



The Syrian Regime Has Released 476 People Under Amnesty Decree 7/2022 and Is Still Detaining Some 132,000 of Those Arrested Since March 2011

Amnesty Decree 7/2022 Is the 19th Since March 2011, and 87.000 People Are Still Forcibly Disappeared by the Syrian Regime

Monday 16 May 2022

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.

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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I. Background and Methodology:

The Syrian regime issues one or two amnesty decrees almost every year, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) counting nineteen such amnesty decrees issued by the regime since the beginning of the popular uprising in March 2011 until May 2022.

Through its work on the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, and in cooperation with Syrian lawyers, the SNHR has closely analyzed the texts of each of these decrees and most importantly, closely monitors their implementation on the ground since it is impossible to understand and implement the texts of the amnesty decrees without knowing their context and without being aware of the system in which they operate, which is that of the Syrian regime's security services, all of which deliberately restrict any proper use of any amnesty decree.

In general terms, each of these amnesty decrees has contributed to releasing between 250 and 300 detainees imprisoned in connection with the popular uprising (we do not document the releases of individuals jailed in connection with actual crimes). In addition, the Syrian regime has not stopped carrying out arbitrary arrests, as is evident from the cases [we document daily](#) and [publish in monthly reports](#). We know, therefore, that despite 19 amnesty decrees, the Syrian regime is still detaining 132,000 people in connection with their involvement in the popular uprising; as we revealed in a previous report, even if the regime immediately stopped these arbitrary arrests, it would take 325 years for the regime to release the detainees still imprisoned in its detention centers if it continues at the current pace. Unfortunately, there are no indications that it plans to end these arbitrary arrests, with all the data and statistics showing that the regime continues to arrest far more innocent people than it releases.

Meanwhile, despite the different contexts of the events accompanying the issuing of each decree and various reasons that apparently motivated their issuance, we believe that the real reason behind Bashar al Assad's decision to issue so many of these decrees - 19 in all since 2011 - is to underline his absolute dominance over the nation and demonstrate his life-and-death power over the Syrian people, showing that he alone can pardon whomever he wants when he wants, and however he wants; these decrees are a symbol of absolute tyranny that can transcend the constitution, constitutional law, and the spirit of laws, expressing Assad's unlimited power.

April 30, 2022, saw the issuance of the latest of these amnesty decrees - Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022.¹ SNHR is publishing this report to analyze the text of that decree and the prisoner releases resulting from it that we have been able to document since its issuance up to the current date.

¹The Syrian People's Assembly, Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022.

<http://www.parliament.gov.sy/arabic/index.php?node=201&nid=22968&RID=1&Last=134&First=0&CurrentPage=0&Vid=1&Mode=1&Service=1&Loc1=0&Key1=&SDate=&EDate=&Year=1&Country=&Num=7&Dep=1&>

We note that the documentation and monitoring processes are still ongoing, with SNHR receiving hundreds of calls and messages from families of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons through many specially designated communication channels specifically created to record and report cases of arrests and enforced disappearances, requesting support and advice from our team, who have worked tirelessly and with exceptional diligence round the clock since the decree's release in order to document and respond to each request. The SNHR's Detainees Department also makes exhaustive attempts to communicate with those released and with the families of those still detained and forcibly disappeared in order to collect as much information and data as possible to track cases of arrests and enforced disappearances and the context and backgrounds of the releases, as well as communicating with detainees in civilian detention centers and their lawyers and families to monitor their conditions and follow up on the trials they are subjected to. We are reliant on the information we've obtained from detainees who remain in detention in civilian prisons in the Syrian governorates, such as the central prisons of Homs, Hama, Adra, Aleppo, and Suwayda, and in particular Hama Central Prison, Homs Central Prison, Adra Central Prison, and Suwayda Central Prison, as well as on information from their lawyers and their families, and a number of those who were released under Decree No. 7/2022. In this report, we provide four of the testimonies. We have exhaustively analyzed all the data and information we collected to obtain the most accurate possible results in this report and have informed the families and victims of the purpose of collecting the data, with all the interviewees agreeing to work cooperatively with us. Over the eleven years since 2011, we have built an extensive database of detainees, forcibly disappeared people, and those released.

In the report, we provide the record of the Syrian regime's detainee releases documented by the SNHR team since the issuance of Decree No. 7 on April 30, 2022, up until May 11, 2022, for those arrested in connection with participation in the popular uprising, who are routinely charged with 'terrorism'. We update these cases constantly, and we continue to receive information on new cases that we are examining and working on. In the report, we distinguish between the record of the releases related to the amnesty decree and those not related to it, which took place due to the expiry of those detainees' sentences. We have tried, as much as possible, to verify the charges used against those who have been released since the issuance of this decree, and can confirm that here we are presenting cases involving detainees whose arrest was politically motivated and are not concerned with cases of release of actually criminal detainees charged with theft, forgery and similar offences. Also in this report, we present the results of the initial analyses, all of which have been cross-checked with the existing data stored on the SNHR's archive that we conducted regarding the detainee releases resulting from the decree.

We try, as much as possible, to take into account the severely traumatized psychological and physical condition of detainees and their families, and to prioritize their security and wellbeing, and sometimes make referrals to partner medical and psychological organizations. The information contained in this report only represents the bare minimum of incidents which we have been able to document and of the severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, this data doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications of these events.

II. Seven Key Points Make Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022 Empty Texts Similar to the Eighteen Amnesty Decrees Issued by the Syrian Regime Since 2011:

On April 30, 2022, an amnesty law was issued by legislative decree No. 7 of 2022; according to the text of the decree, it includes "terrorist crimes committed by Syrians before the date of April 30, 2022, except for those which caused death to a human being, as stipulated in the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 19 of 2012 and the General Penal Code."

