syria.

Abdul Ghany also shed light on the Iranian regime's large-scale encroachment into the institutions and organs of the Syrian state and community, as well as stressing the need for Syria's detailed political roadmap to return to its normal path in accordance with Resolution 2245 - establishing a transitional governance body and formulating a constitution, followed by holding elections. Lastly, Abdul Ghany emphasized that a more inclusive form of governance should be realized in the areas under the control of international coalition force, in tandem with the implementation of a process to compensate the victims and the reconstruction of the infrastructure and buildings which were destroyed by the aerial and land bombardment by international coalition forces; he stressed that this has become a pressing priority in the wake of defeating ISIS in order to bring about a greater sense of security and stability.

Meanwhile, the White House director for Syria emphasized that the US will not allow the re-legitimization of a Syrian government under the Assad family's rule, adding that the US Coalition will play an integral role, along with their allies and friends, to prevent any such eventuality from coming to pass. He stressed that the Syrian regime and its allies will be unable to reconstruct what they have destroyed in the areas under their control, and no progress will be made in this regard without the implementation of a political solution that ensures a democratic political transition.



The second meeting, which was dedicated to discussion of judicial and prosecution-related issues, focused on how the US can exercise its universal jurisdiction and hold individuals involved in war crimes and crimes against humanity accountable in the same way as they are on American soil. The meeting featured discussions on a number of issues, firstly the importance of US support for the establishment of an international special tribunal on Syria, as well as the significance of the introduction of the 'Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act', and the role that economic sanctions against Russian and Iranian companies could play as a means of ensuring accountability, which would impede these nations' shared agenda of heavily controlling the reconstruction process in Syria and apply pressure on said companies to push towards bringing about political progress consistent with the UN resolutions. Also during the meeting, representatives of the legal and human rights office explained their workflow, and an agreement was reached to enhance data-sharing and coordination in this regard.

SNHR has been a primary and approved source for all human rights reports issued by the US Department of State on Syria since 2012.

Moreover, SNHR's representatives held a meeting with advisors to a US senator on Wednesday, October 3, with the discussions focusing primarily on supporting the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, opposing Iranian intervention in Syria, and recognizing the importance of starting the process of compensating victims and accelerating the power-sharing process in the areas under the control of US-led international coalition forces.

On a related note, the Middle East Institute (MEI) held an event on Friday, October 5, to discuss SNHR's most recent report on Russian intervention in Syria. Chaired by Charles Lister, Director of the institute's Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Program, the event was attended by Erika Hanichak, Government Relations Director at Americans for a Free Syria, and Fadel Abdul Ghany, who spoke primarily about Russia's central role in supporting the Syrian regime, and its related direct involvement in hundreds of crimes against humanity and war crimes, noting that Russian forces have perpetrated hundreds of war crimes over the course of the country's military intervention, bearing direct responsibility for the deaths of 6,239 civilians, including 1,804 children.

Abdul Ghany also noted that Russia has used its United Nations veto powers in an arbitrary fashion on 12 occasions, six of these concerning the issue of chemical weapons. In addition, Abdul Ghany shed light on Russia's barbaric attacks which have resulted in the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, as well as on other related issues, as detailed in this [extensive report](#).



A discussion of the SNHR's report on the Russian intervention three years after it began, Middle East Institute, Washington – October 5, 2018





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