

## Statement



**After Nearly a Month, the Syrian Regime Has Released Only 527 Detainees Under Decree 7/2022 and Continues to Detain Around 132,000 Others**

**Amnesty Decrees Offer 'Open Season' for Fraud and Extortion Networks Sponsored by Regime Security Services**

## **The Syrian regime released only 527 people, continuing to detain around 132,000 others:**

On April 30, 2022, the Syrian regime issued an amnesty law via Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022.<sup>1</sup> The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) team monitored the implementation and effect of this law on those imprisoned or forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime in connection with the popular uprising against the regime, which has arrested hundreds of thousands of Syrians in the subsequent period now covering almost twelve years; according to the SNHR's database, the Syrian regime is still detaining or has forcibly disappeared nearly 132,000 Syrian citizens from March 2011 until May 2022. On May 16, we issued a [report in which we presented an analysis of the text of the decree and the releases of detainees resulting from it](#). In this statement, we'll update the record provided in that report, and can confirm, based on our daily monitoring and documentation operations that, since the decree was issued, only about 527 people have been released from the regime's various civil and military prisons and security branches in the Syrian governorates, including 59 women and 16 people who were children at the time of their arrest.

Among those released, we recorded the cases of 11 individuals who had been registered by SNHR as forcibly disappeared, having been separately arrested in 2011, 2013, 2015, 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.

It should also be noted that at least 131 of the 527 released people had settled their security status with the regime prior to their arrest and been given a supposed guarantee according to the terms of these settlements assuring them that they would not be persecuted by regime security authorities; 21 of those released, including two women, had been refugees or otherwise living outside Syria and were arrested on their return to the country.

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<sup>1</sup>The 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&>

While some websites have published statistics that suggest a far larger number of detainees being released, we note that all these sites rely on unreliable, non-competent media sources for their information, with none of these sites or sources known to have any expertise in this area, unlike SNHR which has spent over a decade daily painstakingly documenting and tracking cases of arrest and enforced disappearance, corresponding with the United Nations and other international agencies and issuing monthly and periodic reports specifically concerned with the issue of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance. Indeed, we have seen no credible evidence or methodological documentation to substantiate those sources' claims. It seems that these claims may either be part of a deliberate effort to magnify the true number of releases and to promote confusion and uncertainty over these, or that they result from genuine confusion caused by a flaw in the methodology which makes it difficult to distinguish between the cases of detainees arrested in connection with the popular political uprising and actual criminal cases.

**Amnesty decrees offer 'open season' for the fraud and extortion networks sponsored by regime security services:**

The Syrian regime has issued 19 amnesty decrees since 2011; in each of these, we've monitored a remarkable level of activity by fraud and extortion networks sponsored by the regime's security services. We have discussed this in dozens of reports, especially in our reports focusing on some of the amnesty decrees, because the release of a number of detainees reopens the wounds of tens of thousands of detainees' and forcibly disappeared people's desperately worried families who feel compelled to do anything and pay any price in exchange for information about their detained loved ones. Fraud networks exploit these feelings and are exceptionally active following each amnesty decree, with SNHR receiving reports of many cases of fraud that detainees' family members were recently subjected to, following the issuance of the latest amnesty decree.

These fraud networks utilize multiple methods, with officials taking advantage of their connections within the regime's security services to uncover personal information about detainees, before tracking down their families to offer 'help' in getting information about their loved ones or securing their release in exchange for massive sums of money. The officials involved in these fraud networks include officers, lawyers, and judges, who have gained extensive experience over the past twelve years in analyzing and exploiting the reactions of desperately worried families.,

which enables them to prey upon these vulnerable people, who feel they have nowhere else to turn, with SNHR and our partner media unable to alert them to these callous and predatory networks' operations. While some families are aware that these officials are charlatans profiting from their anguish, they deal with them for lack of any other option out of desperation, knowing they have only the most minuscule hope of obtaining information about their loved ones.

We constantly advise detainees' families not to be drawn into the trap of these callous and exploitative fraud networks, which have gained expertise and use a wide variety of techniques to appear plausible but to instead contact reputable and reliable national human rights organizations. We have provided several numbers and emails in order to facilitate communication.

The SNHR calls on the international community to pressure the Syrian regime to release the men, women, and children, numbering at least 132,000, who are still unjustly detained in its prison network, with SNHR once again emphasizing that around 87,000 of this number have been forcibly disappeared. The Syrian regime must abolish its exceptional courts and nullify all rulings issued by these courts because these courts violate many of the fundamental rights of the Syrian citizens. We do not believe, however, that any of these demands will be achieved without a political transition towards democracy that ends the tyranny and brutality of the regime's security services.

