



On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women: SNHR's 11th Annual Report on Violations Against Females in Syria

A total of 28,761 females have been killed in Syria since March 2011, including 94 due to torture, while 11,141 females are still detained, and SNHR has documented 11,526 incidents of sexual violence against females

Friday 25 November 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.

Content:

I. Eleventh Annual Report, Violations Against Women Still Continue in Syria, Detention and Forced Displacement Top 2022's Violations.....2

II. Most Notable Violations Against Females, as Documented on SNHR's Database.....5

III. Comparison between the most Notable Patterns of Violations Against Females in Syria from March 2011 Until the 2021 and 2022 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Respectively15

IV. Patterns of the Most Notable Violations Against Females by the Main Active Parties to the Syrian Conflict17

V. Conclusions and Recommendations41

I. Eleventh Annual Report, Violations Against Women Still Continue in Syria. Detention and Forced Displacement Top 2022's Violations

Syria's women have been an active and present force in all phases of the popular uprising for freedom in March 2011. They have left an impactful mark on crucial aspects of the uprising's trajectory. Indeed, women still have a significant presence in the fields of human rights, humanitarian relief, and media. For this participation, many women have suffered violations, either because of their own activism or due to that of their husbands, or relatives. In some cases, the impact of those violations has been compounded.

As the Syrian conflict grew into a multi-party conflict, the patterns of violations against women also multiplied. Documenting violations in Syria is a complex task in light of the many difficulties we encounter; however, it is specifically difficult in the case of women, since it presents additional social, gender, and security aspects specific to women. Since the founding of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) nearly a decade ago, grave new violations against women have taken place on a daily basis. These violations have been and continue to be perpetrated with no regard for the special nature of women. On the contrary, indeed, some of these violations have exhibited a discriminatory nature against women.

In keeping with our commitment to the protection of women's rights and based on our belief in the centrality of women's role in the democratic struggle, we, at SNHR, have dedicated part of our mission to documenting those violations specifically perpetrated against women. We give a special mention to those violations in our reports, statements, and daily news. We also release special reports and news on women, and have a database dedicated specifically to recording all violations against women at the hands of all parties to the conflict since 2011, which we have been able to document, which we must clarify only reflects the bare minimum of such violations. We also publish two annual reports on women that are released on the [International Women's Day](#) and the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#). On this occasion, marking the latter event, we are releasing our annual report that includes the most notable violations against females in Syria over the course of the past year (in the year since the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women). In another sense, this report is an update to our database on the violations against women. In other words, we update our overall figures that we have been able to document since March 2011 based on the data we've accumulated over the past year. Finally, the primary goal of this report is to show that many of the horrific violations perpetrated against women for the past 11 years are still taking place.

Since many of the types of violations against women taking place in the context of the armed conflict and at the hands of the controlling forces as well as many of the instances of discrimination against women have yet to be addressed, it is important to note that this report shows accumulative figures which clearly illustrate the yearly deterioration in conditions, even if the number of violations is lower than previous years, as the accumulated total toll of violations is still rising. For instance, while a number of detained or forcibly disappeared females have been released, the actual number of females in both these categories has increased. This is also applicable, more or less, to the other types of violations against women.

Our data also shows that in the period between the release of our 10th report on last year's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the release of this report, the most notable violations suffered by women have been arrest/detention and displacement.

With respect to arrest/detention, we have noticed that it has been used as a method of extortion against women and their communities. We have recorded that no fewer than 513 females were arrested/detained in this period, mostly at the hands of Syrian regime forces who have attempted to terrorize families through arresting their female members, as well as terrorizing the areas where settlements and reconciliations have taken place. Females have also been arrested over their contact with individuals in non-regime areas or while traveling between areas under the control of different parties, and lastly in accordance with the Cybercrime Law.

Meanwhile, further forced displacement has resulted from the worsening security situation in various areas due to bombing by and clashes between the different parties to the conflict, or as a result of the infighting that took place in the period covered by the report. While internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in general suffer from extremely difficult living conditions, women are particularly severely affected due to their gender. This is especially true of those women who have become the primary providers for their families with the loss of their husbands. SNHR estimates that no fewer than 74,000 females have been displaced since the start of 2022, with most of these being displaced multiple times. These displacements were concentrated in the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, and Daraa.

The repeated bombardment by Syrian regime forces using machine guns, mortar shells, and artillery that targeted the populated areas near the dividing lines in northwestern Syria has led to repeated forced displacements. Also, the Syrian-Russian alliance's targeting of camps or areas near camps in the suburbs of Idlib governorate with airstrikes has led to multiple displacements for the camps' already displaced residents. Similarly, the Kurdish Self-Administration's repeated targeting of the Kuwait al-Rahma Camp using rocket shells has led to similar outcomes for its residents. Moreover, the continued military tensions in Aleppo governorate between the armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA) and Turkish forces on one side, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), whose primary component is the People's Protection Units (YPG) of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), have been a significant cause of extensive displacements of residents. These operations have resulted in mass displacements in the cities of Manbej, Ein al-Arab, and Tal Ref'at in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Furthermore, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)'s expansion policy, as it attempted to take over parts of the territories controlled by the armed opposition factions/SNA in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate and the ensuing military operations have been another cause of forced displacement for women in many areas of the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

International humanitarian law has devoted numerous articles to the protection of women in particular. Indeed, over 560 articles in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its two additional protocols of 1977 provide for the protection of women and men as civilians, or as combatants by placing restrictions on the permissible methods of engagement in aggression, or in the case of prisoners of war (prisoners, patients, or wounded persons). Among the 560 articles (all of which apply to women), over 40 articles specifically address women¹.

¹ International Committee of the Red Cross, [Women and War](#)

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, which is today a customary law binding to all states, prohibits the following acts with respect to multiple categories, including women:

"...violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment".

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (Resolution 48/104, issued on December 20, 1993), which stresses that "...women in situations of armed conflict are especially vulnerable to violence." The rights accorded to women in the situations of international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts have become a customary law. As such, Rule 134 of the study of the customary international humanitarian law by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stresses that "the specific protection, health and assistance needs of women affected by armed conflict must be respected."

Syria has ratified the 2003 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)², as well as both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights³ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴, and the Geneva Conventions⁵. The key issue in this context, however, is that the parties to the conflict do not respect or comply with those articles, instead treating them as if they do not exist. The issue is further complicated when the ruling authority (the Syrian regime) is the first and foremost party responsible for perpetrating violations, to the point that some of the regime's violations qualify as crimes against humanity⁶. The ruling authority is supposed to protect its people, rather than being the party responsible for killing, torturing and displacing them.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR director, says:

"This report should be a reminder of the sheer severity of the violations against women in Syria. It is imperative to remember that neither these violations nor their agonizing ramifications have been addressed, even though women's basic rights are being violated by all the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, of which by far the worst is the Syrian regime, which has forcibly disappeared thousands of women, who suffer the most horrible forms of torture. Prompt and decisive steps must be taken to bring about the release of all the Syrian women who have been arbitrarily detained."

² United Nations, [Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard](#)

³ United Nations, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

⁴ United Nations, [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross, [The Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols](#)

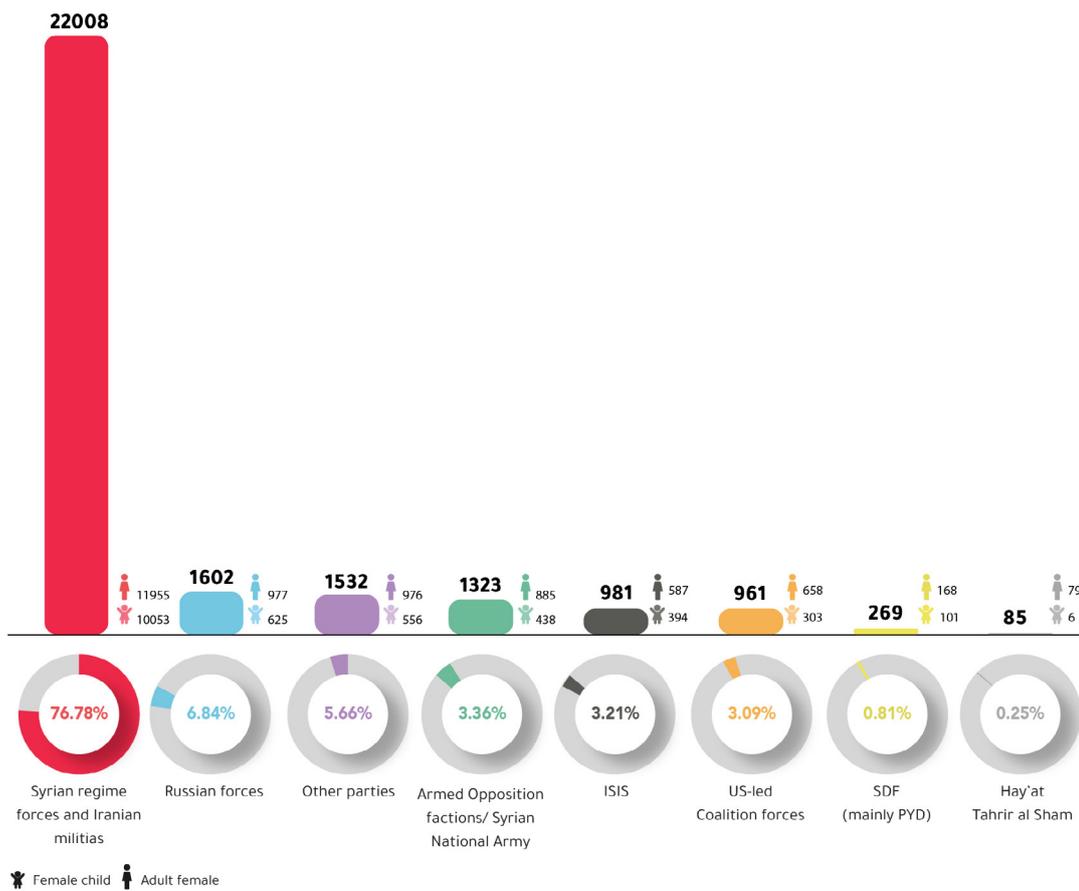
⁶ International Criminal Court, Rome Statute, [Article 7](#)

II. Most Notable Violations Against Females, as Documented on SNHR's Database

While women in Syria have experienced various patterns of violations, all of which have displayed a violent and repeated nature, these differ in their severity and commonness, and in their current and future ramifications on Syrian females. At SNHR, we focus particularly on the gross and life-threatening violations as determined by the UN Security Council, which are documented based on our methodology. Naturally, the killing of females is classified as the primary and most dangerous violation perpetrated against females in Syria, more especially considering the significantly high numbers of female victims. The second most dangerous violation perpetrated against females is arrest/abduction which goes on to become enforced disappearance in the overwhelming majority of cases, and then torture and sexual violence. We also focus on the conscription of female children, assaults on females, and the persecution of females at the hands of the parties to the conflict.

Extrajudicial killing against females

SNHR has documented the killing of 28,761 females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)⁷**: 22,008 females, divided into 11,955 adult females and 10,053 female children.

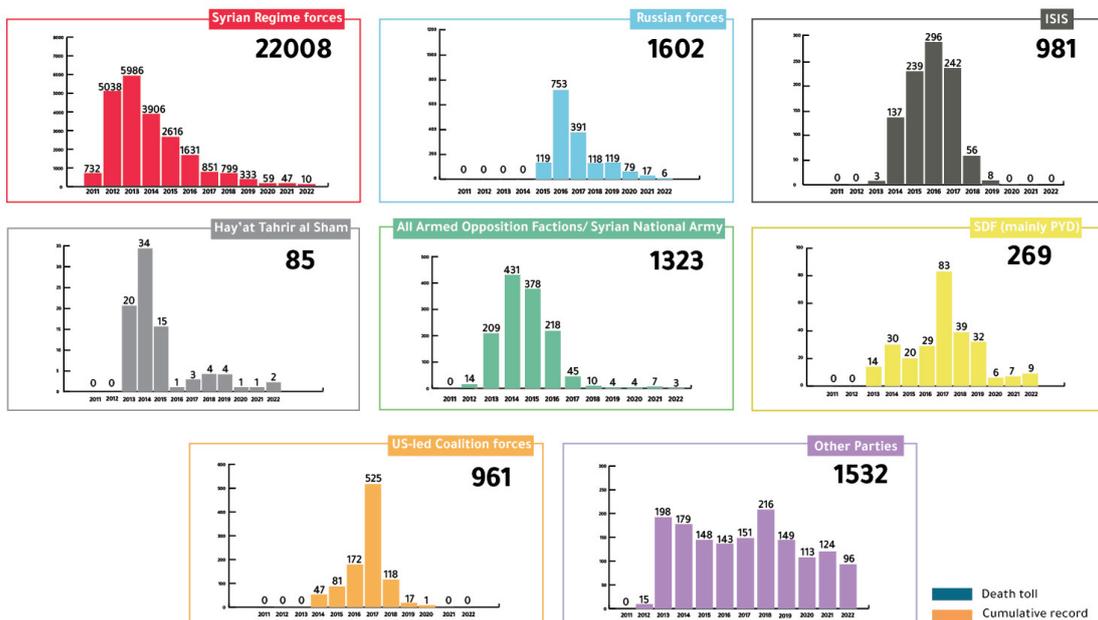
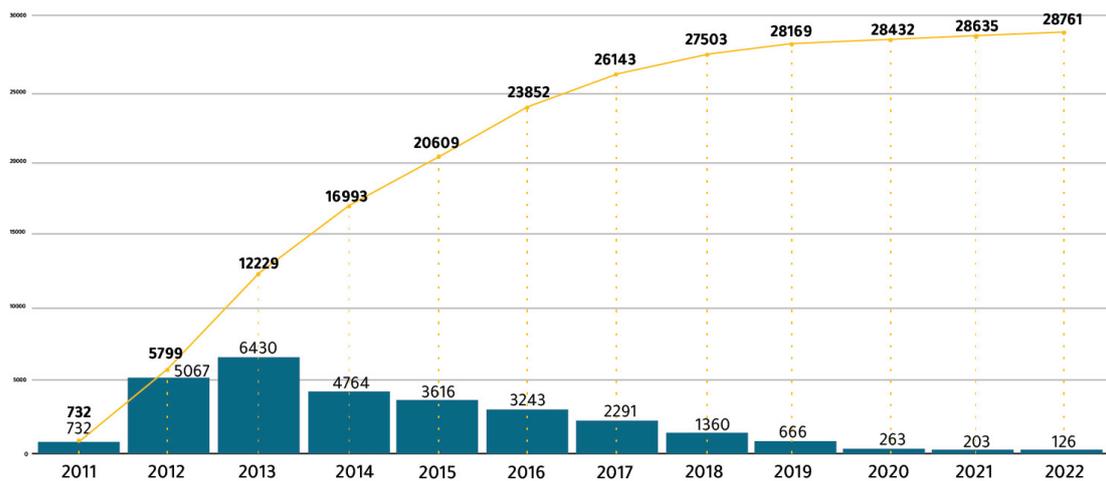
- **Russian forces**: 1,602 females, divided into 977 adult females and 625 female children.

