

Since the ICJ Order Was Issued Six Months Ago, the Syrian Regime Has Killed No Fewer than 29 Individuals Due to Torture, and Arrested At Least 534 Civilians, Including Eight Children and 21 Women

All ICJ Members Must Cut Any and All Forms of Political, Economic, and Military Ties With the Syrian Regime



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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.

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I. Assessing the Syrian Regime's Commitment to the ICJ Order Regarding the Case Filed by Canada and the Netherlands

On November 16, 2023, the [Hague-based International Court of Justice \(ICJ\) issued an order](#)¹ regarding the provisional measures requested by Canada in the Netherlands on the 'Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', also known as *Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic*. Since then, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has been closely monitoring all violations of international human rights laws taking place in, or related to Syrian regime detention centers, as well as the arrests/detentions made by regime forces, in addition to any relevant articles of legislation promulgated, repealed, or modified by the regime during the period. We have also been monitoring any changes in the regime's security structure, with these being the bodies primarily responsible for committing violations against civilians in Syria. We summarize our findings in a periodic report assessing the Syrian regime's commitment to the ICJ order, while also analyzing and submitting conclusions in case of non-compliance.

Our assessment draws upon the information and data collected and verified by SNHR team from various sources, including eyewitnesses, local activists, victims, and victims' families. This process is carried out in compliance with the criteria and protocols incorporated in [our documentation methodology](#). We ensure that our data is regularly updated whenever new information becomes available and is verified, in order to maintain its accuracy and reliability. We also store and categorize all the information and evidence we have in our archives based on the patterns seen in each violation category.

This is the second in our series of reports on the ICJ order. In [the first report](#), which was released on February 22, 2024, i.e., three months after the ICJ order was issued, we concluded that the Syrian regime had taken no real action to comply with the conditions of the ICJ order. That report further stressed that, as shown by the data recorded, the Syrian regime has continuously breached the UN Convention Against Torture, which was ratified by Syria in 2004.

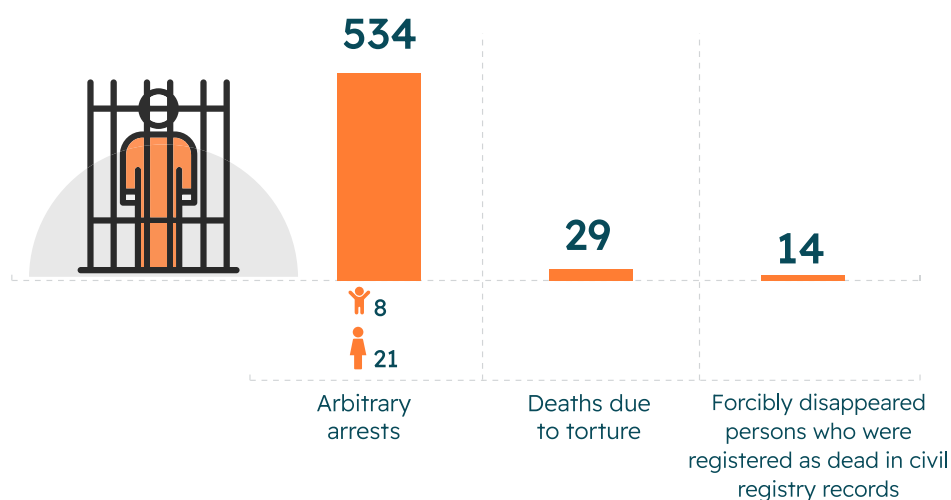
As Fadel Abdulghany, SNHR Executive Director, says:

“One of the main goals of our daily monitoring of the Syrian regime's actual commitment to the ICJ order is to assist the ICJ team in assessing the said commitment before making a conclusive decision, which we hope will come sooner rather than later. Another of our goals is to help build the case against the Syrian regime, which has shown no regard for the ICJ order as evidenced by the dozens of violations we've documented since the order was issued.”

1. The order states that the Syrian Arab Republic, as part of its obligations under the Convention against Torture, is bound to “take all measures within its power to prevent acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and ensure that its officials, as well as any organizations or persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts of torture or other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” In addition, it states, the Syrian Arab Republic “shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of any evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.”

II. Numbers of Violations Related to Regime Detention Centers Between November 16, 2023, and May 16, 2024

During the period specified, we documented serious violations which are being committed in a systematic manner in regime detention centers. These include torture and causing physical and psychological harm to detainees. We have also recorded incidences of enforced disappearance and arbitrary arrest in which those arrested and/or forcibly disappeared have not been tried. Additionally, we've documented that more missing persons have been registered as dead in the civil registry records. Lastly, we observed that individuals implicated in commissioning or perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity have been appointed as heads of regime security agencies, as well as being appointed to other senior positions.



A. Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance

Since the issuance of the ICJ's order on November 16, 2023, up until May 16, 2024, SNHR has documented at least **534 arbitrary arrests**, including of eight children and 21 women. Of these detainees who were arrested and placed in various regime detention centers, 63 were released, while the remaining 471 have been subsequently categorized as forcibly disappeared persons.

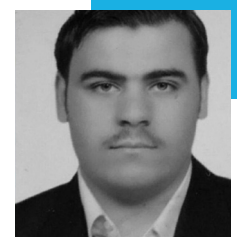
Along with arbitrary arrests come a myriad of other violations – the most notable of which are enforced disappearance, torture of many types, forms, and methods, and exceptional trials which involve summary and secret procedures. Most of those arbitrarily arrested are subsequently categorized as forcibly disappeared persons, which is in and of itself a horrific form of torture. That is not to say that the arbitrarily arrested detainees are not also subjected to other forms of torture; in fact, we [have counted as many as 72 various methods of physical, psychological, and sexual torture](#) that are used in a widespread and deliberate manner against arbitrarily arrested detainees. Even more horrifying is the fact that no detainee is spared this grueling torture, even women, children, elderly people, invalids, and individuals with special needs. These unimaginably inhuman conditions shape every moment of incarceration for numerous detainees who have been imprisoned for many years. Almost every detainee, whether current or former, has been subjected to at least one method of torture during their detention, even if this 'only' lasts for a few hours in some cases.

B. Deaths due to torture

Since the issuance of the ICJ order on November 16, 2023, up until May 16, 2024, SNHR has documented no fewer than **29 deaths due to torture**. We have documented the return of only one victim's body to their family, while all the other victims' bodies have yet to be returned.

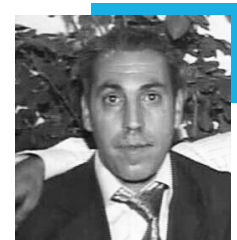
Examples of deaths due to torture recorded

[Mohammad Ziad Dandash](#), born in 1994, worked as a car mechanic in the al-Sena'iya area 'industrial zone' in his home city of Jisr al-Shoghour city in western rural Idlib governorate. He was arrested on Friday, May 11, 2012, by Syrian regime forces following a bombing in the industrial zone. His family was last able to visit him in Sednaya Military Prison in Rural Damascus 'Rif Dimshaq' governorate, in 2014. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his whereabouts and refusing to allow anyone, even a lawyer, to visit him. On Thursday, April 25, 2024, his family learned that he had died in Sednaya Military Prison in 2017. We can confirm he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating a strong probability that he died due to torture and medical negligence in Sednaya Military Prison. SNHR can also confirm that Syrian regime authorities have not returned Mohammad's body to his family.



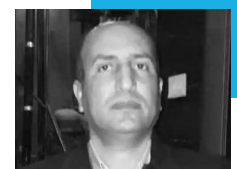
↑ ⓘ Mohammad Ziad Dandash

[Badea Saleh Arafat](#), a man born in 1962 from Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in southern rural Idlib governorate, worked in construction. He was arrested on Friday, August 30, 2013, by Syrian regime forces in Latakia governorate. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his whereabouts and refusing to allow anyone, even a lawyer, to visit him. On Monday, April 29, 2024, his family learned that he had been registered as dead in the civil registry office in Hama city. We can confirm he was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating a strong probability that he died due to torture and medical negligence in a regime detention center. SNHR can also confirm that Syrian regime authorities have not returned Badea's body to his family.



↑ ⓘ Badea Saleh Arafat

[Thamer Habib al-Talla](#), a lawyer from Hasaka city, was arrested by Syrian regime forces in late April 2024, outside the Palace of Justice in the city, where he was working. He was then taken to the local branch of the Syrian regime's Criminal Security branch in the city.



↑ ⓘ Thamer Habib al-Talla

A few days after his arrest, Thamer's family learned that his health had begun to deteriorate in the Criminal Security branch where he was being kept. Although family members urged Criminal Security personnel to transfer him to a hospital in Hasaka city for urgent medical treatment, all of their appeals were turned down. On May 8, 2024, Thamer's family was notified by a Syrian regime official that he had died at the Criminal Security branch in Hasaka city. His body was returned to his family at the city's Shabou Hospital later that day. SNHR can confirm that Thamer was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating a strong probability that he died due to torture and medical negligence in the Criminal Security branch in Hasaka city.

