

## Twelve Years of Suffering: Examining Human Rights Abuses and Opportunities for Accountability in Syria

**Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 1:00-2:30 PM, EST**

(8:00-9:30 PM, Syria's time/7:00-8:30 PM, CET). at the New York Hilton Midtown and streamed online.

**This event is co-hosted with the United States and co-sponsored by Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Qatar**

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) cordially invites you to attend in-person or virtually the hybrid event, "Twelve Years of Suffering: Examining Human Rights Abuses and Opportunities for Accountability in Syria".

March 2023 marked 12 years since Syrians courageously and peacefully took to the streets to demand freedom, political reform, and a human rights-respecting government. Instead, the Assad regime responded to those demands with extreme violent repression, relentlessly continuing to this day. The regime's human rights violations and abuses and blocking of humanitarian aid have contributed to the forced displacement of nearly half of Syria's pre-war population - with 6.9 million internally displaced and 6.8 million refugees - according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Women and children comprise more than two-thirds of those displaced. This issue was further compounded by the February 2023 earthquakes, which did not stop the Assad regime and Russia from bombarding camps for displaced persons and causing casualties. Conditions do not exist for refugees' safe, voluntary, informed, and dignified return to Syria.

**For more than 12 years, the Syrian conflict has caused massive suffering for the Syrian people.** Numerous reports by human rights groups, UN entities, and eyewitnesses describe how the regime continues to arbitrarily detain, torture, and kill political opponents, activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and medical professionals. The evidence collected and preserved by Syrian civil society continues to mount that the regime is responsible for innumerable atrocities, some of which rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented that at least 155,000 Syrians remain unjustly detained or missing, with the regime responsible for the vast majority. The UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) reported in June that the regime engaged in continuing widespread and systematic patterns of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including acts involving enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, in detention facilities in Syria through 2023. The COI also reported that returning Syrians faced torture, including to extract confessions, after being arbitrarily detained upon return, even in cases where reconciliation agreements were in place.

It is clear that 12 years into the conflict, Syrians continue to face horrific human rights abuses at the hands of the Assad regime and other parties, and the regime's allies continue to shield it from facing full accountability. Impunity for the Assad regime's atrocities is unacceptable. Pursuing the political process as called for in UNSCR 2254 can help secure the stable, just, and enduring peace that Syrians need and deserve.

**This event will address the ongoing human rights violations and abuses faced by Syrians and explore how the international community can advance justice and accountability efforts for perpetrators.**

The following themes and questions will guide the event:

- **Documentation:** What are the most concerning trends of human rights violations or abuses that Syrians are facing in the second decade of the conflict? How can the international community better support documentation efforts of Syrian civil society and others?
- **Gendered Impact:** What are the unique challenges and abuses that women and girls face in Syria? What role does civil society play in addressing the needs of women and girls?
- **Missing Persons:** In light of the establishment of the new UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria (IIMP), how can progress be made for the 155,000 missing and unjustly detained persons in Syria?
- **Displaced Persons:** What types of abuses do refugees risk facing upon return to Syria, and how do regime legislation and practices by armed opposition groups impact housing, land, and property rights for displaced persons?
- **Accountability:** What tools are available to hold the Syrian regime and its allies, Russia and Iran, and other perpetrators accountable for their human rights violations and abuses? Where are justice and accountability efforts for Syria heading? How has recent engagement with the regime impacted those efforts?

### Speakers:

#### **Erin Barclay**

Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), USA

#### **Beth Van Schaack**

Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice, USA

#### **Ethan Goldrich**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, USA

#### **Stephen Hickey**

Director of Middle East and North Africa, United Kingdom

#### **Luise Amtsberg**

Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance, Germany

#### **Delphine Borione**

Ambassador at Large for Human Rights, France

#### **H.E. Lolwah Rashid M. R. Al-Khater**

Minister of State for International Cooperation, Qatar

#### **Linnea Arvidsson**

UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI)

#### **Fadel Abdul Ghany**

Head of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)

#### **Dr. Talal Sunbuli**

Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity (SACD)

#### **Ahed Fistouk**

Syrian activist

### Moderator:

#### **Qutaiba Idlbi**

Atlantic Council

### Location:

**New York Hilton Midtown**

This will be a hybrid event, where attendees are welcome to join either in-person or tune in virtually [via ZOOM](#).

If you are planning on attending in-person, please fill the [form below](#).

This event will be conducted in English, with Arabic interpretation available.

**You can also watch the event live on SNHR's social media channels:**



For any question, please do not hesitate to contact Abdullah Bassam at:

[abdullah@snhr.org](mailto:abdullah@snhr.org)