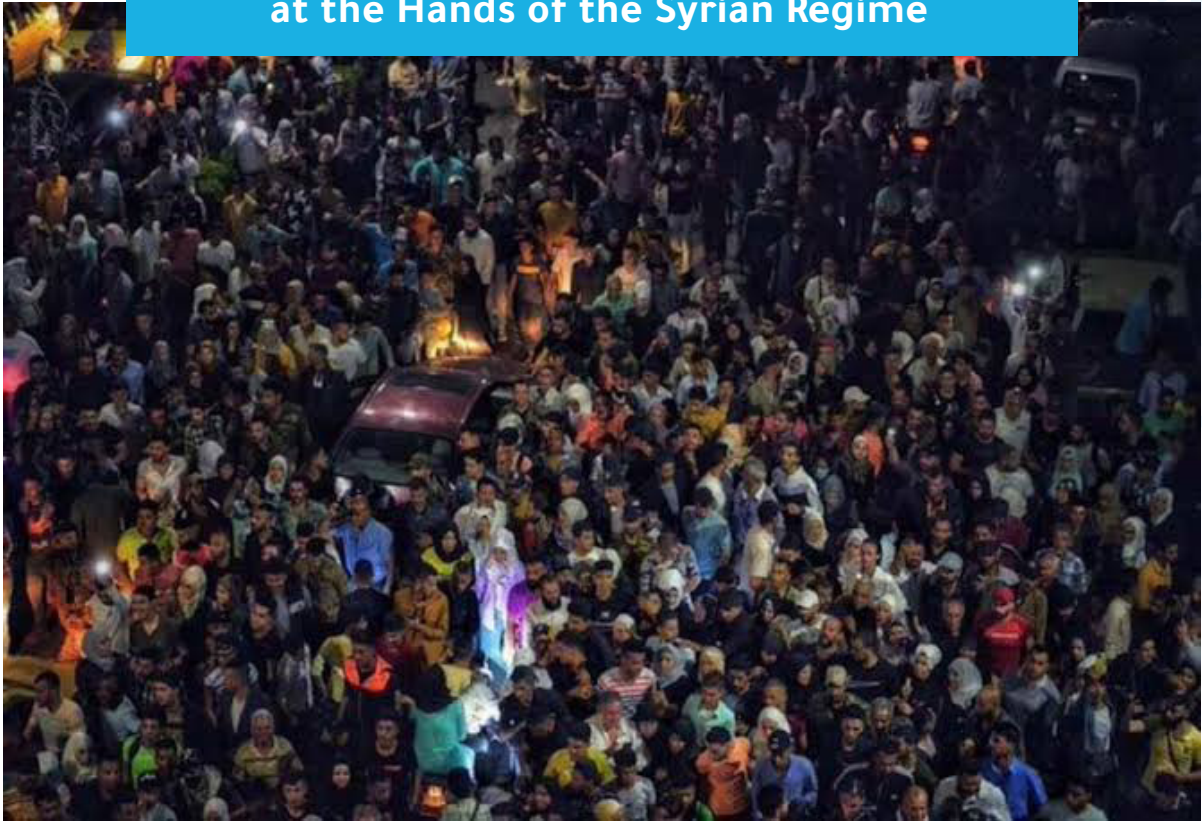


Statement

SNHR Welcomes the UNGA Decision to Establish the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria

Roughly 122,000 Persons Have Been Forcibly Disappeared Since March 2011, Including 96,000 at the Hands of the Syrian Regime



Friday 30 June 2023

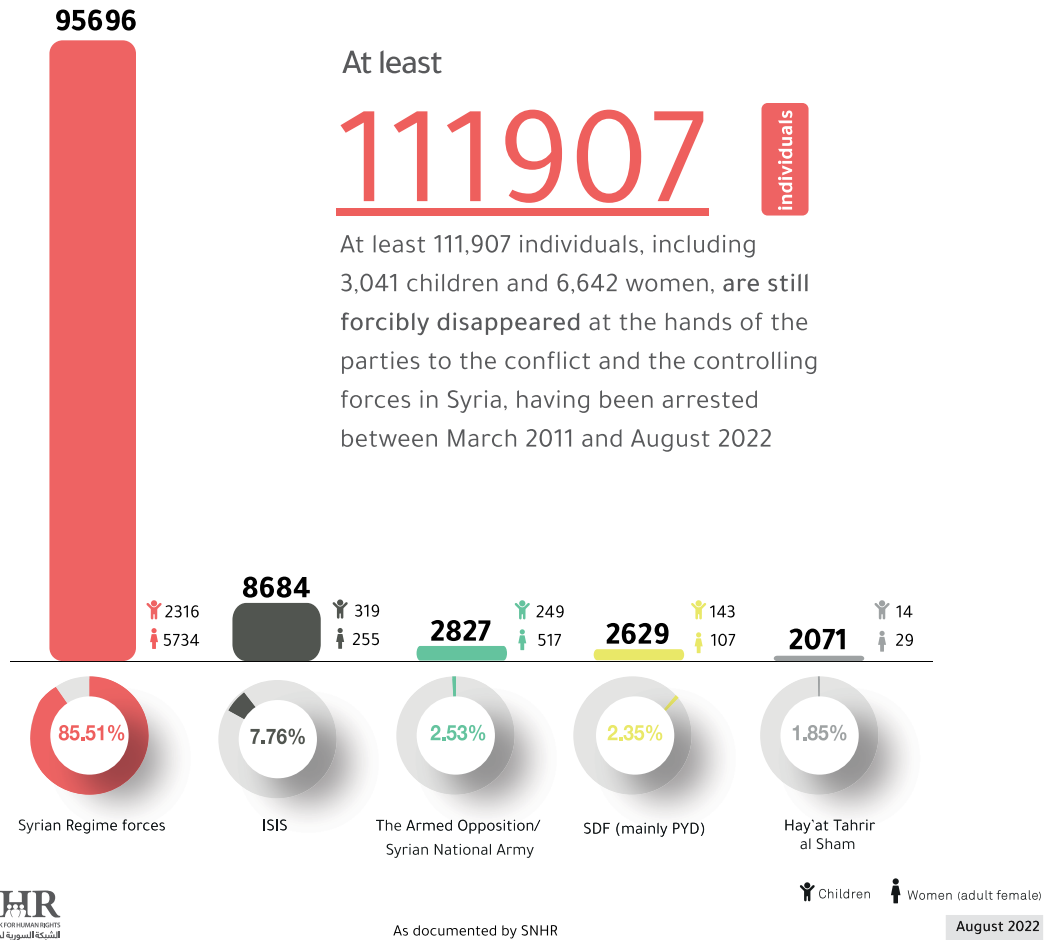
The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyzes in Syria.