C. Forcibly disappeared persons are still being registered as dead in the civil registry records

With the start of 2024, SNHR was able to obtain death certificates for new enforced disappearance cases that had not been publicly disclosed, leading us to believe that the Syrian regime is sending newly released information about forcibly disappeared persons to the civil registry offices to register their deaths. Since November 16, 2023, up until May 16, 2024, we have documented the registration of the deaths of no fewer than 14 forcibly disappeared persons in the civil registry records. Among these cases were victims from the same families, political activists, and university students. In all the cases, the cause of death was not given, and the Syrian regime has not returned the victims' bodies to their families or notified the families of their loved ones' deaths at the time they took place.

III. Military Figures Implicated in War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Have been Appointed to Senior Leadership Roles in the Regime's Security Apparatus

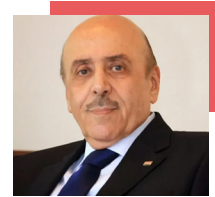
The Syrian regime, as we have observed, has been making numerous changes to its security structure since the beginning of the year. Those changes concern leadership roles at security agencies and alterations to the duties and powers of personnel at some security branches. We believe that all of these actions aim primarily to once again centralize all issues related to the regime's security agencies in the hands of the National Security Bureau, so as to tighten its control over those bodies and regulate their powers as the National Security Bureau, which is directly connected to Bashar Assad, sees fit, especially since Iran and Russia have encroached on the operational management of some security agencies.

While Bashar Assad is [promoting](#) such actions as positive and reform-oriented, we believe any such reform is in name only since these actions are, in reality, affecting no real change in the brutality with which the regime's security agencies treat detainees. That is to say, the Syrian regime is continuing with its customary draconian security policies, with these actions amounting to no more than a reshuffling and recycling of those regime officials implicated in gross violations, appointing or promoting them to different roles rather than holding them accountable. Not only can these appointments and promotions be seen as a reward for those figures' criminal actions, but they also intensify the environment of impunity. Simply put, those figures who have been involved in violations will continue to wield power and influence in their new positions and to be responsible for more and more enforced disappearances and torture.

Most prominent regime military figures implicated in war crimes and crimes against humanity who were appointed to senior positions in 2024:

Ali Mamlouk

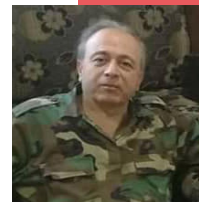
A Major General, born in 1964, from Damascus city, Ali Mamlouk served as the head of the National Security Bureau from 2012, until January 18, 2024, when he was named as a Special Security Advisor to the President of the Syrian Arab Republic.



↑ 👁 Ali Mamlouk

Kefah Melhem

A Major General, Kefah Melhem is from Jneinat Raslan in rural Tartus governorate, was appointed as the head of the Military Security Intelligence Directorate's information department in 2014. In July of the same year, he was promoted to Major General and appointed as the deputy director of the Military Security Intelligence Directorate. In 2019, he was appointed as the head of the Military Security Intelligence Directorate. On January 18, 2024, he succeeded Major General Ali Mamlouk as the head of the National Security Bureau.



↑ 👁 Kefah Melhem

Suhail al-Hassan

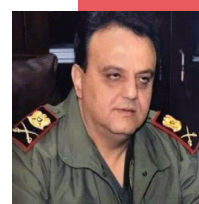
Suhail al-Hassan, a Major General from Beit Ana village in a rural area near Jabla city in Latakia governorate, was the Commander of the regime's Division 25 Special Operations unit, and an intelligence officer with the Air Force Intelligence Directorate in Damascus city. On April 9, 2024, he was appointed as Commander of the Syrian regime's Special Forces unit.



↑ 👁 Suhail al-Hassan

Akram Ali Mohammad

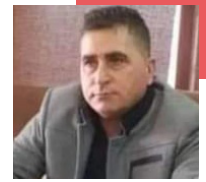
Akram Ali Mohammad, a Major General from Hadida village in rural Homs governorate, headed the regional State Security branch in Aleppo governorate from 2009 to 2012. In 2013, he was appointed to succeed Brigadier General Ghassan Khalil as head of the General Intelligence Directorate's Branch 255, also known as the state security division, in Damascus city. In 2016, he was appointed as head of the State Security branch in Tartus governorate. In 2019, he was promoted from Brigadier General to Major General, as well as being named the First Deputy to the head of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate. On May 12, 2024, he was appointed as the governor of Suwayda governorate, which has been witnessing anti-regime protests since August 2023.