With the exception of individuals charged with crimes causing a human death, this amnesty applies only to those charged with crimes stipulated in the Counter-Terrorism Law, including the financing of terrorism and the promotion of terrorist acts, for example, and also includes the ill-defined terrorism crimes stipulated in Articles 304, 305, and 306 of the General Penal Code. Although the provisions of the Counter-Terrorism Law abolished these articles, their inclusion in this amnesty is intended to include those convicted under these articles before their abolition in July 2012.

According to our review of the amnesty decree text, it differed slightly from the previous decrees in terms of being applied unconditionally, as it did not require that the wanted person surrender themselves to the authorities within a specified period, nor did it require the forgiveness of the injured party or that the individual should have paid the stipulated fines in order to benefit from its provisions; therefore, it applies to those wanted by the Syrian regime, those who are not currently detained and who are outside Syria without restriction or condition. (In regard to this specific exception, SNHR has repeatedly emphasized that the regime's exceptional courts, namely the 'Counter-Terrorism Court' and the 'Military Field Court,' do not formally inform those wanted persons of the existence of cases against them, and, consequently, the citizen does not know up until their arrest and trial whether s/he is wanted, or if any charges or sentence have been issued in absentia against them. This also applies to the regime's security branches that issue arrest and search warrants without any recourse to official judicial warrants, but reliant solely on regime security services' reports with no credible connection to the law or the judicial authority).

Given all these facts, the SNHR believes that this amnesty, despite its terms being theoretically slightly broader than those of its predecessors, does not differ in implementation from any of the preceding 18 amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime since 2011, all of which failed to secure the release of any of the detainees arrested and imprisoned in connection with the popular uprising.

The following are the key points that make Decree 7/2022 one more pro forma decree:

First: The vast majority of those arrested since March 2011 for expressing their opinion and showing any opposition to the Syrian regime have been accused of terrorism in retaliation for doing so. The detainees were forced under torture and threats during interrogation to admit and confess to acts they did not commit. The Syrian regime deliberately used vague, unspecified charges in formulating its definitions of crimes against state security listed in the Penal Code and in drafting the Counter-Terrorism Law, under which detainees are tried, in order to use these against dissidents and to punish any expression of political dissent or opposition, violating the fundamental characteristic that penal texts must possess, namely accuracy of expression, clarity of pronunciation, and the use of explicit speech to denote certain, specific meanings.

Second: The decree excluded crimes that “caused death to a human being.” The accusation of carrying out terrorist acts that caused death to a human being was broadly, indiscriminately, and falsely filed against thousands of detainees, including peaceful activists, by the security branches without providing any evidence of these crimes except for that provided in ‘confessions’ contained in security reports which were extracted from detainees under torture, with these detainees subsequently tried on these charges according to this ‘evidence’ over the past years by the Counter-Terrorism Court and the Military Field Court; the sentences subsequently issued against them following these kangaroo trials reached death or hard labor for life.

We have spoken with dozens of detainees held in central prisons who have been charged with carrying out terrorist acts that caused death to a person, all of whom told us that they do not know who was the person whose death they allegedly caused or how the killings they’re accused of were committed, and that even their lawyers before the Counter-Terrorism Court were unable to find out any details of the supposed victims in these crimes because the detainee’s report file is submitted by the security branch, without specifying the names of those supposedly killed in the incident. Usually, the Counter-Terrorism Court contacts the Army Operations Department to obtain the names of those killed in the incidents for which the detainee faces charges, with the court invariably receiving no response from the Army Operations Department. Thus, these detainees remain imprisoned by the regime for many years before even standing trial, awaiting a response in order to allow them to stand trial, while being excluded from all the amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime; dozens have subsequently been sentenced to death, with these charges occasionally reduced to hard labor for life. Meanwhile, detainees referred for trial at the Military Field Court cannot access their case files and find out the details of the crimes they’re charged with at all because of the court’s confidential nature.

Based on the foregoing, we find that this exception mainly applies to a wide range of detainees who face charges of this nature without any evidence being presented against them and without their lawyers being allowed to defend them according to fair trial procedures, which are naturally absent in both the Counter-Terrorism Court and the Military Field Court.

Third: This amnesty decree does not include those who are being prosecuted/detained for other crimes related to state security as stipulated in the General Penal Code, such as crimes of 'assaulting the constitution', 'undermining the status of the state', 'deducting part of the state's lands', or similarly vaguely defined charges that can be directed against any detainee or dissident. Usually, several charges are brought against each detainee under the Counter-Terrorism and General Penal Laws, so that even if the amnesty decree includes one charge/crime against them, it's unlikely to include the others.

Fourth: The regime's security branches, rather than its exceptional courts, have the sole authority to determine who will actually be released. According to our observation and monitoring of detainee releases, we have noticed that the regime has released a limited number of individuals who it's held in custody or imprisoned from a number of detention centers while other detainees charged with the same offences have not been released. We have obtained photocopies of the documents used as 'Notes of Judgement' in the cases of a number of those who were released and of others who were not, which lead us to believe that all those released by the regime have been subjected to background security studies by the security branches before agreeing to his/her release, while others who should also be covered by the amnesty have been kept in detention, with this tactic also used with all the regime's previous amnesty decrees.

Fifth: Although the vast majority of regime arrests go on to become cases of enforced disappearances, we have documented barely any cases in this decree or any of the previous decrees in which forcibly disappeared individuals have benefited from them or even in which their fate has been revealed, except for a very few and very limited number of cases. In this report, we have compared the number of those released under Decree 7/2022 with the number of the forcibly disappeared in each of the Syrian governorates.