On Thursday, June 29, 2023, Member States of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) voted on [draft resolution A/77/L.79](#) providing for the establishment of a UN body with the aim of working on the missing persons issue in Syria. The resolution was approved with 83 states voting in favor, 11 voting against, and 62 states abstaining. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) welcomes the outcome of this resolution, and, as with all previous UN mechanisms, will surely work with the newly formed UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria.

SNHR has supported all the demands of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) since its very first report in November 2011 with regard to establishing a UN mechanism with the sole focus of the missing persons issue, including forcibly disappeared persons. In fact, SNHR has worked closely with the COI since the beginning of its mandate. We have worked on a daily basis to document cases of arbitrary arrest for over 12 years, as the majority of which cases have been subsequently categorized as enforced disappearances. We have built a massive database containing roughly the names of **112,000** forcibly disappeared persons, with the Syrian regime being responsible for roughly **86** percent of all enforced disappearance cases. We also have a second database containing victims who have died due to torture, numbered at roughly **16,000** Syrian citizens, in addition to approximately **2,100** death statements issued by the Syrian regime's civil registry offices. Those statements are for forcibly disappeared persons who died under torture, but the majority of their families have not been informed of their death.

Besides dozens of reports, we have already made this data, which hugely underscore the need for such a UN mechanism, available to the UN. Further, we have submitted a report to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) detailing our vision for this mechanism, in which we also reiterated our willingness to collaborate with a potential UN mechanism should it come to be, which includes supplying it with the information and data we have documented on our databases for the past 12 years.

According to SNHR's database, no fewer than **111,907** persons, including **3,041** children and **6,642** women, have been forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 up until August 2022, with the Syrian regime responsible for roughly 86 percent of all enforced disappearance cases.



SNHR believes in the vital, fundamental importance and role of the newly formed body, and that it has much to work on in order to support and advocate for the missing persons in Syria. The Independent Institution on the Missing Persons in Syria must work to make this issue a principle one on the agendas of all states, considering it is a central file that affects the lives of millions of Syrian people. However, we feel we should warn of raising the ceiling of expectations for this institution for the potential effects this may bear on the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared persons. One needs to remember what it cannot do, as much as what it can do, instead of just focusing on the latter.

The newly formed institution will undoubtedly galvanize efforts on the Syrian and international level in support for the missing persons issue, and perhaps build a central database with a platform that enable tens of thousands of families to contact it. However, its role will not be to release those who have been arbitrarily arrested. We are certain that the Syrian regime and the other parties to the conflict will not collaborate, which will complicate its mandate in revealing the fate of the missing persons. Moreover, such a body will not have the jurisdiction to hold those responsible for violations accountable.

Arbitrary arrest in Syria is still taking place as part of a central policy for the Syrian regime, which forcibly disappears the overwhelming majority of detainees in a systematic and calculated manner. The enforced disappearance practices of the Syrian regime constitute a crime against humanity that is still being perpetrated to this very moment. The states who have restored relations with the Syrian regime, which is responsible for forcibly disappearing 96,000 Syrian citizens, may have to reconsider and distance themselves from the regime as fast as possible, since it is a decaying regime with no chance for redemption or reform.

Lastly, the states that voted against the resolution draft, and against the Syrian people are:

Belarus, Bolivia, China, Cuba, North Korea, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, and Zimbabwe

On June 8, 2023, we released [a report exposing the states that have voted in support of the Syrian regime and against the rights of the Syrian people in the UNGA](#), which are no more than 9-17 states in contrast to the rest of the world states which, voted in support of the rights of the Syrian people. We would like to again express our gratitude for the 83 states that voted with us against the Syrian regime and its allies.



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