

**Statement**

**SNHR Participates in the Event,**

**'Pathways to Safe Return: Addressing Challenges for Syrian Refugees in the Wake of Regime Normalization'**



**Saturday 08 July 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.

Thursday, July 6, 2023 - The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) participated in a virtual panel discussion entitled, 'Pathways to Safe Return: Addressing Challenges for Syrian Refugees in the Wake of Regime Normalization', which was organized by Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, and co-hosted by the Immigration Policy Lab at Stanford University and ETH Zurich, European Institute of Peace (EIP), and SNHR.

The panel discussed the pressing issues that need to be addressed for the millions of Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries—mainly Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan—to safely return home, as well as what role can the Arab League countries and the international community play to enable or facilitate a safe return for Syrian refugees.

The panel featured Ala' Alrababa'h, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Public Policy Group and Immigration Policy Lab at ETH Zurich, Marie Forstier, Senior Advisor at the EIP, and Fadel Abdul Ghany, SNHR Executive Director, with Maha Yahya, Director of the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, acting as a moderator.

In his speech, Mr. Abdul Ghany underlined that the violations by the Syrian regime, first and foremost, as well as the other parties to the conflict is the reason that drove millions of Syrians to displace, and remains the issue generating more and more refugees. He also stressed that returning refugees, whether forcibly or voluntarily, are suffering the same violations suffered by the residents of Syria.

Furthermore, he shed light on the regime practices of seizing dissidents' properties and lands as a form of collective punishment. Those practices, he pointed out, targeted three main groups - forcibly displaced persons first and foremost, estimated today at 12.3 million Syrian citizens according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as well as forcibly disappeared persons and civilian and military victims, estimated at half a million Syrian citizens. On May 25, 2023, SNHR released [an extensive report](#) on the real estate issue, and how the Syrian regime targeted the forcibly displaced through promulgating "law" legitimizing seizures and expropriations of properties, in order to eradicate any possibility for them to return to their homes.

Mr. Abdul Ghany also reiterated that the Syrian regime being readmitted into the Arab League does not mean that Syria is now a safe country for the return of refugees, because the regime is still committing crimes against humanity. In this context, SNHR is seriously concerned that the process of restoring relations with the regime may lead to forcing Syrian refugees to return to Syria. In fact, SNHR has recorded the refoulement of no fewer than 874 Syrian refugees from Lebanon since April 2023, including 86 women and 104 children. Of these, we recorded the arrest of 87 individuals; including two children, five women, and two individuals from the same family; with most being arrested by the Syrian regime's infamous Military Intelligence Directorate in the al-Masna border area.

Moreover, Mr. Abdul Ghany referenced the [situation report recently released by Germany's Federal Foreign Office \(AA\)](#), which further confirmed that Syria is still wholly unsafe and that the safe return to any area in Syria for any group of people cannot be ensured or verified.

Mr. Abdul Ghany concluded his input by reiterating that the violations by the Syrian regime, first and foremost, and the other parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria has displaced half the Syrian people, either as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, with tens of thousands of Syrians still waiting for any change to flee the country in light of the ongoing violations. To make matters worse, diplomatic relations are being restored with the perpetrators of said violations, which has ended any hope for a return to Syria in the near future.

To watch the panel discussion in full, please click this [link](#).



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