Sixth: On May 5, 2022, the regime's ['Ministry of Justice' issued official statement No. 6457](#) clarifying the latest amnesty, confirming the cancellation of all reports and procedures (search warrant - arrest - review) based on the crimes stipulated in the Counter-Terrorism Law against all citizens at home and abroad unless the act they're accused of causes the death of a person or proves the accused individual's continued affiliation with terrorist organizations or their connection to other countries; this 'clarification' failed to clarify the type of connection being penalized, with the Syrian regime deeming meetings with ambassadors or envoys of countries or foreign ministries, or participation in international seminars and conferences, and sessions of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council, as forms of connection and intelligence cooperation. This means that tens of thousands of activists involved in the popular uprising are accused; the same standards apply to alleged affiliation with 'terrorist organizations', with the regime classifying many civil society organizations as 'terrorist organizations' because they demand democratic change or provide aid to people in areas outside the regime's control.

Seventh: It is not possible to understand the implementation of any amnesty decree or amendment of penal laws in isolation from the unlimited powers of the President of the Republic and the regime security branches subordinate to him, which enjoy absolute legal immunity, since the President of the Republic controls the judicial, legislative and executive authorities, while the courts to which detainees are referred do not meet any internationally accepted description of a court because they do not take into account any of the principles and procedures of fair trials or justice, but are, rather, exceptional and irregular courts serving the regime. We have addressed all of these issues in [previous reports](#).

III. Preliminary Data Analysis of the Releases Related to Decree 7/2022 Between May 1 and May 11, 2022:

According to the SNHR's database, at least 132,000 of the Syrian citizens arrested by Syrian regime forces between March 2011 and May 2022 are still classified as detained or forcibly disappeared in regime prisons; according to the observation and monitoring conducted by the SNHR team during the first ten days following the issuance of Amnesty Decree 7/2022, from May 1-11, 2022, we documented the release of around 476 people from various civil and military prisons and security branches in the Syrian governorates, including 55 women and 13 people who were children when they were arrested. We are still following up on the monitoring and documentation of detainees released in connection with Decree 7/2022.

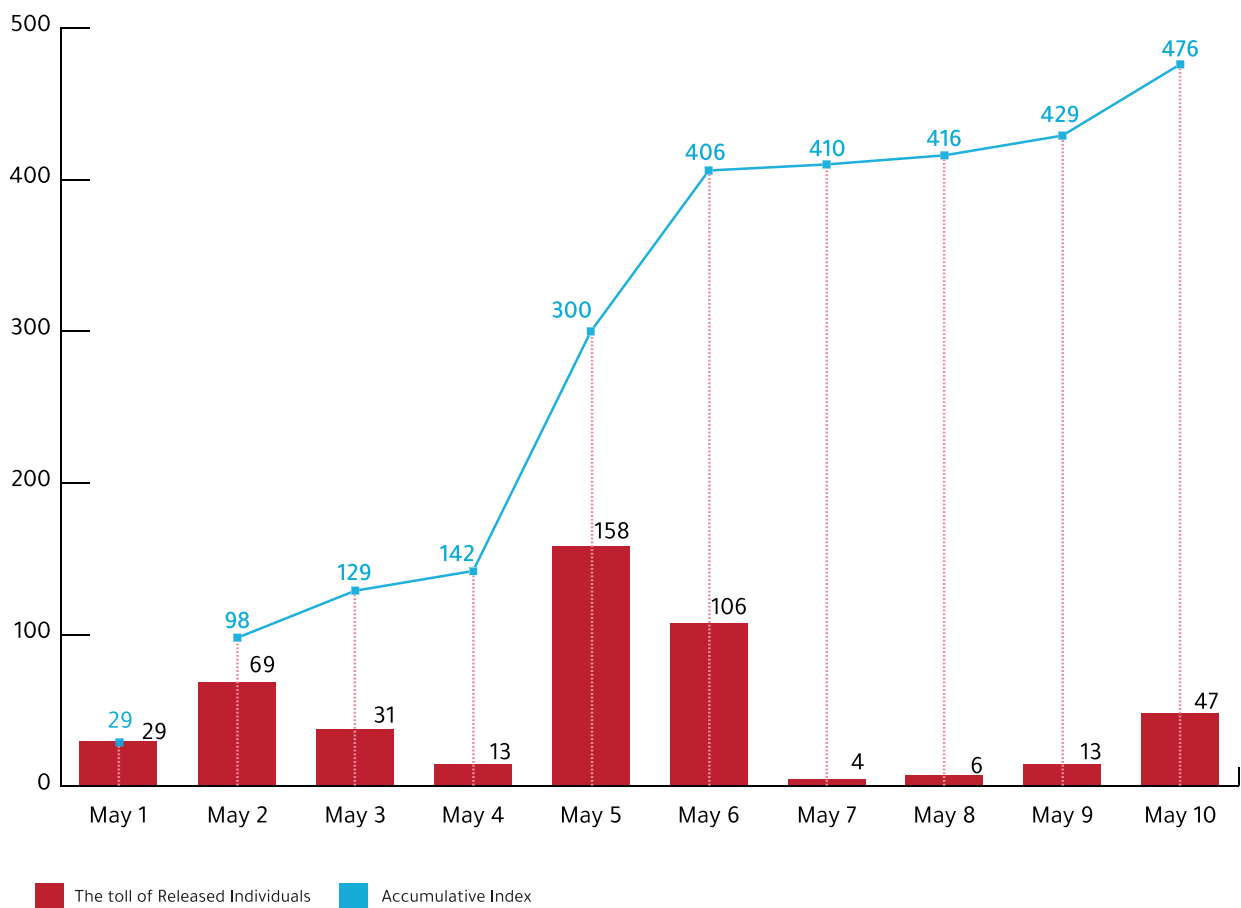
We note that of the 476 people released, only six had been registered by SNHR as enforced disappearance cases, having been arrested in 2011, 2013, and 2016, with their families unable to obtain any information about them during the period of their detention/disappearance, and being denied any opportunity to visit or communicate with them.