⁷ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the security apparatus. Conversely, the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under a personalist/family rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade merely for show: the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides. The Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security officer, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the heads of the security branches with the president. We are aware that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government', however, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')**: 981 females, divided into 587 adult females and 394 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)**⁸: 85 females, divided into 79 adult females and six female children.
- **All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA)**⁹: 1,323 females, divided into 885 adult females and 438 female children.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF (Democratic Union Party/PYD)**: 269 females, divided into 168 adult females and 101 female children.
- **International coalition forces**: 961 females, divided into 658 adult females and 303 female children.
- **Other parties**: 1,532 females, divided into 976 adult females and 556 female children.

As the chart shows, the Syrian regime is responsible for roughly 78 percent of all cases of extrajudicial killing involving females. Of the toll of female deaths by the Syrian regime, 45 percent are female children and minors. This indicates that the Syrian regime has been targeting females in a deliberate and calculated manner.

The female death toll at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria is distributed by year as follows:

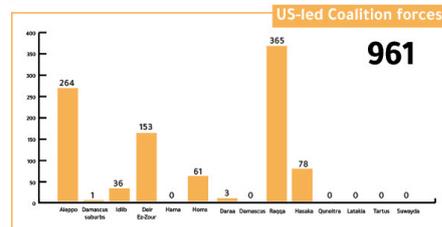
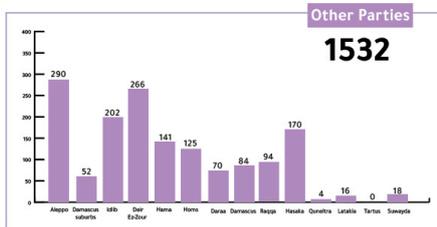
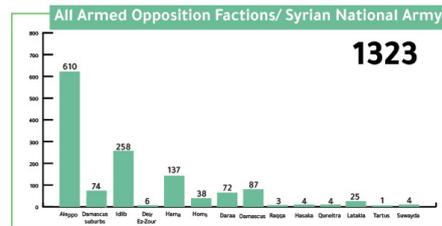
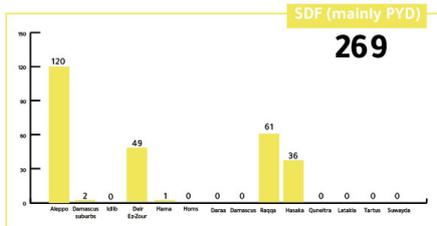
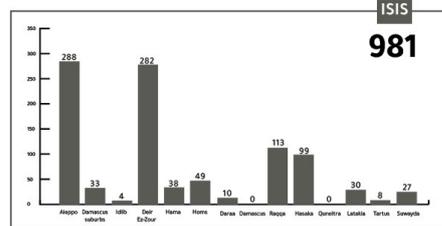
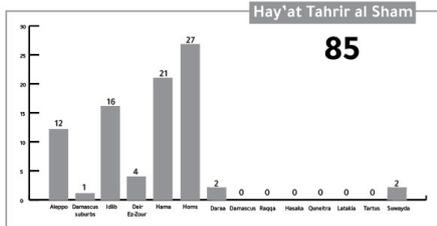
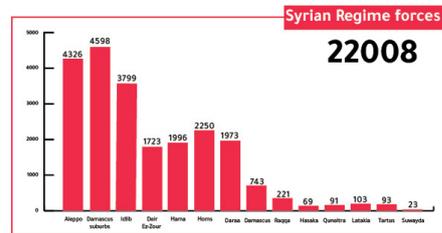
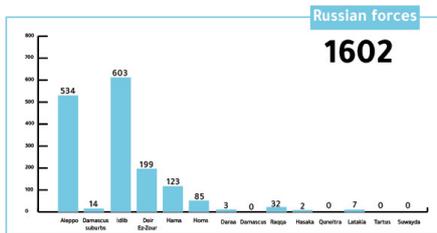
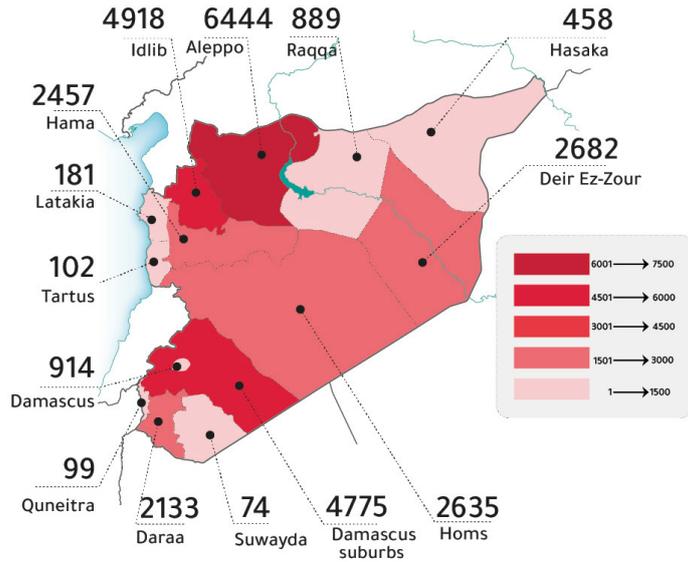


⁸ Was designated as a terrorist group by the UN.

⁹ All armed opposition factions: all factions that have been founded since 2011 in the various Syrian neighborhoods and areas. Many of those factions are now non-existent, and many did not have a central command. Towards the end of 2017, the Syrian National Army was founded as an umbrella organization for the armed opposition factions that remained in existence at the time.

According to the graph above, 2013 was the worst year in terms of female deaths, most of which were at the hands of Syrian regime forces with a percentage of roughly 93 percent, followed by 2012, then 2014, and then 2015. The Syrian regime was responsible for over half of all the female deaths we recorded in all of these years.

The female death toll at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria is distributed by governorate as follows:

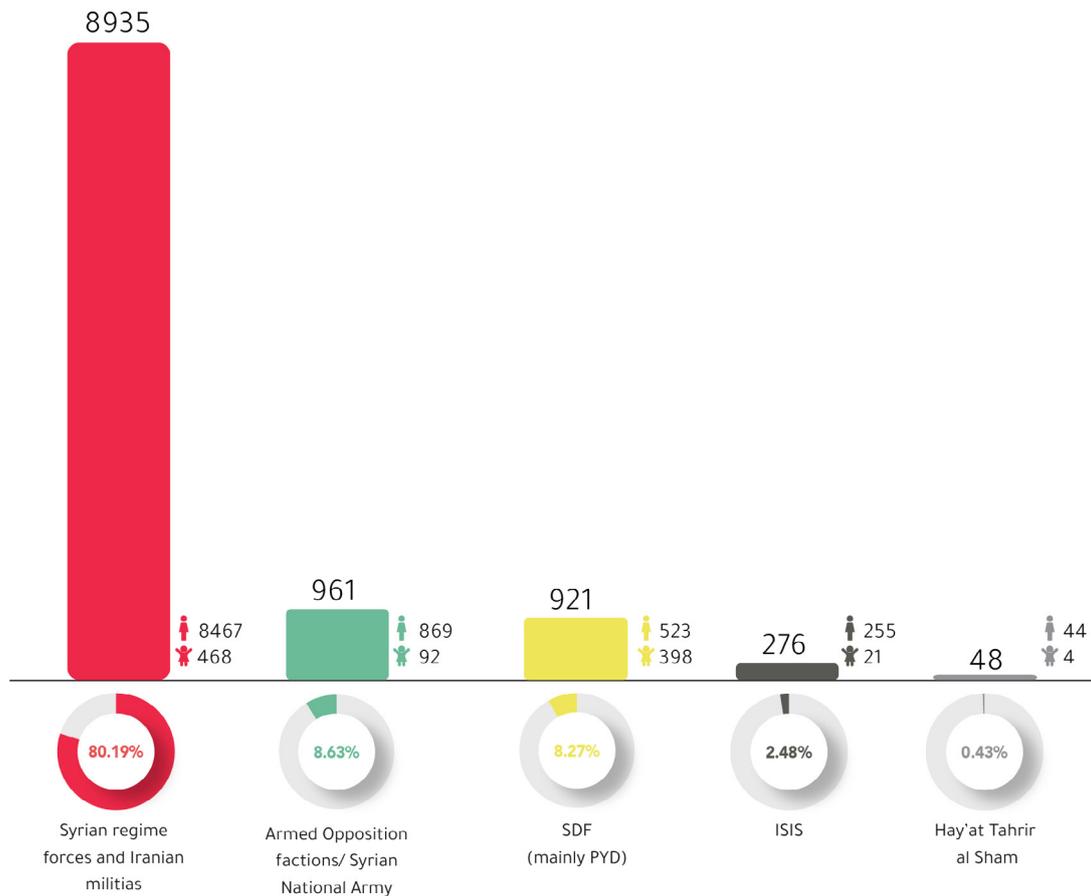


Death toll (blue bars), Cumulative record (orange bars)

As shown in the graph above, the highest number of female deaths was documented in Aleppo governorate, followed by Idlib, and then Damascus suburbs.

Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance of females

According to SNHR's database, no fewer than 11,141 of the females arrested, detained, and/or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling force in Syria since March 2011 are still under arrest, or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2022, distributed as follows:



- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias):** 8,935 females, divided into 8,467 adult females and 468 female children.

- **ISIS:** 276 females, divided into 255 adult females and 21 female children.

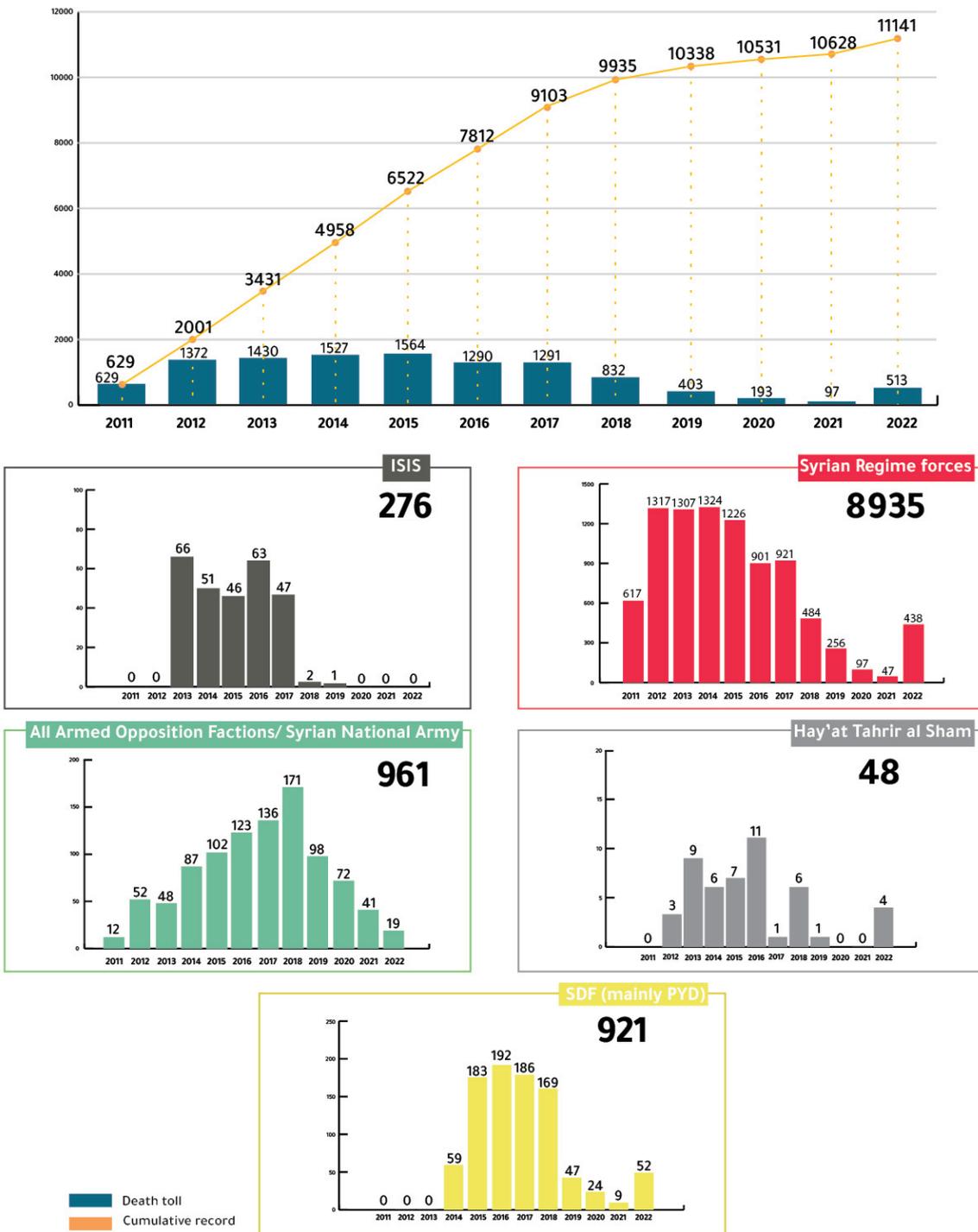
HTS: 48 females, divided into 44 adult females and four female children.

- **Armed opposition factions:** 961 females, divided into 869 adult females and 92 female children.

SDF: 921 adult females, divided into 523 adult females and 398 female children.

