Syrian Citizen Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din and His Sons Anas and Malik Are Forcibly Disappeared

Saturday 9 December 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 analyses in Syria.
The Hague - The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has briefed the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances on the case of the citizen, Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din and his sons Anas Shams al-Din and Malik Shams al-Din, born in 1954, 1980, and 1984 respectively, all from Al-Qsair city in southern rural Homs governorate. Abdul Karim and his son Anas were working as civilian police officers, while Abdul Karim was working as a taxi driver, at the time of their arrest. Anas and Malik were arrested first, in 2012, at a Syrian regime checkpoint in al-Qtaifa town in northern Rural Damascus ‘Rif Dimshaq’ governorate (on the Damascus-Homs international highway) while they were on their way back from the police station in the town of Sa’sa in southern Rural Damascus governorate. The brothers, who were travelling in in a yellow Kia Rio car on their way to al-Qsair city in southern rural Homs governorate, were taken to an undisclosed location, and have been forcibly disappeared ever since, as their fate remains unknown to SNHR as well as their families.

Subsequently, their father, Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din, was arrested in 2014 by Air Force Intelligence Directorate personnel while he was visiting the directorate’s branch in Homs city. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with his fate also remaining unknown to SNHR as well as to his family.

The SNHR has also briefed the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, as well as briefing the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, specifically in regard to the cases of the citizen Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din and his two sons, citizens Anas Shams al-Din & Malik Shams al-Din.

Syrian regime authorities have denied any connection with the enforced disappearance of Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din and his two sons Anas Shams al-Din & Malik Shams al-Din. SNHR has been unable to determine their fate, as have their family members, who fear that they may be arrested and tortured by regime personnel themselves if they continue to ask about their loved ones’ whereabouts and fate, as has happened in numerous other cases.
SNHR has called on the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, as well as on the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, to intervene and to demand that Syrian authorities release Abdul Karim Ismail Shams al-Din and his sons immediately, as well as to secure the release of thousands of other forcibly disappeared citizens whose whereabouts and current conditions must also be revealed.

Although the Syrian government is not a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, it is indisputably a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Enforced disappearance constitutes a violation of both instruments.

SNHR also confirms that there are well-founded fears that many of those forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime since 2011 have been subjected to and have possibly died as a result of torture, with the number of citizens forcibly disappeared by the regime continuing to grow.