In addition, at least 98 of the 476 released people had settled their security status prior to their arrest and been given a supposed guarantee according to the terms of these settlements that they would not be persecuted by regime security authorities; eighteen of those released, including two women, had been refugees or otherwise living outside Syria and were arrested on their return to the country, while at least 12, including three women, were Palestinian refugees.

We documented Syrian regime forces transferring many of those released from their places of detention in civil and military prisons to regime security branches prior to their release, and we believe that this procedure was followed due to recommendations from the branches that carried out the arrests or investigations into these individuals, stating that the detainee should be returned there prior to their release to conduct security reviews. This procedure, which is followed in the vast majority of releases of detainees tried at the regime's Counter-Terrorism Court and Military Field Court, is contrary to Syrian law, as is the case with all stages of the regime's arrest, detention, trial and release process.

As a result of our intensive communication with the released detainees and their family members during the past few days, we were able to confirm hundreds of cases of enforced disappearance that we were previously unable to register on the database of forcibly disappeared persons due to lack of information. This confirms a point that we have always stressed, namely that the officially documented figures on forcible disappearances in Syria represent the bare minimum of actual cases, and that there are a massive number of detainees whose cases we have been unable to document due to the exceptional challenges to our work.

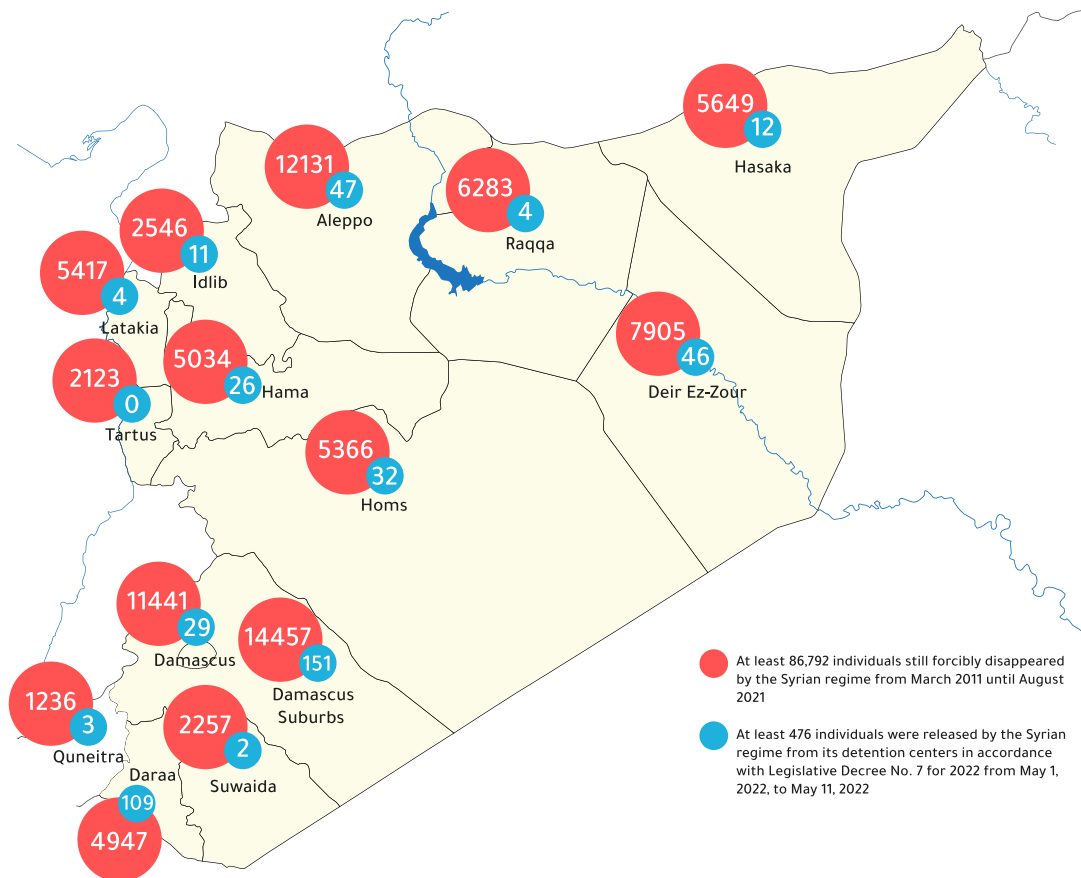
The distribution of the 476 detainees released under the latest amnesty, according to our documentation, by their release date, from May 1 to May 11, 2022, is as follows:



A comparison between the record of released detainees and the record of the forcibly disappeared in each Syrian governorate:

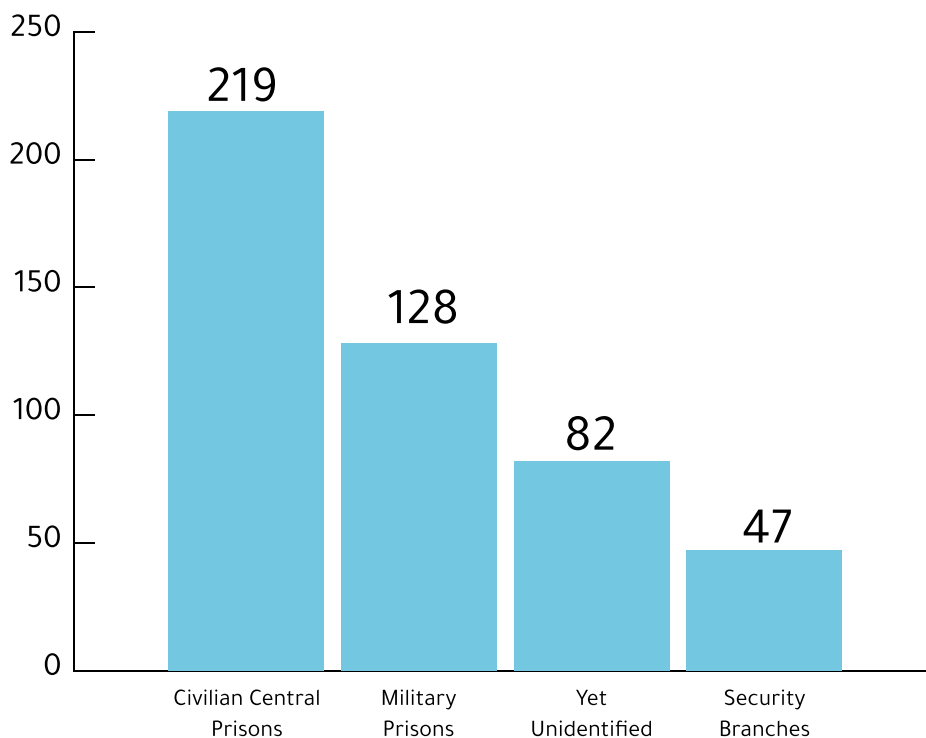
According to the SNHR's database, at least 86,792 of the individuals arrested by Syrian regime forces since March 2011 are still classified as forcibly disappeared by regime forces as of August 2021.

The following map shows the distribution of these cases across all the Syrian governorates according to the location of the arrest incident. The map also shows a comparison with the distribution of the 476 people released under Decree 7/2022 from May 1 to May 11, 2022:

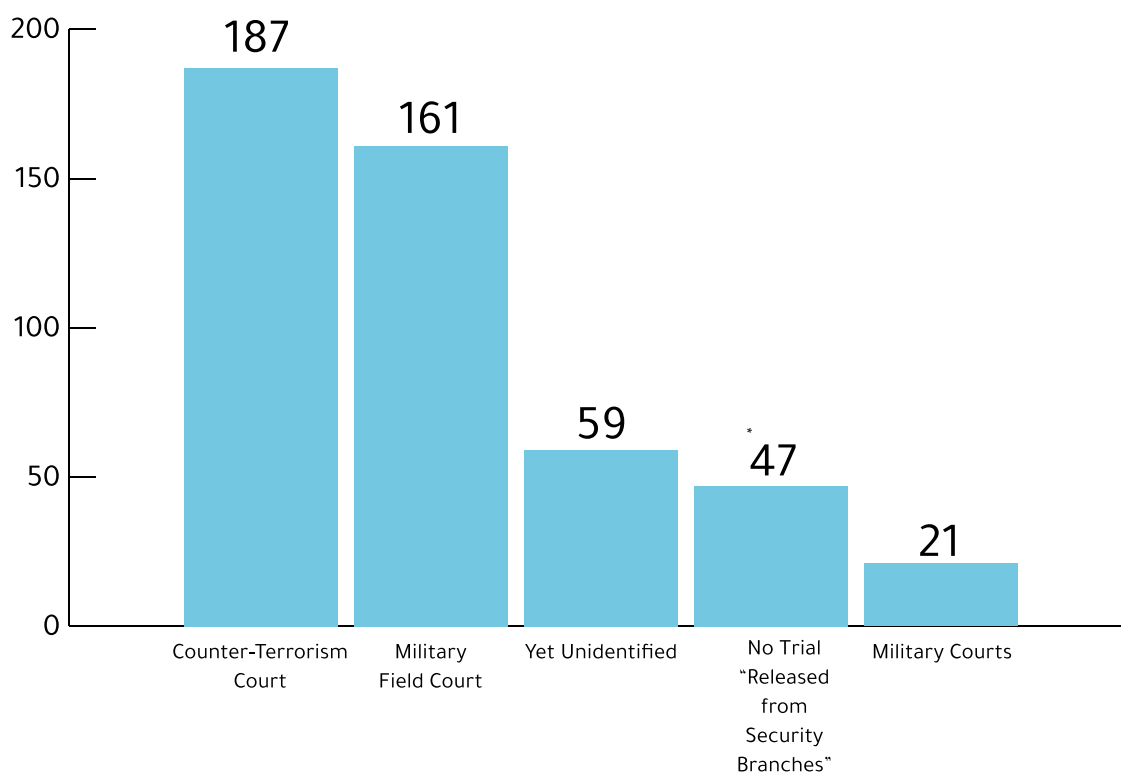


This comparison very clearly shows that the number of released people accounts for approximately 0.10% on average of the documented total number of forcibly disappeared people in each of the governorates in which the comparison was made, a stark percentage which proves that, at the current woefully low rate of releases, it would take hundreds of years for the Syrian regime to release these detainees and forcibly disappeared persons held in regime detention centers even if the regime were to stop all new arrests immediately; this once again underlines the fraudulent and wholly inadequate nature of these amnesties. While we are genuinely delighted for the few released detainees and their families finally reunited after years of unimaginable trauma, worry and stress, the number of families who are still suffering is exponentially infinitely greater.