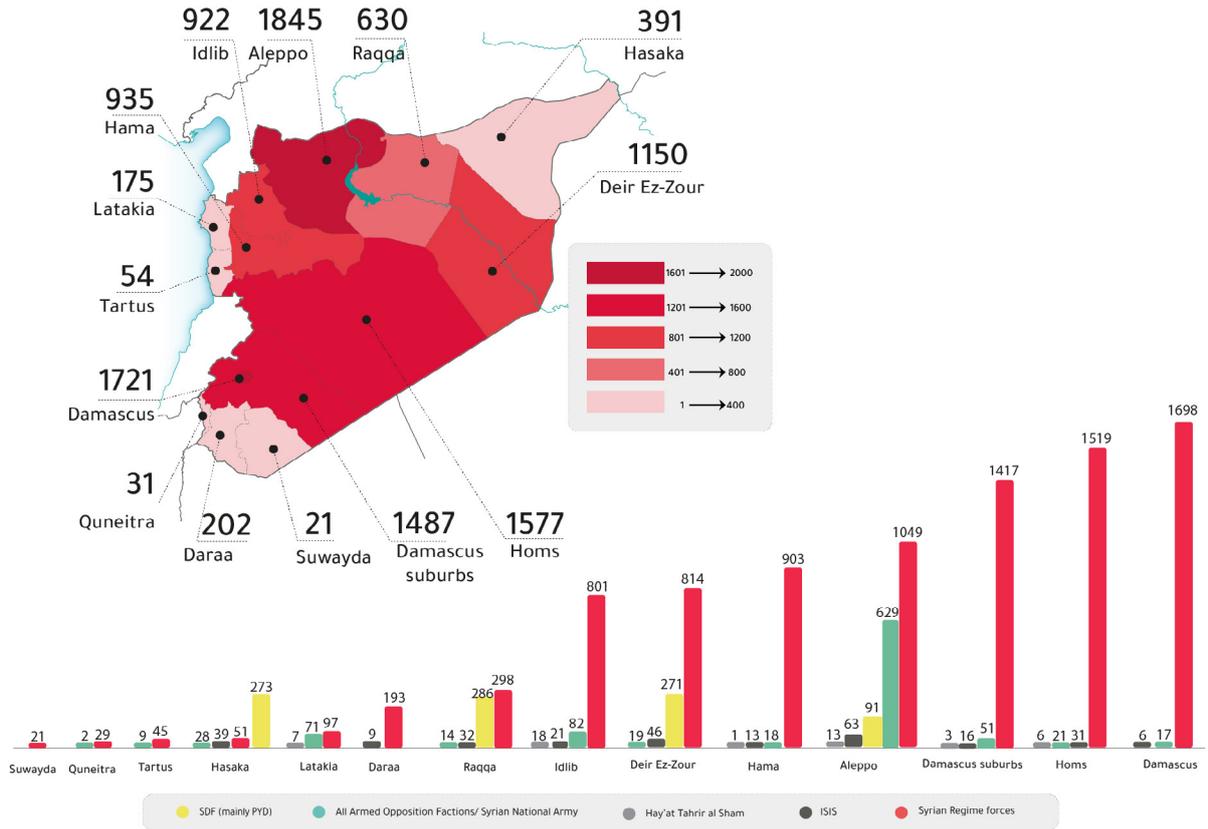
As the chart shows, the Syrian regime is responsible for 80 percent of all cases of arrest and enforced disappearance involving females. This indicates that the Syrian regime has been pursuing, arresting, and disappearing females for various motives in a deliberate and calculated manner.

Cases of arrest/detention and/or enforced disappearance involving females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by year as follows:



According to the graph, 2015 was the worst year in terms of arrests targeting females, with roughly 78 percent of all arrests of females that year being carried out by Syrian regime forces, followed by 2014, then 2013, and 2012. The Syrian regime was responsible for over half of all the arrests of females which we documented in all of these years.

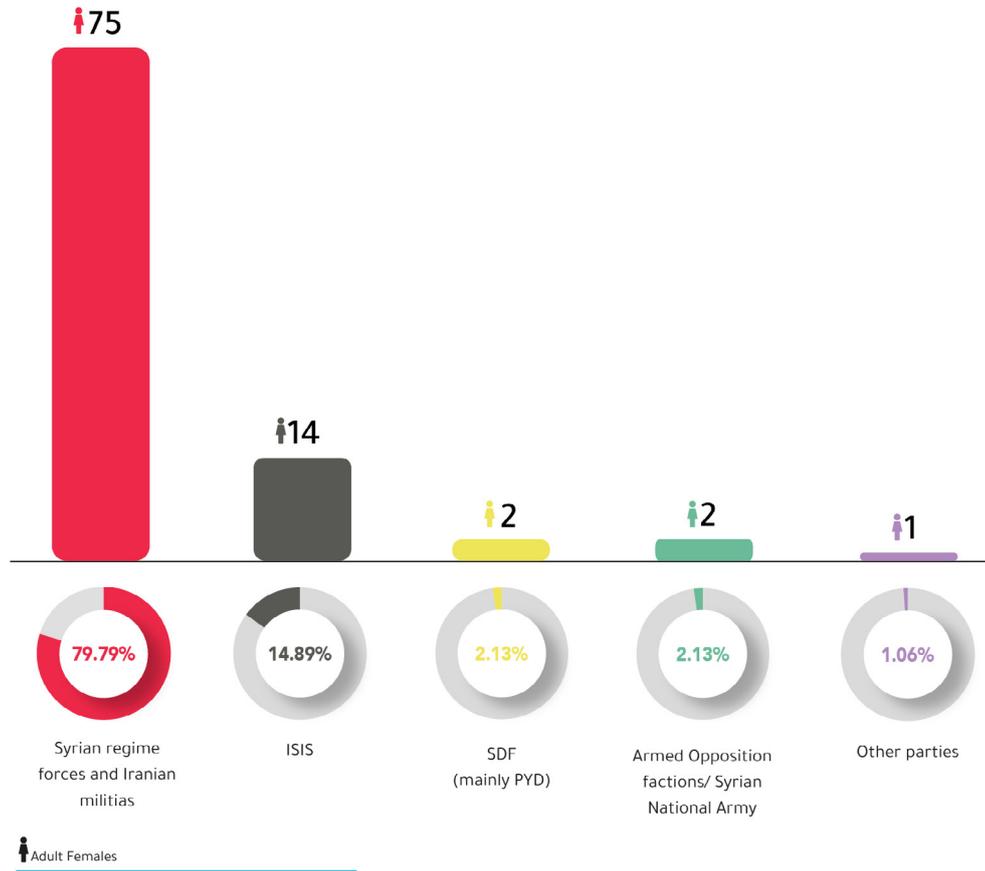
Cases of arrest/detention and/or enforced disappearance involving females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by governorate as follows:



According to the graph above, the highest number of arbitrary arrests/detentions involving females was documented in Aleppo governorate, followed by Damascus, then Homs, and then Damascus suburbs.

Female deaths due to torture

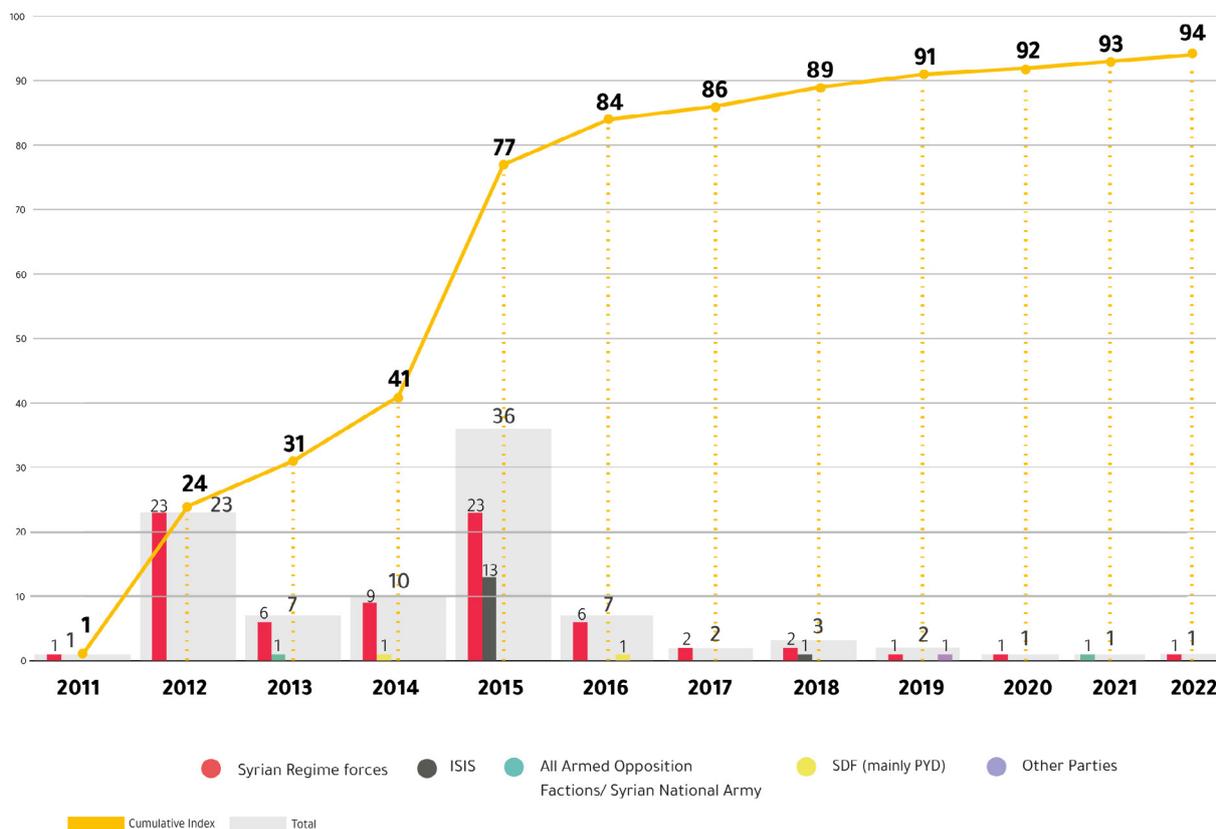
Between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, we recorded no fewer than 94 female deaths due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, distributed as follows:



- Syrian regime forces: 75
- ISIS: 14
- SDF: 2
- Armed opposition factions: 2
- Other parties: 1

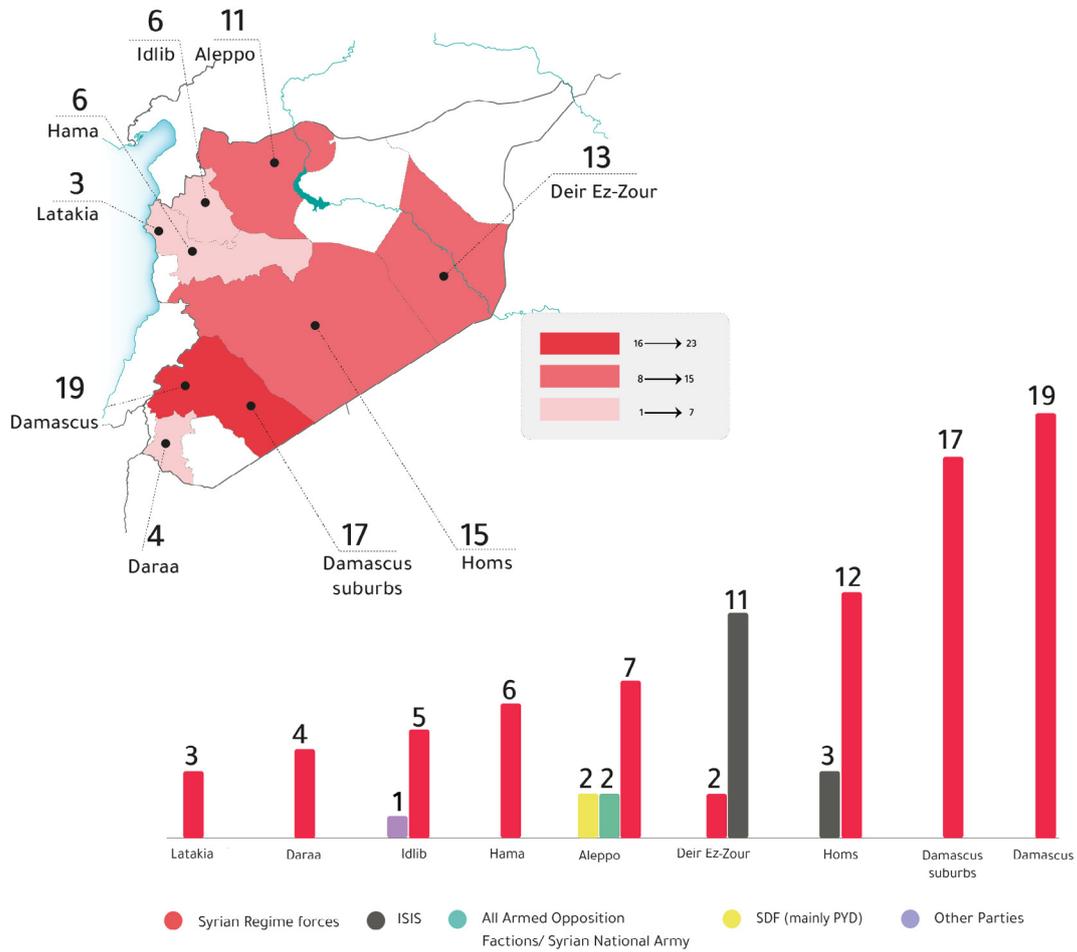
As the graph shows, the Syrian regime has been responsible for roughly 80 percent of all female deaths due to torture.

The death toll of females who died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria was distributed by year as follows:



As the graph shows, 2015 was the worst year in terms of female deaths due to torture, with Syrian regime forces being responsible for all cases that year -23 percent- and ISIS, followed by 2012, then 2014. The Syrian regime was also the only party responsible for all deaths, except for one, in these two years.

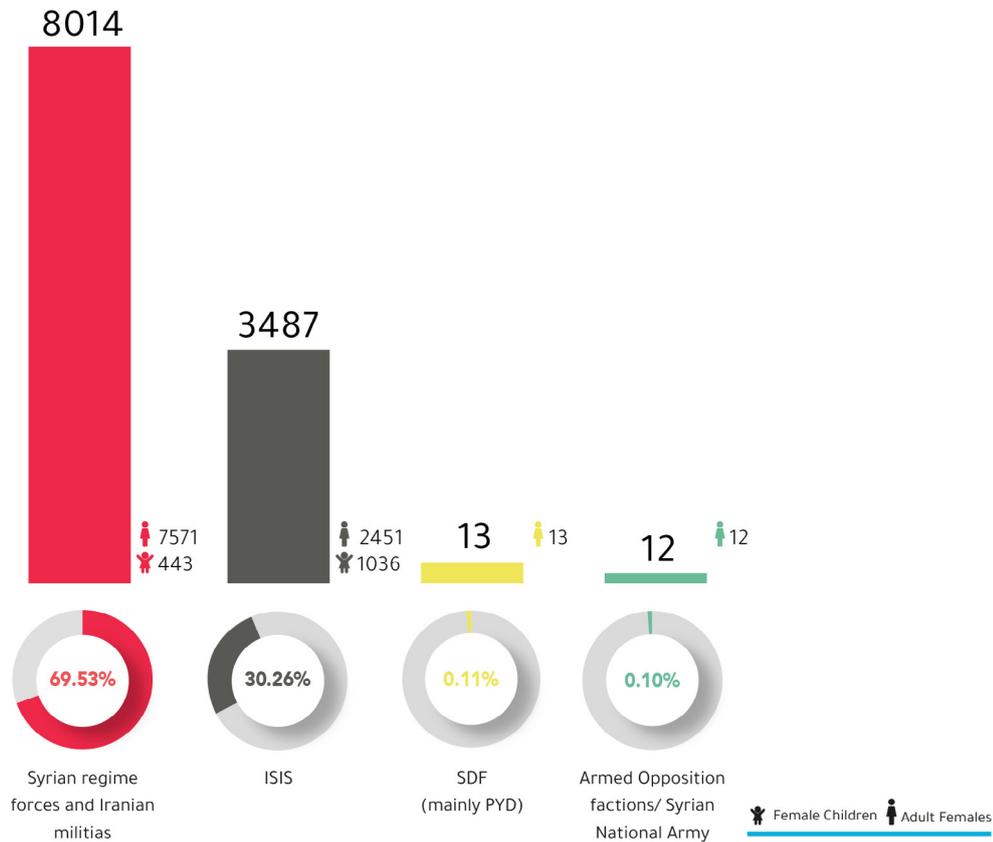
Toll of female deaths due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria was distributed by governorate as follows:



According to the graph, the highest number of female deaths due to torture was documented in Damascus, followed by Damascus suburbs, then Homs, and then Deir Ez-Zour

Sexual violence against females

SNHR has documented no fewer than 11,526 incidents of sexual violence against females, including females below the age 18, at the hands of parties to the conflict and the controlling forces between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, distributed as follows:

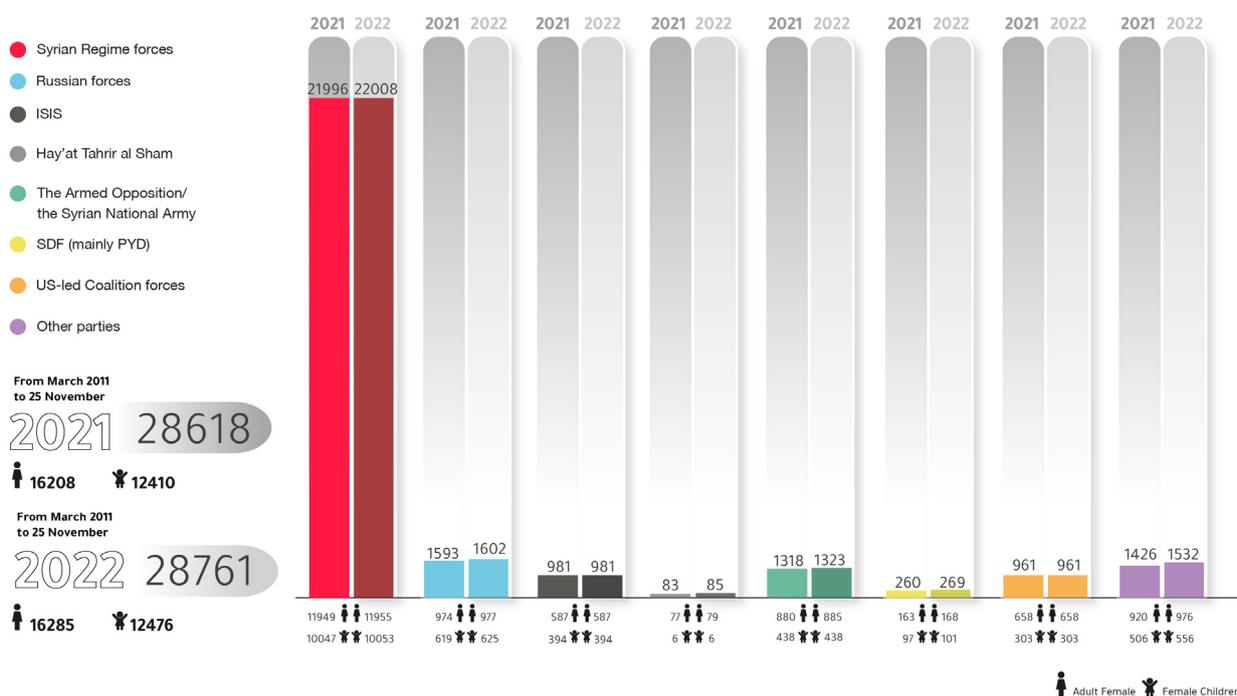


- **Syrian regime forces:** 8,014 incidents, divided into 7,571 involving adult females and 443 involving female children.
- **ISIS:** 3,487 incidents, divided into 2,451 involving adult females and 1,036 involving female children.
- **Armed opposition factions:** 12 incidents.
- **SDF:** 13 incidents.

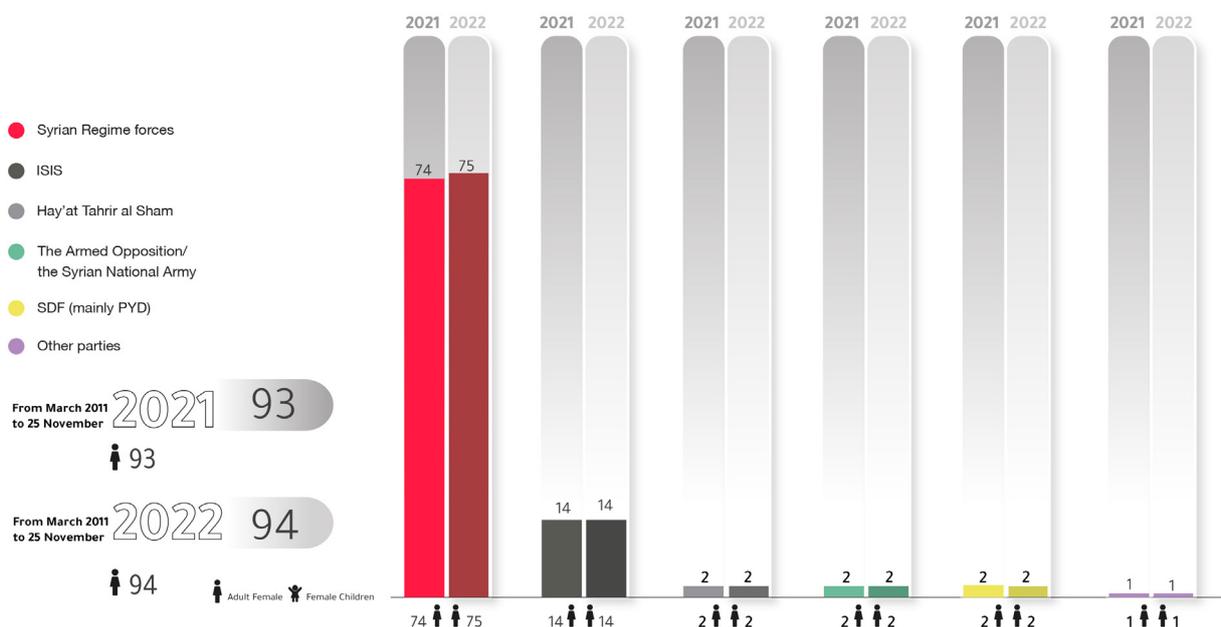
As the graph shows, the Syrian regime has been responsible for roughly 70 percent of all sexual violence cases we have recorded, followed by ISIS. Both of these parties used sexual violence as a strategic weapon of war and instrument of torture and retaliation against the Syrian society.

III. Comparison between the most Notable Patterns of Violations Against Females in Syria from March 2011 Until the 2021 and 2022 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women Respectively

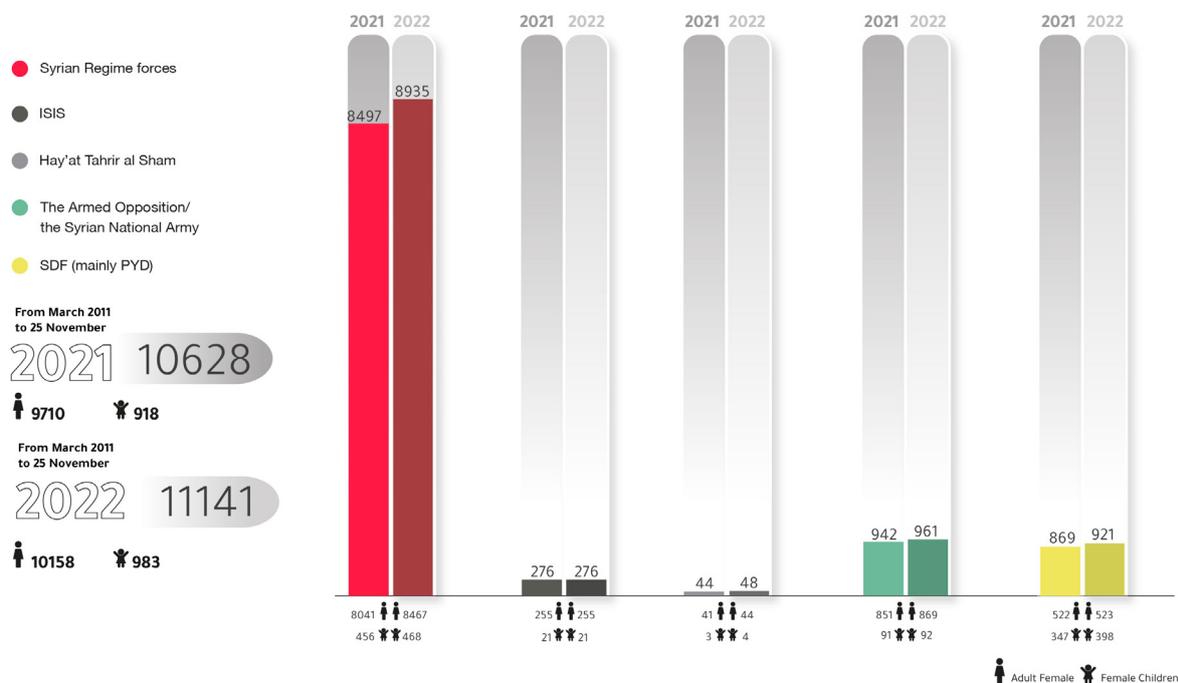
Comparison between female deaths at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces from March 2011 until November 25, 2021, and until November 25, 2022



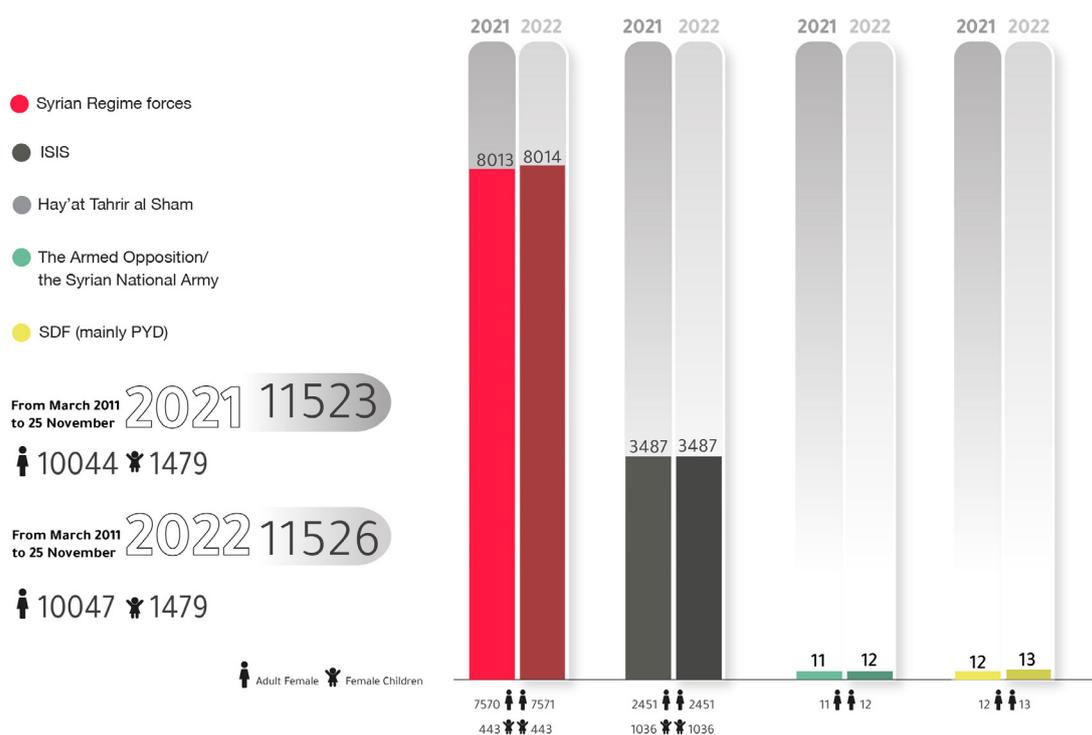
Comparison between female deaths due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces from March 2011 until November 25, 2021, and until November 25, 2022



Comparison between the toll of females who were arrested/detained and are still under arrest and/or detained at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces since March 2011 until November 25, 2021, and until November 25, 2022



Comparison between sexual violence incidents against females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 until November 25, 2021, and until November 25, 2022



IV. Patterns of the Most Notable Violations Against Females by the Main Active Parties to the Syrian Conflict

A. The Syrian regime (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)

1- Extrajudicial killing

The Syrian regime's crimes of extrajudicial killing crimes have taken many forms. One common feature has consistently emerged in all these crimes, however, namely a total disregard for the principles of discrimination and proportionality. Indeed, the Syrian regime has deliberately carried out indiscriminate attacks, using internationally prohibited weapons and munitions in a purposefully indiscriminate, and chaotic manner. The Syrian regime's attacks have claimed the lives of numerous women, due to being carried out in an environment where it is impossible to separate females (women and girls) from the sites targeted. We've documented many types of lethal attacks at the hands of Syrian regime forces in which women were killed, some of which are:

- During clashes in populated cities and areas
- In indiscriminate shooting at demonstrations and in the streets
- As a result of deliberate and indiscriminate attacks by the Syrian regime carried out specifically to terrorize the people and force them to submit to the regime and abandon their demands.
- During raids and while hunting down activists and dissidents
- In attacks targeting areas that broke free of the Syrian regime's control. This includes indiscriminate and directed land and aerial bombardment, using a wide range of weapons; including shells, missiles, cluster munitions, chemical weapons, and barrel bombs. The Syrian regime has deliberately targeted areas heavily populated with civilians, such as markets, streets, gatherings, residential neighborhoods, hospitals, schools, populated buildings, camps, and gatherings of IDPs. These warfare operations have resulted in massacres in which women lost their lives either in their homes or places of work, or while they were receiving medical care or humanitarian services. There have been also many cases where pregnant women or mothers and their children have died under the rubble of their bombed houses.
- Women have also been victims of targeted killings on the basis of gender that involved barbaric methods, such as immolation, decapitation, or using cold weapons (bladed or other weapons not using explosives). These killings have included many massacres that exhibited sectarian cleansing characteristics or elements of retaliation. Such massacres have been primarily concentrated in Homs governorate, Banyas city, the Damascus suburbs of Jdaidat al-Fadel and al-Qalamoun, the northern suburbs of Hama, and the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. In many cases, regime forces would incinerate their victims' dead bodies in basements and houses following the massacre.
- Lastly, we documented women's deaths as a result of complete or partial starvation sieges, most of which lasted for years, which were enforced by Syrian regime forces on many cities, towns, and neighborhoods as a strategy to force those areas' residents to submit and accept the restoration of the regime's control. In those sieges, Syrian regime forces barred the delivery of food and humanitarian relief aid to the besieged areas, while bombing vital centers such as hospitals, food warehouses, and the sanitation infrastructure. The Syrian regime also banned civilians from leaving the besieged areas for treatment, and even blocked medical treatment from entering. All of these factors forced women to endure unimaginably grueling conditions as they grappled with diseases and malnutrition. In addition to these and to death, women suffered from a total lack of medical care and health supplies, with many pregnant women suffering miscarriages due to siege conditions.