↑ 👁 Akram Ali
Mohammad

Redwan Ali Saqqar

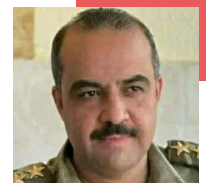
Redwan Ali Saqqar, a Brigadier General, from Juvin village in rural Tartus governorate, was previously the head of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate branch in Hama city. On May 9, 2024, he was appointed as the head of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate branch in Homs city.



↑ 👁 Redwan Ali Saqqar

Duraïd Ismail Awad

Duraïd Ismail Awad, a Colonel, from al-Rbe'a city in rural Hama governorate, was previously the head of the 'al-Ashghal al-Nari' [Gun Manufacturing] Department within the regime's Division 25 Special Operations unit. On May 9, 2024, he was appointed as the head of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate branch in Hama city.



↑ 👁 Duraïd Awad

Rami Munir Ismail

Rami Munir Ismail, a Brigadier General, from Latakia governorate, was appointed as the head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Coastal Region, on May 9, 2024.



↑ 👁 Rami Munir Ismail



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- All the points above and the other data collected by SNHR show that the Syrian regime is still committing acts of torture of every variety, beginning with arbitrary arrest, which is, in and of itself, a form of torture since it is carried out in a manner more akin to an abduction than a legitimate arrest with no judicial warrant being shown. The process of arrest also involves the use of excessive violence and beatings of various types and degrees, which usually begin from the very first moment of the arrest, and continue throughout the detention period, which also includes subjecting detainees to cruel and inhumane detention conditions, as well as [referring them to exceptional security courts](#), where trials are conducted in a way that is closer to an interrogation at a security facility than a legitimate courtroom trial.
- As proven by our database on cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance at the hands of regime forces, no indication can be seen of any willingness by the regime to cease torture, or even to undertake the most minimal and basic of measures mentioned above in response to the ICJ's ruling. Furthermore, at least 136,192 people are still arbitrarily detained and/or forcibly disappeared by the regime, and enduring torture in regime detention centers. Despite being responsible for such unimaginably terrible suffering, the Syrian regime has not launched even one investigation into the disappearance or torture of detainees by its personnel. On the contrary, the regime has enacted 'laws' shielding them from accountability.

Recommendations

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- This case is a genuine test of the credibility and power of the ICJ. As such, the ICJ must take immediate and effective measures to address those violations and ensure the realization of justice and accountability. All possible measure must be taken against the Syrian regime, including the UN Security Council issuing a binding resolution calling for ending systematic torture, all of which constitutes crimes against humanity, and unequivocally condemning the Syrian regime's breach of the ICJ order.
- The ICJ must issue a statement assessing the Syrian regime's commitment to the provisional measures indicated by the Court six months after its most recent order.
- Take more decisive action against the Syrian regime in light of the abundance of evidence of the regime's lack of commitment to the previous provisional measures.

International community

- All ICJ members, namely every state in the world, must cut all and any forms of political and military association with the Syrian regime over its blatant breach of the ICJ order.
- Take additional action against the Syrian regime, and intensify sanctions, in order to ensure compensation for victims and the protection of human rights in Syria.
- More work must be done to ensure the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012; UN Security Council resolution 2043, adopted on April 21, 2012; and UN Security Council resolution 2139, adopted on February 22, 2014, which provides for putting an end to enforced disappearance.
- Take action under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations to rescue detainees from impending death in detention centers, and put an end to the nationwide epidemic of enforced disappearance practices, which threatens the foundations of societal security and stability, put an end to torture and deaths due to torture in regime detention centers, and save the remaining detainees as soon as possible,

Syrian regime

- Comply with the ICJ's order and hand over those accused so they can be fairly tried.
- Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, which are still going on as this report shows, must be immediately halted. The fate of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons must be revealed, and their families must be allowed to visit them immediately, while the bodies of those killed due to torture must be returned to their families.
- Unconditionally release all detainees who have been detained for simply exercising their political and civil rights, and release all women, children, persons with special needs, invalids, and elderly people, as well as ceasing the use of detainees as prisoners of war.
- Stop manipulating the records of forcibly disappeared persons in the civil registry and end the use of state resources in the service of security policies.

Acknowledgment

SNHR would like to sincerely thank all victims, their families, eyewitnesses, and local activists for their invaluable contributions to this report. We stand in solidarity with the victims, detainees, forcibly disappeared persons, and their families.

SNHR

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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