The documented number of those released was distributed according to the detention centers as follows:

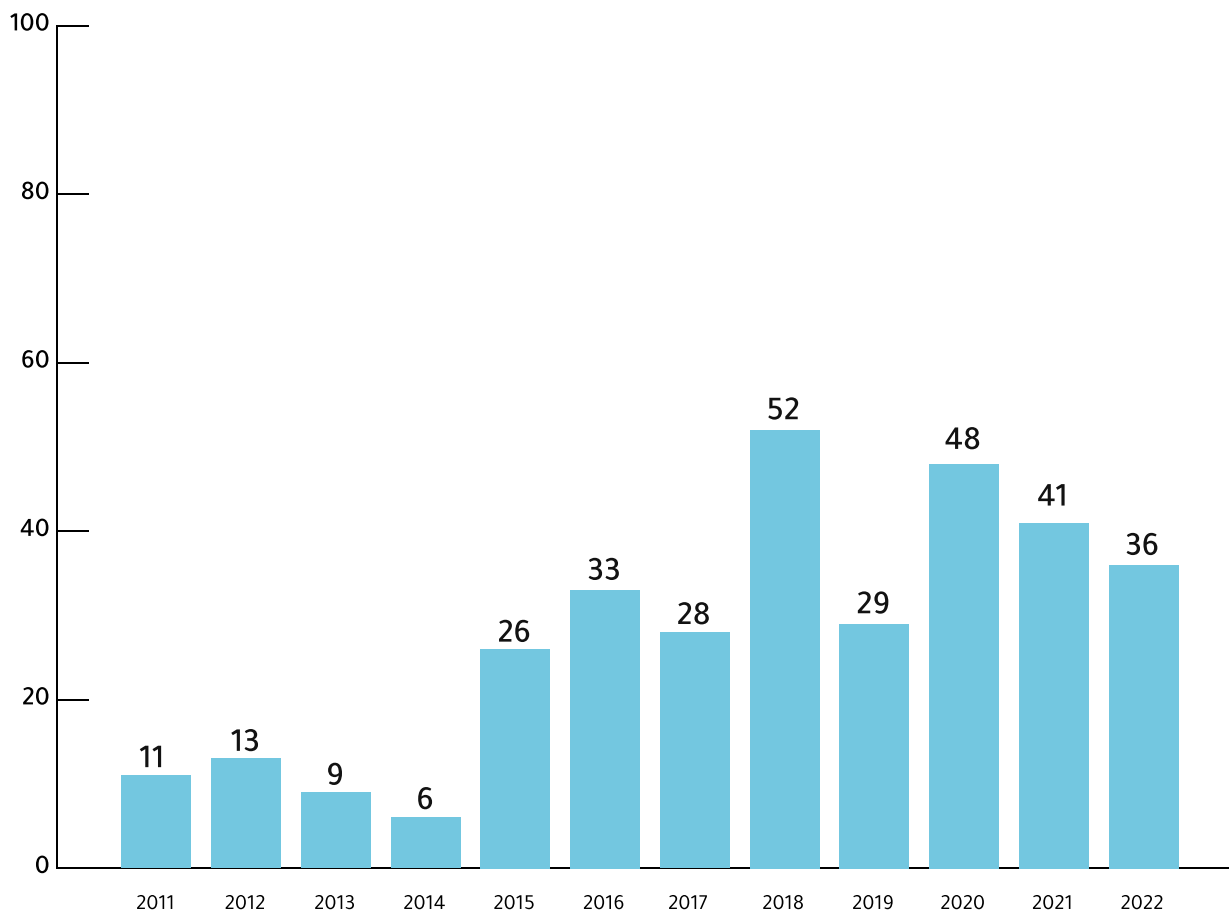


The record of those released was distributed according to the exceptional courts at which they were tried as follows:



*This number does not include those detainees subjected to an extended release process during which they were first transferred from military or central prisons to regime security branches prior to their release, but rather includes only those who were released directly from the security branches.

The record of the 476 released people was distributed according to the year in which the arrest occurred:



144 Yet Unidentified

The previous chart shows that 2012 was the worst year to date in terms of the number of those forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime, followed by 2013, 2011, and 2014. That is, the first four years of the popular uprising for democracy saw the highest waves of enforced disappearances, the same years that saw the lowest number of releases. This increases our concern over the fate of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared individuals who were arrested and disappeared during these years, even if we assume that the cases that we have been unable to identify yet date back to these years.

IV. Through Decree 7/2022 and Its Implementation Procedures, the Syrian Regime Deliberately Inflicted Moral and Material Harm on the Detainees' Families and Insulted the Released Detainees' Dignity:

During the implementation of this decree, the Syrian regime followed procedures aimed at misleading the public into believing that the regime had released the majority of detainees in order to inflict more psychological, emotional, and material harm on the already traumatized families of detainees and the forcibly disappeared. We have monitored cases of psychological collapse among many families of the forcibly disappeared.

The Syrian regime deliberately released small numbers of detainees in several groups from detention centers, dropping them off in public squares without handing them over to their families or even contacting their families to notify them of their loved ones' release. This caused a state of panic among the released and among the families of detained and forcibly disappeared people, leading thousands of distraught family members of detainees and forcibly disappeared people to gather in these locations to search frantically for their disappeared loved ones among the small numbers of released people, carrying photos of their loved ones in order to inquire about them.