The SNHR team has documented the killing of 22,008 females, divided between 11,955 adult females and 10,053 female children, at the hands of Syrian regime forces between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, with details of all these deaths recorded on SNHR's database. It should be noted that the Syrian regime is responsible for roughly 78 percent of all female deaths in Syria, with the females documented killed by regime forces making up roughly 10 percent of the total death toll in Syria. Such a significantly high percentage illustrates that the Syrian regime has deliberately targeted females since the start of the popular uprising for freedom in March 2011.

[Maysa' Mohammad al-Damen](#), a pregnant, internally displaced woman from al-Kasibiya village in western Aleppo governorate, was aged 30 when she was killed on July 4, 2022 along with her unborn fetus, while her other daughter was wounded, in artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired mortar shells at residential houses in Ma'aret al-Na'san village, northeastern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

[Rayya Mahmoud al-Hamdawi](#), a woman born in 1987, from Maskana town in eastern Aleppo governorate, was killed on June 9, 2022, by a Syrian regime sniper while she was working in agricultural land in al-Sawamea area to the west of Tedef city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

On August 3, 2022, SNHR [issued](#) an urgent appeal to end the suffering of thousands of IDPs in al-Rukban Camp in light of an alarming shortage of drinking water. Since the end of May 2022, the 7,500 IDPs living in al-Rukban Camp, almost half of whom are women, had to grapple with a reduction in the already inadequate allocated drinking water supplies almost by half. Those drinking water supplies were delivered across the Jordanian borders with the support of UNICEF. The situation became even more dire due to the extreme summer heat in July and August, to the point that residents, especially women and children, faced the risk of death as a result. To add to that trauma, the camp has suffered under a crippling siege imposed by Syrian regime forces and Iranian militias, leading to an almost complete absence of health-care and a severe shortage of basic food supplies.

[Yaqin Eissa al-Salama](#), an infant girl from Tadmur city in the eastern suburbs of Homs governorate, born in January 2022, lived with her parents in al-Rukban IDP Camp in eastern Homs governorate. Yaqin suffered respiratory and nutritional deficits since birth as a result of a congenital malformation in her mouth. On October 23, 2022, Yaqin's family transferred her to the Sham Medical Point in al-Rukban Camp after her health condition deteriorated. However, the medical staff there were unable to save her life due to the lack of medical and healthcare equipment and services required to treat such cases. Yaqin died on the same day.

2- Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

Arrests/detentions have been among the most prominent Syrian regime's violations involving females. More accurately, the Syrian regime's four main security agencies¹⁰ have practiced arrests/detention against females in a deliberate, calculated, and widespread manner as a warning and threat to Syrian society of the repercussions of continuing with the popular uprising which began in March 2011 and its demands for freedom and political change, with the arrest of a female widely viewed as a stigmatic mark upon a family's honor. Due to this perception, women were specifically targeted for mass arrests in various cities and areas as a means of imposing pressure on residents there to end any anti-regime activities, surrender their fugitives, and agree to the regime's 'settlements' and 'reconciliations'. The arrest of females has taken many forms, but the most notable are the following nine:

- At checkpoints, border crossings, and during inter-city journeys.
- In security ambushes targeting females.
- In raids that target females' houses, places of residence, places of work, or universities.
- Through raiding anti-regime events, such as demonstrations and sit-ins.
- While they are carrying out humanitarian work, such as aiding IDPs and the wounded.
- Abducting them from the streets or public places.
- By summoning them to security branches, then placing them under arrest.
- During their visits to civilian detention centers to see their detained/imprisoned relatives.
- While they are leaving areas previously besieged by regime forces.

While the arrest of women has been used by the Syrian regime as a weapon of war against the entirety of Syrian society, this was not the only context or motive behind those arrests. Females were targeted, in some cases, purely on the basis of their gender. SNHR's database contains dozens of arrests that specifically targeted females with no ties to or involvement in any sort of activism. On the other hand, some females were arrested specifically because of their active involvement in civil, humanitarian, or political activism. In other cases, females have been arrested over geographical, sectarian, and ethnic considerations. Another cause for arresting females has been the material and/or moral extortion of their families, or due to their blood relationship to activists or armed opposition fighters, where the detained females are used as hostages to pressure fighters to surrender themselves or during prisoner exchange operations between the Syrian regime and the various parties to the conflict. Another context also emerged for female arrests in recent years as the Syrian regime regained most of the Syrian territory and proceeded to brutally crush dissidents, activists, and anyone seen as supporting the popular uprising, with females being arrested over contacting their relatives or acquaintances in the areas that remain outside the Syrian regime's control, or for receiving money transfers, or simply for voicing their opinions and criticizing the living conditions and regime corruption on social media, or during trips between the territories under control of the different parties to the conflict.

¹⁰ The four security agencies are: Military Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, General Intelligence, and Political Security

In many incidents, we've documented the arrest of pregnant women or of mothers along with their children, or with female relatives, including elderly women in some cases. In most of those mass arrest cases, the detained women remain together and get transferred together between detention centers for the entire duration of their detention, and experience the same detention situation. The arrest of children along with their mothers only adds to the suffering of women. Worst of all is when children are used as a means of putting pressure on detained women during interrogation, which can take the form of children being beaten and tortured in front of the women, or being taken away to other cells to be imprisoned with adult detainees. Pregnant women in detention are also denied the most basic medical and nutritional needs, including any medical attention from a doctor. In the event that a pregnant woman goes into labor, she is taken to a military hospital with no regard for her needs or the needs of the newborn child, such as clothing, medical care, and adequate nutrition. In most cases, the mother and her child are taken back to the detention center immediately or no more than a few hours after the birth. We have documented no fewer than 167 incidents where children were arrested with their mothers between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, and at least 91 cases of childbirth during detention in the same period, in all of which cases the women suffered the absence of any post-natal medical care and were denied the most basic nutritional, medicinal, medical, and psychological requirements. As a result, seven of the 91 newborn children whose births in detention we documented died soon after being born.

Furthermore, the 21 amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime between March 2011 and Decree No. 7/2022 have led to the release of only 349 women. [We recently released an extensive report tackling the Syrian regime's amnesty decrees](#), underlining that these decrees secure the release of only an extremely limited number of detainees, while arbitrary arrests are still widespread. In the case of females, the percentage of women released, in accordance with the amnesty decrees, amounted to no more than four percent of all female detainees.

SNHR's team has documented that no fewer than 8,497 of the females, divided between 8,041 adult females and 456 female children, arrested by the Syrian regime between March 2011 and November 25, 2022, are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared in the regime's official and unofficial detention centers. During their detention, female detainees are barred from seeing or contacting their families, or hiring a lawyer. It is also not uncommon for female detainees to be held for many months or years, with Syrian authorities denying their arrest or any knowledge of them upon inquiry. In most cases, arbitrary arrests turn into enforced disappearances.

Torture is an innate part of the detention experience at the Syrian regime's detention centers, which excludes no one, including women, children, elderly people, and those with special needs. As such, females have been subjected to the same forms of torture and the same level of brutality as males. They also suffer the same detention conditions that their male counterparts endure, and appear before the same extraordinary security courts, such as the Field Military Court and the Counterterrorism Court, which are in themselves part of the regime's apparatus of torture.

In a previous detailed report, SNHR listed the most prominent methods of torture used by the Syrian regime at its detention centers and military hospitals. As the report noted, at least [72 methods](#) of torture, including physical, psychological, and sexual torture, are routinely used in a deliberate and widespread manner in all the regime's detention centers. Torture also takes place in tandem with deliberate medical negligence and starvation, as well as the inhumane detention conditions, such as the lack of proper hygiene and ventilation, overcrowded and cramped cells, deprivation of clothing and blankets in extremely hot or cold weather conditions. These inhuman conditions which detainees are forced to endure, often for many years, further increase the number of deaths due to torture and medical negligence, with deaths at detention centers being an almost daily occurrence.

Females' greater physical vulnerability and personal needs only exacerbate what are already intolerable detention conditions and intensify the torture. We have recorded many cases of miscarriages due to torture. Females are also denied the right to use toilets or address their periodic menstrual needs, which also results in the spread of dangerous diseases. Moreover, Syrian regime forces give no regard to women's requirements, placing them in security branches with no female officers or holding cells designed for women. According to SNHR's database, a total of 75 females (adult women) have been documented as dying due to torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers between March 2011 and November 25, 2022.

Farida Mohammad Qasim Shaikhouny, a housewife born in 1949, in Ma'aret Misreen in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was living in the Jobar neighborhood of Damascus city when she was arrested in February 2013, by Syrian regime forces at a sponge factory in Adra city in Damascus suburbs governorate after her family fled from Jobar neighborhood to Adra city to escape ongoing clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions. She was taken to an undisclosed location. She has been forcibly disappeared ever since, with her fate remaining unknown to SNHR as well as to her family.

SNHR spoke with Mr. Mohammad Hmeidan¹¹, Mrs. Farida's grandson, who told us:

"My grandmother Farida fled to al-Sbi'i Sponge Factory in Adra city, where my uncle [Farida's son] works as an executive director. She lived there with my uncle, his wife, and their six children. After they fled there, clashes erupted between the regime forces and Jaish al-Islam in the area. On January 28, 2013, regime forces raided the factory and detained the civilians there. They stationed themselves in the factory and used the civilians as human shields to stop Jaish al-Islam from advancing and raiding the factory. After the regime forces withdrew from the area, they took the civilians who were held at the factory. We have had no new information about them ever since."

Wahida Adnan Harmoush, born in 1971, from Idlib city, was a housewife, who had been living in Shtoura village in Qadaa' Zahla, Beqaa governorate, Lebanon when she was arrested on Sunday, April 7, 2013 along with her son at a Syrian regime checkpoint in Homs city while she was returning from Lebanon. Wahida and her son were taken to an undisclosed location. They have been forcibly disappeared ever since, with their fate remaining unknown to SNHR, as well as to their family.

¹¹ Via Messenger on October 21, 2022.

SNHR spoke with Mr. Redwan¹², a relative of Wahida's husband, who told us:

“Wahid was on her way back from Lebanon. We lost contact with them on the afternoon of Sunday, April 7, 2013, when their bus stopped at a security checkpoint in Homs city. We tried to call her but her phone was shut down, and we tried looking for her but we found nothing.” Mr. Redwan added that a few years later they learned from a former detainee that he had been arrested with the people on the bus, including Wahida, and that Syrian regime forces put them in a school near the checkpoint and then took them to an unknown location.

Layla Hussein al-Mebkher, born in 1978, a housewife from Irbeen city in Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs, was living with her family and other families at a sponge factory in Adra city, Damascus suburbs governorate, after they fled from Irbeen city to Adra city to escape clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed opposition factions when she was arrested on Monday, January 28, 2013, along with her family members by Syrian regime forces who raided her place of residence at the sponge factory. They were taken to an undisclosed location. Her fate remains unknown to SNHR, as well as to her family.

SNHR spoke to Mr. Qais¹³, a relative of Layla, who told us:

“Layla was living with her family and other families in al-Sbi'i Sponge Factory in Adra city, Damascus suburbs governorate, after they fled from Irbeen city to Adra city on account of the clashes between the Syrian regime and armed opposition. It was at that time when she was arrested with her husband and four daughters (three of whom are under 18-year-old), as well as other members of her family. They were taken to an unknown location. A few days later, Layla's brother, named Ihsan, negotiated with the officer from the Air Force Intelligence that was responsible for the arrest through an intermediary. The negotiations were about releasing the children in return for money and the car owned by Ihsan. However, when it was time for the delivery, they took the money and arrested Ihsan and we've had no information about any of them ever since.” Mr. Qais added that in 2018 they received information that they were killed and buried behind the factory, but were unable to verify this information.

Sample cases of detention/arrests involving females by Syrian regime forces in 2022

Heba al-Hasan al-Mousa al-Thaher, a woman born in 1997, from Kasrat Sheilh Jumaa in the southern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested on Thursday, January 27, 2022, by members of the Syrian regime's National Defense militia at a checkpoint located at the entrance to al-Sabkha town in the eastern suburbs of Raqqa over accusations that she was working as an employee in the SDF's Town Council in Raqqa city. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

Rasha Khalil Eissa, from Kafrsafra village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in northwestern Aleppo governorate, was arrested on February 26, 2022, by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint located at the entrance of al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo city. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

¹² Via phone on June 30, 2022.

¹³ Via phone on August 12, 2022.

Bushra Abdul Malik was released by Syrian regime forces on Saturday, May 7, 2022, from Adra Central Prison in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 7/2022 that provided for the release of detainees facing terror charges by the Syrian regime. She was arrested again as she was leaving Adra Central Prison by the Political Security forces, and taken to one of their detention centers in Damascus governorate.

Nour Khairllah, a woman born in 1988, from Damascus city, was arrested on Friday, May 20, 2022, by Syrian regime forces in Damascus city, over contacting a former detainee who was released in accordance with Amnesty Decree No. 7 on social media to ask about his detained brother. She was taken to an undisclosed location.



Fatima Mohammad Qanbar, a woman from Kawenda village, one of the Medaniyat villages which are administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in northern Aleppo governorate, was living in Tal Ref'at city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate when she was arrested, along with her nephews, on Wednesday, September 21, 2022, at a Syrian regime checkpoint near al-Layrmoun roundabout in Aleppo city. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Wednesday, February 2, 2022, Syrian regime forces arrested two women from al-Sanamayn city in northern Daraa governorate at a checkpoint in Damascus city. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Monday, March 21, 2022, Syrian regime's Military Security forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Qedsayya city in Damascus suburbs governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of three civilians, including one woman. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Saturday, June 11, 2022, Syrian regime forces arrested a 52-year-old woman in Zamalka town in Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs governorate for the purpose of extortion. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

On Friday, September 16, 2022, Syrian regime forces arrested a woman with two of her children at a checkpoint in al-Rastan city in the northern suburbs of Homs governorate, in order to put pressure on a relative of her and force him to surrender himself to regime authorities. They were taken to the Military Security branch in the city of Homs.

On Wednesday, October 19, 2022, Syrian regime forces arrested four women from Jasim city in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate at a checkpoint near al-Mesemiya town in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

3- Sexual violence

SNHR data shows that the first four years of the popular uprising saw the highest documented rates of the use of sexual violence by Syrian regime forces, with sexual violence being practiced in a widespread manner.

Sexual violence was recorded during raids on cities and house inspections, as well as in the regime's official and unofficial detention centers and checkpoints. Evidently, the Syrian regime has given its officers the power to practice sexual violence with no restrictions or consequences with the implicit approval of those in charge, in order to terrorize and spread mass fear in Syrian society. In the years since 2014, sexual violence has still been used, but to varying degrees during military operations against the cities and areas that broke free of the regime's control. However, it continues to be used in a systematic manner inside detention centers.

