

Press release:



SNHR Participates in Several Events on the Sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region Baytna and SNHR Organize an Event Entitled 'Peace in Syria: Possibility or Fantasy?'

In May 2022, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) participated in several events on the sidelines of the Brussels VI Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region - 2022. The following is a summary of the most prominent events in which SNHR participated:

A. Open events:

On Friday, May 6, 2022: An event entitled 'No Peace without Justice: the need for accountability in Syria,' [in cooperation with Crisis Action](#) and sponsored by the European Union's Permanent Representatives of Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The event, held via the Zoom platform, featured addresses by Ms. Mariam Hallak of the Caesar Families Association, Mr. Ahmad Helmi of the Ta'afi initiative, Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR's Director, and Ms. Anna Fleischer of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung. The session, which was moderated by Ms. Jacqueline Hale, the director of Crisis Action Brussels, also included participation from representatives of the organizing countries.

In his speech, Mr. Abdul Ghany pointed out the stark difference between European countries' reactions to the violations by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally in Syria compared to their reactions to the same violations by Russia in its war on Ukraine. He noted that European countries and the European Union have imposed no sanctions on Russia over its illegal military intervention in Syria as they have in response to its crimes in Ukraine, despite Russia's committing multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria too, saying: "Zero sanctions against Russia, compared to 6,000 sanctions against Russia, according to Bloomberg, as a result of its intervention in Ukraine." He stressed that the actions taken by the West in Ukraine are positive steps in the right direction, adding, "We hope that similar steps will be taken in Syria because Russia's impunity in Syria has allowed it to expand in Ukraine."

Mr. Abdul Ghany also spoke about the importance of stopping the transfer of material support from Syria and other warzones to the Ukrainian conflict, emphasizing that while support to Ukraine is essential, it must not come at the expense of equally essential support for other victims in other warzones, since ending such support sends a negative message to the victims and a positive message to the perpetrators of violations.



On Friday, May 6, 2022: Baytna and SNHR held an event entitled 'Peace in Syria: Possibility or Fantasy,' featuring participants Mr. Mazen Gharibah, Executive Director of the Syrian British Council (SBC), Ms. Thuraya Hejazi, Director of the Release Me Organization, Ms. Salma Kahale, MENA Director at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR's Executive Director. The session, which was broadcast on social media platforms, was moderated by Ms. Rime Allaf, Communications Manager at Baytna.



The event addressed several issues and focused on a number of questions related to each of them, including discussion of the available tools for justice and accountability, how best to reach a route to national accountability, and the role of civil society, in addition to analyzing the necessary guarantees to protect fundamental rights. On this topic, Mr. Abdul Ghany spoke about the importance of ensuring accountability in order to achieve peace in Syria, adding that a feeling of despair prevails among Syrians due to the limited achievements attained in terms of accountability, noting that accountability is not limited to trials. He explained that the limited successes that have been achieved, such as the establishment of an international commission of inquiry by the United Nations and the establishment of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and others, in addition to these bodies issuing reports condemning the Syrian regime's violations - whose recommendations were not built upon or satisfactorily pursued by the international community and European countries - delivered a message to Syrians that 'in terms of accountability, this is the most that we can offer you.' Mr. Abdul Ghany said that this failure means these limited successes lose what value they have.

Mr. Abdul Ghany made several recommendations, stating, “The European Union countries should make more efforts to advance the stalled political process, and recognize that the political process has been in place since the Geneva Communiqué as of the Constitutional Committee.” He added, “Achieving political transition is the highest degree of accountability that the Syrian regime and the other parties to the conflict could be exposed to, and it is more important than judicial accountability, which may take decades, and [will only] hold individuals at lower ranks accountable.”



The [event](#) concluded with a question and answer session, and the discussion was opened to the public. You can listen to the full content of the event via the following link to our YouTube channel.

B. Additional Participations:

On Thursday, May 5, 2022: Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany participated in an event organized by the EuroMed Feminist Initiative, during which he spoke about the atrocious violations being perpetrated against women in Syria, not only in relation to the conflict but also by the controlling forces. Mr. Abdul Ghany stressed the importance of protecting



women, saying, “These violations by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces aim to prevent women’s participation in the media, and in public political, and relief fields inside Syria,” stressing the importance of working to enhance the role of women in various fields.

On Tuesday, May 10, 2022: Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany met with a number of ambassadors of the permanent missions to the European Union and spoke about the SNHR’s work in documenting human rights violations in Syria for nearly 12 years since the beginning of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011, as well as the SNHR’s cooperation with international investigation committees, human rights organizations, and others. Mr. Abdul Ghany pointed to the limited successes attained in achieving any accountability measure, stressing that “What has been achieved, despite its importance, is a simple step, while accountability should not be focused on the judicial and advocacy fields. These efforts and successes must be transformed and invested in achieving a political transition because the violations remain ongoing to date.”

In a related context, Mr. Abdul Ghany indicated that the latest amnesty decree issued by the Syrian regime is similar to the 19 previous amnesty decrees, all of which are devoid of any meaningful content. He pointed out that SNHR has documented the release of only 419 detainees out of more than 132,000 detainees still held in the regime’s detention centers.

Mr. Abdul Ghany recommended placing more individuals involved in violations on the sanctions lists and referred to the SNHR’s database of criminals, which contains data on many individuals involved in committing violations in Syria.

The SNHR director also stressed the importance of supporting the victims’ families, especially women, by increasing the funding of civil society organizations working in documenting violations against victims and organizations working in health and psychological care. He pointed out that some countries have stopped funding projects in Syria in order to support Ukraine, saying, “It is unfortunate, [since] the victims in both Ukraine and Syria must be supported.”

Mr. Abdul Ghany reminded the other participants in the meeting that European countries and the European Union should actively push to advance the political transition process in Syria, "I think that now is an appropriate opportunity because Russia, which has been obstructing the political transition for years, is now preoccupied with its war on Ukraine and is in a position of weakness, and this explains Assad's visit to Iran, in order to request more support due to the decline in Russian support." He added that the issues of Ukraine and Syria are linked, that Russia must be defeated in both Ukraine and Syria, and that achieving a political transition towards democracy in Syria, which will lead to a regime that will not be loyal to and serve Putin like Bashar al Assad's, would be a major defeat for Putin, as well as putting an end to violations, and ensuring the return of refugees and displaced persons.

Mr. Abdul Ghany concluded his address in the meeting by referring to the investigation into al Tadamun massacre that was recently revealed by the Guardian, which is reminiscent of the barbaric practices of the medieval period, stressing that it is not possible to coexist with such barbarians, nor to accept their rule in the modern age, stressing that combating 12 years of the Syrian regime's impunity is the responsibility of all the world's countries, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and the texts of international law.

Through its organization of and participation in advocacy activities as part of local, regional, and international events, the Syrian Network for Human Rights aims to inform friendly countries and partner organizations about the most prominent current developments in and affecting Syria and to listen to their proposed strategies for the next stage in order to initiate more coordination and cooperation and mobilize greater efforts towards conclusively ending the Syrian conflict, which has spanned more than a decade, through achieving accountability and long-denied transition to democracy.