Despite the passage of many years, the Syrian regime has never provided any real mechanism to enable families of detainees and forcibly disappeared people to find out the fate of their loved ones. In addition, the Syrian judiciary has never announced the names of those covered by these amnesties because the detainees may need to extract a judgment document from the court investigating their cases, with this bureaucratic process taking some time, often more than a year after the amnesty is issued. Moreover, the Military Field Court and the Military Judiciary are affiliated with the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Justice cannot interfere and inspect their work. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the numbers or names of those covered by these amnesties. Going by SNHR's extensive experience of monitoring these amnesties, this is the main reason behind the families of detainees and the forcibly disappeared being exposed to cruel and extortionately expensive incidents of fraud at the hands of networks of regime officials involving judges, lawyers, officers, and influential figures who take advantage of the families' desperation to hold out hope that they can ensure that their detained or forcibly disappeared loved ones are included in the amnesty decree in exchange for huge sums of money. Many families have told us of their experience of being exposed to such cruel and fraudulent operations since the early days of the issuance of Decree 7/2022. We have talked dozens of times about cases of material extortion against the families of the forcibly disappeared, issuing regular warnings about such unscrupulous exploitation of desperate families' concern for their loved ones since 2011 to date.

SNHR spoke with Ms. Wafaa al Ahmad,³ from Damascus city, the mother of two men forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. She told us, **"When I heard that they were going to release the detainees, my brother and I came to the President's Bridge Square where we saw dozens of families like us waiting, then an officer in military uniform came and told me that he could ask if my two sons were among the released for 500,000 Syrian pounds, and I paid him. Then, he told me that I had to go to near Seydnaya prison and wait there. Indeed, I went and waited for three days, moving between one place and another between Seydnaya town and Damascus, but we did not get any answer. I saw a detainee who was released and he told me that they allowed those who would be released to contact their families before being released, and if my two sons would be released, they would contact us from prison."** Ms. Al Ahmad told us that the last information she received about her two sons, who were detained together in July 2013, was in 2017, when she was notified that they were in Seydnaya Military Prison, but added that she has been denied any opportunity to visit them, to communicate with them, or even to appoint a lawyer for them.

We also spoke with Ms. Su'ad al Mahmoud,⁴ from Hama city, the mother of another of the men forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. She told us, **"I left my house on May 3 at 22.00 with my husband after we heard about the arrival of detainees on buses from Damascus to Hama, and we waited until 06.00 sitting on the edge of the road at the President's roundabout. Whenever a bus passed in the street, we and dozens of other people gathered around it, then we'd find out that it was empty. We also waited the next day when a bus arrived that included between 15-20 detainees, but my son was not among them, and I asked everyone about him - they had not seen him, as was the case with all the other families."** Ms. Al Mahmoud added that one of the Military Security Branch officers approached them during their gathering and asked for the name of her disappeared son, her phone number, and the names of a number of detainees from their families, and promised to ask about them, then called her the next day asking for 20 million Syrian pounds to help her find his whereabouts.

³ Via phone on May 3, 2022.

⁴ Via phone on May 5, 2022.

Many of the photos that we obtained and verified showed the poor health of the released detainees after they were held in extremely poor and unsanitary conditions in detention centers where they had clearly been subjected to torture, as well as enduring an almost complete lack of healthcare and medical care, as well as severe overcrowding. We believe that the conditions of detainees who have been missing for a period of up to 11 years is much worse if they have survived. We present the most prominent cases:



Mustafa Abeid



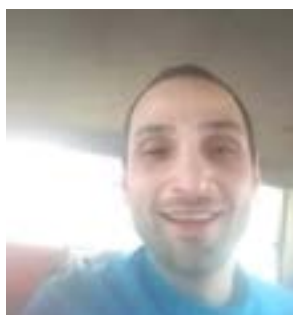
Ibrahim Ali al Khatib



Muhammad Khaled
al Damour



Abdul Rahman al Khatib



Mahmoud Ayyoub



Abdul Kafi Rashid Owda



Muhammad Ali al Zakar

The massive crowds of desperately worried citizens in the governorates of Damascus, Homs, and Hama once again underlined the vast extent of the enforced disappearances carried out by the Syrian regime, further exposing the ugliness of the regime and its monstrous crimes against its citizens; no other country in the modern world arrests its citizens and isolates them completely from the outside world so that even their families don't know whether they are alive or dead. The Syrian regime has changed its previous method of releasing detainees by continuing to release small groups, each containing between 30 and 60 detainees on average, first taking them to local government governorate buildings and subjecting the released detainees to further humiliation, insulting their dignity, photographing them and, grotesquely, presenting the amnesty as though it were a gracious blessing from the regime in the presence of regime officials and officers from the security branches, along with clerics, and clan elders; in most cases, the numbers of these regime apparatchiks in attendance during these events is greater than the number of released detainees present in the government building.



Photo showing some of the released detainees in the hall of the government complex in Daraa city - May 5, 2022



Photo showing some male and female detainees following their release, in the Deir Ez-Zour Governorate building - May 5, 2022



Photo showing some male and female detainees following their release, in the Damascus Suburbs Governorate building in al Marja area in Damascus city - May 5, 2022



Photo showing some of the detainees following their release in the Aleppo Governorate building - May 6, 2022



Photo showing some of the released detainees in the Hama Governorate's General Secretariat building - May 6, 2022

We spoke with Mr. Emad al Hamwi,⁵ from Hama city, one of the detainees released from Seydnaya Military Prison on May 3, 2022, under Decree No. 7, who was arrested by Syrian regime forces in a raid on his home in early September 2011. He told us, **"The day before my release, our names were called, and I did not know that I was among those covered by the amnesty. The next day, we gathered near the prison door, where one of the officers spoke to us and asked us to go to the military police after we get out, and then they gave us registration details, while some of us got a sum of money that was not enough for transportation, and I got nothing. Then, they gathered us in military buses that picked us up around 18.00, then they brought us down into several areas. I got off in Damascus and stayed all night waiting in a garden and called my family. The next day, one of the women of my family came and took me home."** Emad told us that his physical health has deteriorated greatly during his imprisonment, and that throughout all that time, his family was able to visit him only four times, adding that he was subjected to extremely poor detention conditions and severe torture during his imprisonment. He added that since his return home, he has received visits from dozens of families of still imprisoned detainees asking him about their loved ones, which he said has doubled his psychological suffering.