The Syrian regime has used all forms of sexual violence as a weapon of war against its enemies and as a cruel, yet effective, method of torture. Through weaponizing sexual violence, the Syrian regime aimed to spread fear and force residents to flee their hometowns, as well as utilizing it in a retaliatory sense. Even the large number of sexual violence cases documented on SNHR's databases may not reflect the actual severity or magnitude of the use of sexual violence against women in light of the destructive and devastating physical and psychological fallout of such crimes and the loss of hope in any form of accountability against the perpetrators, both of which factors prevent sexual violence victims from disclosing and revealing the crimes they have been subjected to. While the documentation process itself certainly faces challenges such as security and accessibility, documenting sexual violence crimes has its own additional and particular difficulties. More often than not, females opt not to reveal the sexual violence they've been subjected to, being fearful of the stigmatization and alienation borne unjustly by the victims of such crimes in traditional Syrian society, and how such revelations might affect their image and the image of their families. Consequently, women in general keep those experiences a secret. Despite this, however, SNHR has documented no fewer than 8,014 incidents of sexual violence at the hands of Syrian regime forces, including 879 incidents in detention centers, and no fewer than 443 cases of sexual violence against girls below the age of 18.

Drawing upon the aggregate data we have gathered on victims of sexual violence over the past 11 years, we have categorized the forms of sexual violence by the location of the crime into: 1. sexual violence inside the official and unofficial detention centers; and 2. sexual violence during raids and at checkpoints. The motives behind the use of sexual violence vary by case. Usually, the Syrian regime uses sexual violence against women in detention centers as an effective method of torture to extract confessions to crimes that the female detainee did not commit, to extract information, or as a form of punishment, or to spread a sense of fear and humiliation among both female and male detainees. A number of other features such as sectarianism, retaliation, and collective punishment, have also been consistently present in many of the sexual violence cases we have documented.

Most common forms of sexual violence practiced by the Syrian regime:

- **Compulsory nudity:** forcing female detainees to take their clothes off or watching them as they use the bathrooms or the toilet.
- **Molestation:** Inappropriately touching of female detainees' bodies, usually during inspection or interrogation.
- **Beating and directing torture to the genitals:** Beating or electroshocking females' reproductive organs during torture. Such practices usually result in serious physical harm to women.
- **Rape and rape threats:** Usually during interrogation and as a form of torture and retaliation. Many female detainees have faced rape threats, especially when officers are trying to force them to confess to the charges they've imposed.
- **Verbal/psychological sexual violence:** This takes various forms. Usually, a female detainee is forced to talk about her sex life or about her partner. insults of a sexual nature are also common, as is applying pressure to female detainees to force them to respond to the interrogator/officer when asked about sex, among other verbal sexual threats.
- **Blackmail and sexual extortion:** We have recorded many cases of sexual extortion of women in return for certain goods and services. For instance, a female detainee is sexually extorted in exchange for basic requirements such as food and water.
- **Prostitution accusations against female detainees/prisoners:** The Syrian regime has forced no fewer than 11 female detainees, including girls below the age of 18, to appear on its official TV channels and confess to having intercourse with fighters from the armed opposition. All of those female detainees have been forcibly disappeared after their TV appearance. Moreover, many female detainees have told us that among the charges they faced in their trials were prostitution, which is a way for the regime to shame female detainees, shatter their image within their local communities, and put their lives at serious risk due to potential 'honor crimes'.

On Wednesday, June 1, 2022, a woman from Halat village, administratively affiliated with Talkalakh town in the northern suburbs of Homs, was abducted by a group of servicemen from the Syrian regime's National Defense militia as she was heading for her place of work in an agricultural field in Talbisa city, northern suburbs of Homs. Subsequently, local residents told us that they found her the next day thrown into the road in an unconscious state. She was taken to a medical center. The medical report noted that she was tortured and raped. SNHR has collected data and details about this harrowing incident, and we have managed to identify two of the perpetrators - a commander and serviceman from the National Defense militia. We have [released](#) a statement condemning the crime of torture and rape this woman was subjected to.

B. Russian forces

Since the beginning of Russia's intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, Russian forces' tactics have been largely similar to those of Syrian regime forces in their indiscriminate and directed bombardment of populated residential areas, markets, vital facilities, and camps. However, Russian forces have used various weapons that are more lethal and advanced than those of the Syrian regime. Another notable aspect in the attacks by Russian forces has been the use of double-strike tactics¹⁴. Like their Syrian regime peers, Russian forces have also failed to respect the principles of discrimination and proportionality established by the international law, and also fail to distinguish between military and civilian targets. As such, attacks by Russian forces have resulted in horrific massacres in which many civilians, including women, have been killed. In fact, roughly 24 percent of all civilians killed by Russian forces were female. The fact that nearly one-quarter of the total civilian death toll from these attacks is made up of females indicates that Russian forces have deliberately targeted females in their attacks.

The bombardment and the brutal use of deadly weapons by Russian forces have displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, with the Syrian regime utilizing those barbaric attacks to regain control of large areas that had broken free of its control. According to SNHR's database, Russian attacks, in which various weapons were used, have resulted in the deaths of 1,602 females, divided between 977 adult females and 625 female children, as of November 25, 2022. We have recorded many double-strike incidents and released numerous reports documenting massacres and other violations resulting from Russian bombings, the most recent of which was released [on the seventh anniversary of the beginning of the Russian intervention in Syria](#).

At around dawn on January 1, 2022, two-year-old [Nisreen Na'san al-Na'san](#), her 28-year-old mother Fatima Hussein al-Wisi, and seven-year-old Mariam Bassil al-About, were killed, while 10 other civilians were wounded, in an air raid by fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian, which fired missiles near a house and camps lived in by IDPs who work as shepherds to the east of al-Nahr al-Abyad area, administratively affiliated with Jisr al-Shoghour city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate.

[Amina Khaled al-Khaled](#), a woman from Kafr Batikh village in eastern Idlib governorate, was killed on November 25, 2021, while other civilians, including children, were wounded in bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian which fired multiple missiles near civilians picking olives in agricultural lands on the outskirts of Ma'ar Tab'ie to the east of Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate.

C. Kurdish-led SDF (PYD)

1- Extrajudicial killing

The indiscriminate shelling and attacks by the SDF against the other parties' territories, as well as SDF gunfire and clashes involving SDF forces during raids and chases, or in the course of repressing protests, in addition to shootings by SDF snipers, and executions by SDF personnel have all resulted in civilian deaths, including females. We have also recorded massacres of an ethnic character by the SDF. In total, we have recorded the killing of 269 females, divided between 168 adult female and 101 female children, at the hands of the SDF between its founding (as the YPG which is the primary component of the SDF) in July 2012 and November 25, 2022.

¹⁴ Targeting the same location in consecutive and close strikes, which results in massacres and raises the death toll, where medics and gathering civilians are both targeted in such attacks. These attacks usually flatten and completely destroy entire buildings and neighborhoods.

[On October 29, 2022](#), SDF personnel used a rocket launcher to bomb the Kuwait al-Rahma IDP Camp, a group of residential units made of concrete, in Jabal al-Ahlam area to the southeast of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the missiles landed on an IDP residential unit in the middle of the camp, killing a 30-year-old woman named Samirda Mohammad al-Hussein Kazkaz, and wounding her husband and one of her children, as well as severely damaging the residential unit.

[Aziza al-Mohammad](#), an internally displaced woman from Tal al-Daman in southern Aleppo governorate, was killed on July 25, 2022, in shelling by SDF personnel stationed in Mennegh Military Airbase in Aleppo governorate, who used rocket launchers to fire missiles targeting the southwestern parts of Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

[Dunya Abdul Wahhab Shehada](#), a nine-year-old girl, was shot dead on July 25, 2022, by SDF policemen in front of her house in southern Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, while they were pursuing a fugitive in the city.

[Hanaa Mohammad al-Aran](#), a woman from Abu al-Neitel village, administratively affiliated with Soor city, in northern Deir Ez-Zour governorate, died on June 3, 2022, of wounds sustained on May 11, 2022, when she was shot by SDF personnel while they were raiding a house in the village.

Located in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, al-Hawl Camp, which is more like a detention center than a camp in nature, currently houses tens of thousands of IDPs under inhumane conditions. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI) has noted in multiple reports that the PYD's Self-Administration authority is responsible for the unlawful detention of thousands of people there, including females and children. SNHR has released [an extensive report](#) on the al-Hawl Camp. Meanwhile, a CoI [report](#), released on September 14, 2022, regarding the period between January 1, 2022 and June 30, 2022, warned that the security situation in the camp is getting worse, with 34 murder crimes being reported there between January 1 and August 31, 2022, in addition to vicious clashes between the SDF's internal security forces and the camp's residents. The report stresses that children in the al-Hawl, camp and other camps in northeastern areas of Syria are living in alarming conditions, as they lack adequate healthcare and education, with many suffering traumas due to violence in camps. As soon as they reach puberty, these young children face the risk of being taken to military detention centers along with adults who are allegedly former ISIS fighters. Those children are held indefinitely, with no legal grounds for their detention.

The body of [Fatima al-Shwiti](#), a woman from Deir Ez-Zour city, was found by other camp residents on Sunday, June, 2022, in a sewage channel in the fifth sector of al-Hawl IDP Camp with signs indicating she had been shot.

[Suraiya Awwad Iwyied](#), a female Iraqi refugee born in 1982, was shot dead on April 18, 2022, by gunmen who we have not yet been able to identify in the first sector of the SDF-run al-Hawl IDP Camp near al-Hawl city in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate.

2- Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

Females have fallen victim to the SDF's detention and abduction policies in the areas under its control in northeastern Syria. These operations are fueled by various motives, such as blood relations, accusations of being in contact with individuals from the SNA or ISIS or any group opposing the SDF or wanted by the SDF. We have also documented many detentions involving females for the purpose of blackmail or to use them as hostages to force their relatives to surrender themselves. Moreover, female activists or those who oppose and criticize the practices of SDF have also been victims of detention/disappearance at the hands of the SDF, who arrest them in raids on their homes, and abduct them from the streets or their place of work, or at checkpoints. Many arrests have also been documented targeting females on the basis of their ethnicity or gender. Lastly, we have documented many incidents and cases where females were arrested at SDF checkpoints while travelling to or from the territories controlled by armed opposition factions under the pretext of not having a male guardian, known as a 'Kafil'.

According to SNHR's database, no fewer than 921 of the females, divided between 523 adult females and 398 female children, who have been arrested by SDF between its founding (in July 2012 as the PYD, which remains the primary component of the SDF) and November 25, 2022, are still under arrest or forcibly disappeared. Also, the SDF-run al-Hawl camp holds no fewer than 56,000 people, over half of whom are women and children, who have been struggling with the lack of the most basic needs, such as education and healthcare, since 2019.

Females at SDF detention centers suffer incredibly poor conditions from overcrowded cells and bad ventilation to lack of hygienic facilities and poor treatment. Females also are subjected to various methods of torture that include severe beating, nail removal, hair-shaving, falqa, prolonged solitary confinement, and denying them the right to see their families. It is not uncommon for females to be mistreated on the basis of their ethnicity in SDF detention centers, where they are deprived of healthcare and food. Moreover, those detained are not charged with any specific charges or subject to a trial until they have already suffered long periods of detention that may last for months or even years. Torture, medical negligence, and poor detention conditions have resulted in the death of two adult females at SDF detention centers.

[Ghazala Ahmad al-Hussein](#), woman from [al-Kharnoubi village](#) in the suburbs of [Hasaka governorate](#), who lives in al-Qameshli city in northeastern Hasaka, was arrested by SDF personnel on Monday, May 30, 2022 in al-Khalij neighborhood, al-Qameshli city. She was assaulted, beaten, and verbally assaulted, and then taken to an undisclosed location. She was released on June 2, 2022. SNHR has received information indicating that Ghazala, who is in her sixties, suffers from a number of physical and psychological ailments. We have also obtained pictures showing the brutal way in which she was arrested that showed no regard for her health condition.



Ghazala Ahmad al-Hussein
as she was being arrested

Helen Ahmad al-Ismaïl, a 19-year-old woman from Raqqa city, was arrested on Wednesday, June 15, 2022, by SDF servicemen in a raid on her father's pharmacy near Al-Na'im Roundabout in the middle of Raqqa city. She was released on September 26, 2022.



Helen Ahmad al-Ismaïl

Nazliya Rashid Shikhou, a 32-year-old female teacher from Hasayya village, which is administratively affiliated with Nahiyat Me'btali in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, lives in Aleppo city. She was arrested, along with her brother, by SDF personnel on Monday, July 11, 2022, in a raid on the family's home in al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo city. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Samira Kabi Habsonou, a woman born in 2003, from al-Qameshli city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was arrested on Monday, August 1, 2022, as she was leaving a government building in the center of al-Qameshli city. She was taken to an undisclosed location.



Samira Kabi Habsonou

3- Conscription

Females, including minors, are a key element of the SDF. The Kurdish-led group has employed various recruitment methods, both compulsory and voluntary, for the specific purpose of increasing the numbers of their female recruits and conscripts who are deployed in different military, security, and field tasks. This has been the case since the founding of the YPG, the primary component of the SDF, in July 2012, when females began joining the Kurdish forces. Subsequently, the SDF gradually started recruiting and conscripting female minors and children as it tightened its security and military grip in areas under its control in northeastern Syria, where it showed no aversion to recruiting females, either voluntarily or compulsory. Moreover, efforts to increase the SDF's female membership involve attempts to convince, encourage, and offer incentives for female children to agree to join. The SDF also uses schools affiliated with the self-administration authority in its recruitment of girls. As well as recruiting females voluntarily, SDF carries out abductions of females from schools, streets, or residential neighborhoods for conscription.

The Kurdish Self-Administration signed [a joint action plan with the UN](#) in June 2019 to put an end to child recruitment, and release children who have been already recruited. Additionally, the YPG and Women's Protection Units signed a deed of commitment with the Geneva Call organization in 2014 banning the use of children in wars. Despite these actions, however, the group's recruitment of children has not stopped, but, on the contrary, has seen an unprecedented rise compared to previous years. Although the SDF founded [the Office for the Protection of Children from Armed Conflicts](#) on August 30, 2022, to receive complaints about children recruitment in areas under its control, many of the child recruits' and conscripts' families have received no response to their enquiries or information about the fate of their children. The UN Secretary-General's report on children and the armed conflict in Syria for the year 2019, which was released in June 2020, stressed that the SDF was the [worst party in the country](#) with respect to recruiting children, and was the third-worst party in the same regard according to the 2022's report which covers the year 2021, after SNA and HTS.

The al-Shabiba al-Thawriya, also known as the 'Joanne Schurchkar', the Women's Protection Units, and the YPG, are among the most prominent SDF units responsible for recruiting children and sending them to training camps and military squads. We have recorded an increase in the rates of child abductions, both male and female, since the beginning of 2020. Many of the child recruits' and conscripts' families have told us that they have searched for their children and asked about them at SDF headquarters without receiving any response. Some of the families were even threatened in case they reveal that their children had been recruited or conscripted.

