



**Joint
Statement**

**Three Years after Their Disappearance:
Where Is Razan, Wael, Samira and Nazim?!**

On December 9, 2013, a group of gunmen stormed the offices of the Violations Documentation Center in Syria in Douma, Damascus countryside and abducted Razan Zaitounch and three other activists: Samira Khalil, Nazim Hamada and Wael Hamada. Their whereabouts is still unknown, which exacerbated concerns about their health and safety.

Razan Zaitounch is one of the main lawyers who defended political prisoners in Syria since 2001. She started her human rights activism years before March 2011. After March 2011, Razan and her colleague, lawyer Nazim Hamada were among the first supporters of the Syrian street protests. Razan took part in those protests, talked to the media and wrote down her observations. In collaboration with a number of activists, she set up the Violations Documentation Center in Syria. She was also a founder of the Local Coordination Committees, which organized the work of the local committees in various Syrian cities and towns. Razan was exposed to fierce security prosecution and in the fall of 2011, because of her work razan suffered from a lot of security harassment and in 2011 her husband, Wael Hamada and his brother were arrested by the Air Force Intelligence and they were released later.

Razan and her husband went into hiding. Nazim and Samira continued their activities underground amid persistent security chase. In 2013, the four of them moved to Douma (which had come out of regime control). Razan continued her work in the VDC management and established the “local development and SME support office”, which provided assistance to NGOs operating in the besieged Eastern Ghouta.

In honor of her human rights activism, Razan Zaitounch won numerous international awards including Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2011, Anna Politkovskaya Award in 2011 (by Reach All Women in War) and the International Women of Courage Award in 2013. Yet, she could not receive those prizes in person because she was at the time under travel ban. This was just one among numerous





sacrifices made by Razan. Nazim Hamada also could not print his second poetry book because he was an activist- under different names- documenting human rights violations committed in Syria by different parties.

Like Wael, Nazem and Razan, Samira Khalil, a former political detainee (1987-1991), refused to get out of Douma. They preferred to live together or die together. They chose to stay with the people under siege and daily bombardment.

“Nothing, not even our ten thousand martyrs, choking siege or the betrayal of the international community would defeat the will of the people who dream and believe in the future,” says Razan in an interview with the International Federation for Human Rights before her abduction.

While the armed factions in the Eastern Ghouta issued a statement immediately after their kidnapping denying responsibility for that crime and for other violations in Eastern Ghouta, these factions did not facilitate a prompt, serious and independent investigation to uncover the fate of the four kidnapped, despite the fact that the protection of civilians is the responsibility of any party in the areas under their control.

The peaceful civil and rights activism of Razan, Samira, Nazim and Wael (who worked years in silence and was arrested and tortured in silence), which was inseparable from their approach to civil rights and their calls for a country with more justice and respect of human dignity, had created them numerous enemies. All those violating human rights and insulting human dignity are their enemies; all those seeking political or military control for personal profit are their enemies. And it was those who managed to abduct Razan, Samira, Nazim and Wael.

The undersigned Syrian human rights organizations confirm that this crime is not subject to statute of limitations under the international humanitarian law. Accountability is definitely coming and the only ones authorized to forgive are Razan, Samira, Wael and Nazem.

The undersigned organizations urge all international players to take all necessary measures to uncover the whereabouts of Razan Zaitouneh, Samira Khalil, Nazim Hammadi and Wael Hamadeh and release them immediately in accordance with the international law, and to ensure their safety. Their continued detention is part of wider violations including threats and harassment of human rights activists from government and anti-government parties alike.





We, the undersigned human rights and civil organizations, call on all capable forces to interfere and pressure to find out the whereabouts of the four disappeared persons and to release them immediately and let them return to their families and friends. We emphasize that the work started by the four abductees has not stopped and will never stop. Documenting violations and seeking to establish accountability is the obsession of great many Syrian human rights activists and patriots including those enforcedly disappeared. It has never stopped and will never stop.

Sign:

1. Syrian Kurdish Journalists Union
2. Free National Gathering For Workers in the Syrians state's institutions
3. Syrian Association for Citizenship
4. Assyrian Human Rights Network
5. Syrian Network for Human Right
6. The Syrian Committee For Detainees
7. Syrian lobby
8. National group for transitional justice in Syria
9. Al-Marsad | Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights
10. Human Rights educational Center- Germany
11. Syrian Center visual media
12. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
13. Syrian Center for Legal Research and Studies
14. Arab organization for human Rights - syria
15. Arab organization for human Rights
16. The Syrian National Organization
17. Club franco syrien
18. Central local Union of Lawyers
19. Central union for Liberal lawyers
20. Komela Rewşen Bedirxan
21. Zeal
22. The Peace Loop of Gaziantep
23. Syrian Women's League
24. Syrian Christians for Peace. SCP
25. Syrian for Truth and Justice – STJ





26. SYRIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK
27. The Working Group for Syrian Detainees
28. Academics Council
29. Diplomats Council
30. majlesalkadaa
31. The Council of free Syrian judges
32. mudar aljundi
33. Justice for life observatory
34. Justice for life observatory in DeirEzzo
35. Arraya Centre for Media Freedom and press
36. Bercav center
37. Violations Documentation center
38. Democratic Republic studies center
39. Centre for Strengthening the Rule of Law
40. Massar
41. Urnammu
42. Solidarity for Syria
43. The Working Group for Syrian Detainees
44. ALKAWAKIBI ORGANIZATION For HUMAN RIGHTS
45. Rexrewa peyva me
46. Kurdish Women's Development Organization
47. Human Rights Organization in Syria-MAF
48. Syrian activists monitoring organization
49. Jen organization
50. Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights
51. Human rights Guardians