We also spoke with Mr. Abdul Rahman al Akash,⁶ from Raqqa city, one of the detainees released from Homs Central Prison on May 7, 2022, under Decree No. 7, who was arrested by Syrian regime forces at one of the regime's checkpoints in the eastern suburbs of Homs in early November 2014. He told us, **"I was tried at the Counter-Terrorism Court. Since my arrest, I have only attended three court sessions and was sentenced to 15 years in prison for no apparent reason, except for one charge brought by the Military Security branch that I confessed to under torture, which was the attempt to carry out terrorist acts. When the amnesty was issued, I contacted my lawyer and paid the sum of five million Syrian pounds to include me in the amnesty, and to bring the date of my release closer."** Abdul Rahman said that prior to his release the Political Security detachment in Homs prison wrote down his details and those of the other released detainees, the addresses of the residences where they would be staying after their release, and the phone numbers of people related to them, then he was released from prison with a group of detainees, and they were transferred to the Homs Governorate building, where they were photographed and presented in the Syrian regime's official media.

⁵ The means of communication was not mentioned in the interest of the witness's safety, on May 10, 2022.

⁶ The means of communication was not mentioned in the interest of the witness's safety, on May 10, 2022.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

1. The Syrian regime is the party responsible for forcing detainees to confess to acts they did not commit, trying them on the basis of these false coerced confessions, and then issuing a partial amnesty for them; this manufactured cycle aims to blackmail detainees and their families and to increase their suffering, and constitutes a violation of the most basic principles of human rights.
2. Decree No. 7 of 2022 did not include political detainees or those detained in connection with their expression of opinion, or activists in the popular uprising.
3. The amnesty does not include the vast majority of detainees who have not been charged or referred to any courts, many of whom have been detained for several years.
4. There is a lack of any clear criteria for selecting and releasing detainees included in the amnesty and most of those released were civilians, who had been arbitrarily arrested and framed on charges of terrorism, under which they were tried in exceptional courts that lack the most fundamental legal standards of justice or degrees of litigation, who were granted amnesty, and released.
5. The Syrian regime has not only brought charges against and tried detainees under the General Penal Code's articles related to crimes against state security, but has also issued a Counter-Terrorism Law, in which it provides vaguely defined articles and ambiguous, non-specific definitions of terrorist acts and conspiracy, according to which the largest possible number of detainees could be tried before the Counter-Terrorism Court, with the legislation leaving room for the judges to define and analyze the accusations made according to their own opinions, opening the door to the material exploitation and extortion of any detainee in exchange for his or her release or inclusion in the amnesty decrees issued.
6. Originally, there was no legal basis for the mechanism for criminalizing and charging political detainees, with charges brought either under the Counter-Terrorism Law or the General Penal Code, based on confessions extracted from detainees under torture and coercion, especially those who have been subject to military field courts, which are not courts in any legal or judicial sense but are instead more like parallel centers of the regime's security branches.
7. The amnesty decree is, essentially, a tool providing a new opportunity for the security services to extort more money at the expense of the suffering of the detainees' families.
8. The Syrian regime uses amnesty decrees to pardon those fleeing from military service in order to re-conscript them into its forces.

Recommendations:

The United Nations and the international community:

- Should not be deceived by the tricks and ruses of the Syrian regime and should continue to put constant pressure on it to release political and human rights activists, protesters, and all peaceful, democratic opponents and dissidents.
- Must demand that the Syrian regime reveal the fate of 87,000 forcibly disappeared persons and disclose the fate and whereabouts of the bodies of the many thousands who were killed by torture or executed, as seen in the case of the recently published investigation into the massacre in Damascus' al Tadamun neighborhood.
- Must do everything possible, starting from imposing sanctions to invoking a threat of military action, to allow international organizations access to the Syrian regime's detention centers, to reveal the torture methods detainees are subjected to, and to make every possible effort to secure their release.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Follow up on the Syrian regime's use of futile partial amnesty decrees created to deceive both the Syrian people and the international community.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):

- Condemn the Syrian regime's continuing forcible disappearance of tens of thousands of Syrian citizens, manipulating their fate, and extorting their families financially and politically.

Countries friendly to the Syrian people and countries of asylum:

- Should not be deceived by the amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime, as these decrees hardly represent any of the tens of thousands of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, with the decrees' main objective being to mislead international public opinion, and to extort the detainees' families financially.

The Russian regime:

- Put pressure on its ally, the Syrian regime, to release tens of thousands of political detainees.

The Syrian regime:

- Revoke the sentences issued by the Counter-Terrorism Courts, the military courts, and the Military Field Courts in relation to detainees imprisoned in connection with the popular uprising, as these lack the foundations of court, justice, and law.
- Unconditionally release detainees imprisoned in connection with the popular uprising, disclose the fate of the disappeared among them, compensate the affected people, and stop manipulating their fate and extorting their families.
- Stop using the Syrian state as a private family property.
- Cease terrorizing Syrian society through enforced disappearances, torture, and death due to torture.
- Stop manipulating the constitution and laws by using them to serve the goals of the ruling family and enacting deceptive legislation.
- Bear the costs of all the legal and material consequences, and compensate the victims and their families.

Gratitude:

We offer our sincere thanks to the survivors of detention centers, the families of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, and the activists, whose participation contributed to the completion of this report.



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