As of November 25, 2022, SNHR has documented no fewer than 102 girls who have been recruited by and are still active with SDF since the group's foundation.

Hamida Fawzi Mohammad, a girl born in 2006, from Sherkan village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was abducted on Thursday, August 4, 2022, by personnel from the SDF's Joanne Schurchkar group from a cultural center that teaches children 'Kurdish theatre and folk dancing' in al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood, Aleppo city, for the purpose of conscription. She was taken to an SDF recruitment center.



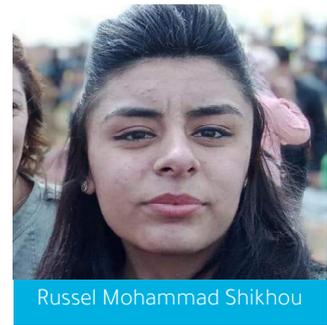
Hamida Fawzi Mohammad

SNHR spoke to Mr. Raji¹⁶, a relative of Hamida's, who told us:

"Hamida used to go with her two sisters to a center that teaches Kurdish language and folk dancing. On Thursday, while she was in a dance rehearsal, she was lured, without the knowledge of her older sister, by a group of women that were [members of] Joanne Schurchkar. When her sister noticed she was missing, she asked about her around the center and they told her that Hamida went home because she had a headache. A while later, the older sister called her mother to check on her sister, and the mother told her that Hamida had not returned. The next day, her mother went to the Joanne Schurchkar and Women's Protection Units center to ask about Hamida and they denied having her. Three days after her disappearance, a group of women from the Women's Protection Units came to Hamida's house and told her family that she is with the Joanne Schurchkar." Mr. Raji added that they have received no new information since then, and Hamida never called her family again.

¹⁶ Via phone on September 26, 2022.

Russel Mohammad Shikhou, a girl born in 2006, from Shadira village, administratively affiliated with Afrin city in northern Aleppo governorate, was abducted on Monday, March 28, 2022 by SDF servicemen in front of Qahrman School in al-Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhood in Aleppo city, for the purpose of conscription. She was taken to an SDF recruitment center in Manbej city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.



Russel Mohammad Shikhou

Bushra Adib Kenjou, a girl born in 2007, from Halnaj village, administratively affiliated with Ein al-Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was abducted on Saturday, September 24, 2022, by the SDF's 'Joanne Schurchkar' at the Kurdish Language Institute in Ein al-Arab city, for the purpose of conscription. She was taken to an SDF recruitment center.



Bushra Adib Kenjou

Khawla Khalil Hamak, a girl from Baghdik village, administratively affiliated with Ein al-Arab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was abducted on Wednesday, June 15, 2022, by the SDF's 'Joanne Schurchkar' from the Baghdik Village School's campus, for the purpose of conscription. She was taken to an SDF recruitment center in Kesra village, northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate.



Khawla Khalil Hamak

Helen Mousa, a 14-year-old girl from Amouda city in the northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, was abducted on May 19, 2022, by SDF personnel while she was returning home from school (Zaki al-Arsouzi Middle School) in al-Qameshli city northeastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, for the purpose of conscription. She was taken to an SDF recruitment center.



Helen Mousa

4- Sexual violence

The SDF have utilized various patterns of sexual violence in their detention centers, at checkpoints, and in the centers and camp they run. The most notable of these are: molestation during inspection or at female recruitment centers, verbal sexual violence, which includes phrases of sexual nature or rape threats, and sexual exploitation of females for various motives such as facilitating relief aid. As of November 25, 2022, we have documented no fewer than 13 incidents of sexual violence at the hands of SDF.

5- Assaults and persecuting women

Many females have been beaten and assaulted during raids and inspections carried out by SDF in their pursuit of fugitives. To that end, SDF personnel have forcibly entered houses with no judicial permit. We have also documented SDF personnel assaulting women for demanding their rights to labor and freedom of expression. Moreover, we've documented discriminatory treatment of Arab women on the basis of ethnicity, manifested in various forms, including denial of job opportunities, discharge from work, and restriction on their freedom of travel. Many female activists have also been threatened over voicing their opinion. The fact that the judicial system in the SDF-controlled territories is independent from the executive-military authority has negative implications on the rights of women in particular.

Fatima Hasan al-Iliwi, a 45-year-old internally displaced woman from Tadmur city, suburbs of Homs governorate, who lives in the Ya'rub IDP Camp to the northwest of Raqqqa city, was assaulted on Friday, June 17, 2022, by SDF personnel who beat her when she tried to stop them from entering the tent in which she lives with her daughters. She suffered moderate bruises as a result of the assault.

On November 27-29, 2021, a number of families of the children who were recruited or conscripted by the SDF held anti-SDF protests in Amouda and al-Qameshli cities in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, calling for their children to be returned from recruitment center. SNHR recorded threats by SDF personnel against the women taking part in the protests as part of their efforts to end the demonstrations. We have released [a detailed report](#) child recruitment.

SNHR spoke with Ms. Jacquelin Eisou¹⁷, from Amouda city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, who co-organized the protests in Amouda city calling for the return of child recruits. She told us: **“Even though our protest was planned to be a peaceful and short one, the ‘Joanne Schurchkar’ personnel attacked the protest. Not only that, they followed me to my house and vandalized it, and threatened that I would be held accountable if the protests continued. Many of the women who took part in the protests faced such threats. After all, threatening women is easy, with no one to hold them accountable.”**

D. HTS (a formation composed of Fateh al-Sham Front, formerly al-Nusra, and a number of armed opposition factions)

1- Extrajudicial killing

HTS's indiscriminate shelling, which involved the use of both shells and missiles, on the territories controlled by other parties, as well as the group's indiscriminate shooting at residential buildings in the course of clashes with armed opposition factions and its members' raids on houses and camps have all resulted in the killing of 85 females, divided between 79 adult females and six female children, between January 2012, when al-Nusra Front (the former name of HTS) was founded, and November 25, 2022.

¹⁷ Via phone on December 23, 2021.

On Wednesday, November 12, 2022, Fatima Mahmoud al-Abd, a woman from Rasm al-Abd village in eastern Idlib governorate, was [killed](#), while members of her family were wounded, in artillery shelling by HTS forces, who fired multiple shells at the villages of Burj Abdallo and Qerzaihel located to the southeast of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The shelling formed part of the group's attempts to storm the village in support of Ferqat al-Hamza and Sultan Suleiman Shah, two SNA factions, during infighting between them and the al-Failaq al-Thaileth, another SNA faction.

Fatima Abdul Rahman al-Ismail al-Hmeid, a 28-year-old woman from Sfuhun village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, lived in the Sfuhun IDP Camp which is part of the Atma IDP Camps group near Atma village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. She was shot in the head on Thursday, February 10, 2022, by HTS personnel near a checkpoint between Deir Ballout area, administratively affiliated with Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and the Atma area. The area serves as a dividing line between the HTS's territories and the SNA's territories. Fatima was shot while she was moving fuel between the two areas. She died on February 27, 2022, of her wounds.

The killing fueled protests against HTS in the two camps of Um al-Shuhada and Sfuhun which are part of the Atma camps group. Following the protests, HTS arrested and beat 22 civilians, including a media activist, in tandem with unleashing heavy gunfire in the camp. The civilians were released a few hours later. The next day, more anti-HTS protests were held, in which two civilians were arrested by HTS personnel as part of their effort to end the protests.



Picture from the protests in Atma village, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate on February 11, 2022 following the shooting of a woman by an HTS member on February 10



Picture of civilians attacking an HTS checkpoint near Atma village following the shooting of a woman by an HTS member on February 10, 2022



Fatima Abdul Rahman al-Hamid after she was shot in the head by HTS personnel

2- Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

Females have not been spared from the detention/abduction operations carried out by the [HTS](#) during the group's attacks on other parties' territories. In fact, the group routinely targets females on a sectarian basis, as well as using females as hostages in the course of prisoner exchange deals with the Syrian regime. In other cases, female detainees have been released in exchange for large sums of money. The group also detained females from ISIS fighters' families, and targeted female activists working with humanitarian organizations or in the media in areas under its control. Female activists in HTS-controlled areas have faced accusations of treason which were seemingly a way of imposing pressure on them to end their activities or agree to operate within the regulations and restrictions imposed by the HTS. Moreover, HTS has pursued and persecuted women who took part in anti-HTS demonstrations or voiced criticism of the group. We have also documented cases of HTS targeting women merely for being related to fighters from the armed opposition, SDF, or ISIS.

According to SNHR's database, no fewer than 48 of the females, divided between 44 adult females and four female children, who were arrested by HTS are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared in HTS detention centers.

HTS has no detention centers designated specifically for females. However, female detainees are placed in special cells/rooms designated for females at its detention centers or in centers or houses run by HTS. In the event that a mother is arrested with her children, they are kept together if the children are below 5-7 years of age, with male children of that age or older separated from their mothers and placed in cells with adult male detainees.

HTS uses various methods of torture in its detention centers, which are largely similar to those employed by the Syrian regime. It should also be noted that the torture strategies employed by both parties to extract confessions from detainees have many similarities. These strategies do not distinguish between females and males. Indeed, females held at HTS detention centers struggle with brutal conditions such as a complete lack of ventilation, lighting, and hygiene. They are also subjected to harsh psychological torture involving threats of death and execution, and levelling serious accusations in order to evoke fear and force them to give information about their work. HTS also uses traditional torture methods against female detainees, such as severe beating and deprivation of medical care and food.

On Friday, April 15, 2022, HTS servicemen detained two women, one of whom was pregnant, along with two girls from the same family, from Taqad town in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The females were detained after being subjected to a severe beating at the hands of the HTS servicemen in the area of al-Ghazzawiya crossing near Darat Ezza city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The arrest was made over an accusation that the women and girls had been smuggling cigarettes from SNA-controlled areas to HTS-held areas in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. They were released on Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

3 Assaults and persecution of women

Discrimination is arguably the most notable violation females suffer in areas controlled by HTS. Discriminatory treatment includes restrictions on the freedom of movement, clothing, and work, particularly working with civil society, media, humanitarian relief, and political organizations. All of these factors have led to a sharp drop in women's involvement in the public sphere. Women found themselves forced to move to other areas in search of jobs, especially if they were their families' main provider if their husbands had been killed or disappeared. We have released [a detailed report](#) on HTS's violations against the Syrian people, in which we recorded no fewer than 112 incidents targeting women between the beginning of 2014 and November 25, 2022 over the nature of their work or their opposition to HTS' practices. The report also touches upon HTS's judicial authority and detention centers, shedding light on the dysfunctional aspects of the group's judicial system and how its lack of autonomy leads to the erosion of women's rights.

Maram Mahmoud Khattab, a woman from Saraqeb city in the suburbs of Idlib governorate, currently lives in Binnesh city's southern neighborhood in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. On Thursday, May 19, 2022, an HTS member beat her and dragged her along the ground in front of her house in Binnesh city following an altercation between the woman's children, who suffer from dwarfism, and the children of the HTS member and his wife, with both families living in the same building. The HTS member's children accused Maram's children of beating them and stealing their belongings, and mocked their appearance. Maram was transferred to the al-Shefa Hospital in Idlib city. The woman filed a complaint against the HTS member at Binnesh city police station, which is affiliated with HTS.

Batoul al-Abdo, a media activist and photographer from Kafranbel city in southern Idlib governorate, who works with multiple media outlets, was summoned on December 28, 2021, to the public prosecution office affiliated with the Salvation Government in Idlib city, over organizing and reporting on an event for women held in the center of a camp in the suburbs of Idlib governorate at the end of November 2021, which was part of an event marking the 2021's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as for her criticism of a lecturer at Idlib University, which is affiliated with the Salvation Government, in a comment on social media.

SNHR spoke with activist Batoul al-Abdo¹⁸ who told us:

"I received a message on WhatsApp notifying that I had to visit the public persecutor in Idlib city. I went there the next day with a member of my family. At the office, the prosecutor asked me many questions about my activism and with whom I work, and why I attacked them. He called me an 'online troll' even though I only attacked a lecturer at Idlib University because he expelled an IDP student who could not afford his tuition fees. He then asked me about a normal event that was held for women and why I took pictures even though I did not post anything about the event. They told me that our society is a Muslim one and we should respect that. He warned that they would file a lawsuit against me if I repeated my actions." Batoul said that she stopped covering any events for women because of the trouble she has to endure when taking pictures or reporting on it, whether from HTS or members of the public.

¹⁸ Via phone on February 6, 2022.

Hend al-Ahmad, a woman from Atma town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, is a volunteer teacher at a school in Atma town. On January 6, 2022, she was assaulted and had her bag confiscated by personnel at an HTS checkpoint in Atama town because of a verbal altercation between her husband and the officers at the checkpoint, and because she had books by the interim government in her bag. Hend¹⁹ told us about the incident: **"I was with my husband in our car on our way to al-Dana city. We were stopped by the officers at the checkpoint and they said they will inspect the car, and then our mobile phones and a laptop we had in our car. They treated us very poorly. When they asked for my handbag, my husband told them they had gone too far, and that my handbag did not contain anything. They started screaming and asked my husband to get out of the car and move away from the checkpoint to the other side. Then, one of the officers pushed me and took my purse by force. He found a book by the interim government, and told me they would not return the hand bag. After about 30 minutes of arguing, they took our information and refused to give the handbag back."** Hend added that the officials told her that they would contact her to interrogate her, but they have yet to do so at the time of the interview.

E. All armed opposition factions/SNA

1- Extrajudicial killing

The indiscriminate shelling by armed opposition factions/SNA, involving the use of shells and missiles, against other parties' territories, or as part of the infighting within armed opposition factions, as well as clashes with other parties in populated areas has led to civilian casualties, including females. Overall, 1,323 females, divided between 885 adult females and 438 female children, have been documented as killed at the hands of the armed opposition factions/SNA across Syria since the period when armed opposition factions started to emerge in early-2012 up until November 25, 2022.

[On October 13, 2022](#), mortar shells fired by Ahrar al-Sham (The Levant Freeman) and Ferqat al-Hamza artillery forces, two SNA factions, landed in al-Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the shells landed in front of al-Tarbiya al-Khasa School for Special Needs Children, killing Muna al-Aqil, a woman, who was near her house at the time. In addition, the school building was moderately damaged.

[Ruqayya Hasan al-Hamad](#), a 12-year-old girl with special needs, was killed on June 1, 2022, by shell remnants that hit her family's home in al-Bir IDP Camp following an explosion at a munitions depot at a military camp run by Failaq al-Sham (The Levant Squad), an armed opposition faction affiliated with al-Jabha al-Wataniyya Le al-Tahrir (National Liberation Front). The munitions depot is located in a hilly area to the north of Babsaqqa in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, adjacent to the Syrian-Turkish borders. The original explosion triggered a series of other, massive explosions that shook the area, with missiles and shells flying in all directions over a wide area. One of the soldiers at the camp was also killed by the blast, while the explosions and the flying shells and shrapnel caused damage to dozens of IDP camps in the area.



Exclusive photo for SNHR showing the damage caused to IDP camps in the Salah al-Din Camp group located near the camp by shell remnants landing there. By: Mohannad Mohammad

2- Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

In the course of attacks carried out by the armed opposition factions/SNA on other parties' territories, females have been detained/abducted. Females have also been subjected to detention/abduction on the basis of ethnicity and sect. In such incidents, armed opposition factions have used females as part of prisoner exchange deals, mainly with Syrian regime forces. Females have also been detained/abducted over their activism or voicing their opposition to the practices of armed opposition factions in their areas. We have also documented many incidents in which women have been targeted on the basis of their ethnicity, particularly in Afrin city and the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, or under the pretext of working, currently or in the past, with the SDF or its affiliated institutions. Another motive for such practices is extortion, with females being abducted to compel their families to give up or leave their properties, with these practices mainly targeting females of Kurdish ethnicity. Moreover, armed opposition factions have carried out mass arrests of females and their children while they are travelling or passing through areas under these factions' control under the pretext of checking their security records, while detaining them under harsh conditions. Most of these incidents took place with no judicial warrant and without the involvement of any police apparatus, namely the administrative apparatus authorized to make arrests on judicial grounds, and without any clear charges being presented.

As of November 25, 2022, SNHR has documented that no fewer than 961 of the females, divided between 869 adult females and 92 female children, detained by the armed opposition factions/SNA are still under arrest and/or forcibly disappeared in their detention centers.

In detention, women are subjected to various methods of torture at the hands of members of the armed opposition/SNA. These include severe beating, electroshocking, death threats, and solitary confinements, as well as deprivation of medical care, foods, and other needs. In addition, women and their children are separated in the event they were detained together. In all, torture and medical negligence have resulted in the death of two women at the detention centers of the armed opposition.

On Wednesday, October 27, 2022, a group of SNA servicemen arrested three civilians from the same family, including two women, in Ghazawiya village, administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, over charges of working with the SDF. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, SNA forces carried out a raid and arrest/detention campaign in Qadda village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. SNHR documented the detention of five civilians, including one woman. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Wednesday, July 6, 2022, SNA forces carried out a raid and arrest/detention campaign in Mesh Ashoura village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. SNHR documented the detention of three women over charges of working with SDF. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Rouhat Nouri Ebou, a 22-year-old woman from Qerzaihel village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested on Thursday, December 2, 2021, by SNA forces at a checkpoint in Afrin city. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

Asia Ahmad Haydar, a woman from Hayatiya, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, by SNA forces in a raid on her house in the village. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

Hefen Tari, a 47-year-old woman from Jaqla village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was detained on Tuesday, March 1, 2022, from her place of residence in Afrin city. On March 7, 2022, SNA military police arrested her 19-year-old son, Mohammad Nathmi Na'san, and took him to an undisclosed location. Hefen was released on April 7, 2022.



Arin Fakhri Muslim, a 35-year-old woman from Shetka, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested on Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at a checkpoint at the entrance to Afrin city. She was taken to an undisclosed location.



Halima Jolo, a 55-year-old woman from Kawndah village, which is administratively affiliated with Afrin city, in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was detained on Tuesday, May 24, 2022, by SNA forces in a raid on her house in the village. She was taken to an undisclosed location.



3 Assaults and persecuting women

Women have suffered various forms of persecution at the hands of armed opposition factions/SNA. Working woman and female media activists have been summoned to the various factions' security centers over voicing criticism of the practices of the SNA servicemen in territories under its control. During these interviews, women were interrogated and forced to stop their activities under the threat of arrest. We have also noticed discriminatory practices on the basis of ethnicity, such as restrictions on freedom of travel, on practicing traditional customs, and on celebrating national holidays.

Hadiya al-Abdullah, an internally displaced woman from Homs city who lives in Souran city, northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, is a media activist and cartoonist. On November 28, 2021, she was summoned by SNA forces for interrogation over a satirical caricature she had drawn showing a political figure in the political opposition and a military figure in the SNA. She was forced to sign a pledge not to publish or share any artworks depicting any figure. She told us²⁰: **"Usually, I comment on whatever people are talking about on social media through a caricature that captures the moment. We all know how disgruntled people are with the opposition politicians or some military commanders. I drew two artworks and sent them to a Telegram news group. I simply thought I was just expressing an opinion. However, I was surprised the next day by policemen asking me to go to the police station within 24 hours. When I went there, I was shocked by the charges that I was paid by someone and I was agitating for instability, all while calling me stupid and superficial, and those criticisms are beyond my understandings. After the interrogation, the interrogator told me they will keep my file and surveil my work, and in case I touch upon any figure from their areas, they will file a lawsuit, try me, and imprison me."** Hadiya added that since then, she has largely given up involvement in activism, and limited her work to general issues unlikely to evoke any reactions, such as bombings or the detainees issue.

Ruhsin Mustafa, a female Kurdish language teacher from Jandaris village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was summoned twice in December 2021 over her work under the pretext that she was working at a school affiliated with the SDF while they were in control of the Afrin area. She was also threatened and assaulted under the pretext that she is propagating secularist ideals in her work. She told us²¹: **"When they summoned me from my work for interrogation, they asked for detailed information about my work at the school from when the village was under the control of the SDF and my ties to them. Even though I asserted that I am a teacher, and my job has nothing to do with whichever party is in control, I faced accusations and they were not convinced. They told me they would summon me repeatedly until they can verify my views. It was not just me being summoned; armed men once entered the school and threatened me and my colleagues that they would kill us if we spread ideas of atheism and secularism."** Rushin asserted that armed opposition fighters lack discipline, adding that they do whatever they see fit, especially to Kurdish teachers, since they have prepared accusations.

²⁰ Via phone on January 30, 2022.

²¹ In person on February 2, 2022.

F. Other parties

At SNHR, we document human rights violations that were perpetrated in relation to incidents for which we have not been able to identify the party responsible. Those include bombings, landmines, gunshots of unknown sources, killings by unknown parties, abductions and enforced disappearance by unknown parties or by gangs that work solely for their own interests, drowning immigrants, victims dying in fires, and victims killed in indiscriminate shelling by Turkish forces, pro-Turkish forces, and victims killed by Turkish, or Lebanese forces.

1- Extrajudicial killing

In this category, SNHR has documented the death of 1,532 females, divided between 976 adult females and 556 female children, at the hands of other parties between March 2011 and November 25, 2022.

[On September 23, 2022](#), a landmine whose source we have been unable to determine exploded near seven civilians who entered a minefield in the Fekhat Hamdan village near Bza'a city in eastern Aleppo governorate, while they were leaving Syrian regime-controlled territories to travel to SNA-controlled territories. The area where the explosion occurred is a dividing line between the two forces. One woman, Ayyoush al-Taha, was killed in the explosion, while two other civilians were critically wounded.

[Aliya Ali Hamid](#), a woman from Jdaidat Kahit in eastern Raqqqa governorate, was shot dead on August 24, 2022, by unidentified gunmen in the village, which is under the control of the SDF.

[Nebal Abdul Majid al-Bqeirat](#), a 35-year-old woman from Tal Shehab town in western Daraa governorate, was killed on July 17, 2022, while four of her children and two of her husband's sisters were wounded, in an IED explosion whose source we could not determine in her home in Tafas city, western suburbs of Daraa governorate.

2- Abduction and enforced disappearance

SNHR has documented that no fewer than 3,091 females abducted and/or forcibly disappeared at the hands of other parties between March 2011 and November 25, 2022 are still detained or forcibly disappeared.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

The parties to the conflict in Syria have failed to show the proper treatment of women, as defined by Rule 134²² of the customary international humanitarian law: “The specific protection, health and assistance needs of women affected by armed conflict must be respected.”

The parties to the conflict in Syria, particularly the Syrian regime which is responsible for the majority of violations in the conflict, have violated many legal articles regarding women, as included in Protocol II additional to the Geneva Convention, adopted in 1977. These violations include:

“Violence to the life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder as well as cruel treatment such as torture, mutilation,²³ as well as “outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault.²⁴”

Moreover, this report shows that patterns of discrimination against women have been exhibited in a range of practices, which constitute violations of the CEDAW treaty,²⁵ which established all the articles states must implement to protect women from the negative effects resultant from discrimination. In addition, such practices constitute a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325²⁶.

Among the violations included in this report that have been perpetrated by the Syrian regime in the form of widespread and systematic attacks in a way that qualifies them as crimes against humanity are: murder, torture, rape, and enforced displacement.

Among the violations included in this report that have been perpetrated by the Syrian regime, as well as the other parties to the conflict, in a way that qualifies them as war crimes are: sexual violence, violence to life, particularly murder in its different forms, mutilation, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity.

According to international humanitarian law, rape, enforced prostitution, and any form of sexual violence are prohibited. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) cites those practices as part of the definition of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

International humanitarian law establishes that women should be properly respected, that women should be detained or arrested in places separate from men, that women shall not be inspected except by another woman, and that pregnant women and mothers of young children shall receive additional nutritional care that meets their physiological needs. All of the parties to the conflict have failed to meet these requirements.

All of the parties to the conflict, particularly the SDF, have violated the rights of girls through conscriptions. The prohibition on recruiting children was introduced as a customary law in accordance with Rule 136 of the International Committee of the Red Cross's study of customary international humanitarian law, which states that “children must not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups”

²² International Committee of the Red Cross, customary international humanitarian law, [Rule 134](#)

²³ International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva Convention I, [Article 3\(1\)](#)

²⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross, Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), [Article 4 \(2-h\)](#)

²⁵ United Nations, [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979](#)

²⁶ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325 (October 31, 2000)

in both international and non-international armed conflicts. Furthermore, Rule 137 states, "Children must not be allowed to take part in hostilities." Meanwhile, Article 4-1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict states, "Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years." The Rome Statute of the ICC establishes in the case of international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts that "Conscripting or enlisting children under the age of fifteen years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities" are classified as war crimes.

Recommendations

All parties to the conflict

- The Syrian regime must uphold its pledges entailed in its ratification of the CEDAW treaty, implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including General Recommendation No. 30,²⁷ respect both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Geneva Conventions, and accordingly put an end to its crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- All parties to the conflict should immediately release all arbitrarily detained women, and adhere to the international laws on detaining girls, which includes separating them from men, having them inspected and guarded by women, and implement protocols when entering detention to internally report cases of sexual violence.
- Implement the UN Security Council's Resolutions on the Syrian conflict and on the role of the parties to the conflict in protecting women from sexual violence, particularly Resolutions 1325 & 2122²⁸.
- Completely cease the recruitment of children, including female children, and discharge all children below 18 years of age from all military formations and missions.
- Conduct investigations to identify the perpetrators of violations, hold them accountable, and start compensating the victims and providing reparations and damages.
- Provide protection and security for women's work and movements, provide support for women, and end all forms of restrictions and repression of freedoms.
- Support the efforts made by women towards combating violence against women, and work on alleviating the economic and social ramifications of the conflict on women.
- Broaden the active involvement of women in all political and media formations, as well as in civil society and humanitarian relief groups.

International community and UN Security Council

- Put pressure on all parties to the conflict and controlling forces to release all arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared females.
- Provide protection and assistance for forcibly displaced females, both IDPs and refugees, particularly girls, and respect their specific needs, most importantly protection.

²⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, [General recommendation No. 30](#)

²⁸ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325 (November 18, 2013).

- All the world's states must ratify the CEDAW treaty and uphold its commitments in order to hold the Syrian regime accountable and expose its criminal practices against women in Syria, and should spare no effort to ease and put an end to them.
- Expose the states supporting the Syrian regime which are effectively trying to normalize and sponsor perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes against the women of Syria.
- Meet the financial pledges made to:
 - Help neighboring countries and provide every possible bit of support to improve the level of education and healthcare in those countries that are housing the largest portion of female refugees.
- At the very minimum, put pressure on the Syrian regime in order to compel it to allow for international observers, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Col), to visit women's detention centers with no prior conditions or restrictions.
- Refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, or swiftly establish a special court whose purpose is to handle crimes against humanity and war crimes, in order to put an end to the impunity that has been going on for nearly a decade in Syria.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

- In light of the magnitude of widespread violations against women by the Syrian regime, some of which qualify as crimes against humanity, the Committee needs to highlight its efforts in Syria, which seems almost invisible to us. The Committee also needs to redouble its efforts to address the individual and collective cases in Syria. We also recommend that female survivors should individually contact the Committee and submit complaints, while the Committee must take steps to expand the scope of its work.

Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences should redouble their efforts in Syria, considering the severity of the violence suffered by Syrian women, particularly at the hands of the Syrian government itself, compared to women of other countries. Special attention must be paid to women in the detention centers of the Syrian regime and its security arms.

European States and the European Union

- Raise the pace of economic sanctions on individuals and companies supporting the Syrian regime, Iran, and Russia.
- Provide every possible bit of support for the active civil society organizations in Syria working to rehabilitate and reintegrate female victims into society.
- Support the efforts aimed at providing psychological support and reintegration for female survivors in areas of displacement and countries of refuge.
- Continue to support the relief groups helping the IDPs and refrain from reducing the level of support for Syria under the pretext of supporting other countries in conflict.
- Support the path of judicial accountability, and the path of prosecution under the universal jurisdiction principle.

UN Human Rights

- Issue a special report on the violations experienced by Syria's women in particular

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (Col)

- Launch an investigation into the incidents included in this report. We are fully prepared to coordinate and collaborate on such matters.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

- Coordinate humanitarian relief operations by focusing on the worst affected areas, and avoid the pressure and exploitation by the Syrian regime that attempts to solicit aid in its own favor.
- Expand the services aimed at female victims of violence, particularly victims of sexual violence. This includes services such as shelter, treatment, rehabilitation, consultation, and ensuring the provision of women's and girls' special needs, with priority given to pregnant women, new mothers, and breastfeeding women.
- Establish institutions to protect and care for female victims who have suffered exclusion from their families and communities.

Feminist groups around the world

- Provide more support and advocacy for the causes of Syria's women who called for freedom and a transition to democracy, highlight the horrible violations Syrian women have suffered, and shed more light on the suffering of Syria's women in IDP camps, refugee countries, and detention centers.

Neighboring countries

- Ensure Syrian refugees', particularly female refugees', ability to seek asylum, respect their rights, including non-refoulement, and accelerate the family reunion process. EU countries and other states should try and ease the burden of Syria's neighboring countries by taking in more Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, donor states should increase their support for the UNHCR and local community organizations in asylum countries.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- Create a stable and safe environment for Syrian women refugees and put more effort into reintegrating them into their communities through long-term psychological support.
- Support investment in education and healthcare.

Acknowledgment

The Syrian Network for Human Rights would like to express our most heartfelt gratitude to anyone who shared any news or information with us, particularly survivors, eyewitnesses, and local activists, all of whom contributed significantly to this report.



www.snhr.org - info@snhr.org