

Statement

SNHR Participates in an Event Entitled, 'Achieving Justice in Syria: Challenges and Opportunities for the New UK Government'



Monday 05 August 2024

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 Tuesday, July 30, 2024, The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) participated in an event held in London, entitled, 'Achieving Justice in Syria: Challenges and Opportunities for the New UK Government', which was jointly organized by the Syrian British Consortium (SBC) and Amnesty International UK. The event panelists discussed the ongoing efforts to achieve justice in Syria, and the SBC's recent report on the crimes committed in Damascus University by the National Union of Syrian Students (NUSS). The panelists also discussed the instrumental role of the international community, including the UK government, in supporting efforts to attain justice in Syria.

The event featured Dr. Yaman Alqadri, a clinical psychologist and survivor of NUSS violations; Dr. Yasmine Nahlawi of the SBC; Mazen Darwish, Director of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM); and Fadel Abdulghany, SNHR Executive Director, with Emma Beals of the Middle East Institute, acting as moderator.

In his address, Mr. Abdulghany shed light on the state of human rights in Syria in 2024, noting that SNHR has continued to document extrajudicial killings of civilians since the start of year, including in July. As of the start of July, 2024, he revealed the group had so far documented the killing of no fewer than **429 civilians**, including 65 children and 38 women, as well as four medical personnel, at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria. In addition, he continued, SNHR had recorded no fewer than **1,236 cases** of arbitrary arrest/detention, with the detainees including 56 children and 30 women, at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in the same period, while at least **53 individuals**, including one child, have died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria.

Mr. Abdulghany also highlighted the Syrian regime's continuing arrests and detentions of refugees forcibly deported from Lebanon, and of internally displaced persons (IDPs) trying to return to their areas of origin in regime-held areas. In that regard, Mr. Abdulghany emphasized that the regime's persistent practices of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture, have repeatedly violated the order issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The SNHR head added that SNHR had recorded at least **57 attacks** on vital civilian facilities at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between the start of 2024 and the beginning of July.

Moreover, Mr. Abdulghany stressed that the regime has also promulgated Act No. 19 of 2024 introducing a new Ministry of Media to further tighten already draconian restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, noting that this latest law is nothing but a new tool to exert even more severe control over the work of journalists and media content.

Mr. Abdulghany also shed light on the regime's strategy to seize properties and lands which is based on an arsenal of quasi-laws that violate human rights. In this context, he referred to [the SNHR report released on July 16, 2024](#), which states that at least **13 mass provisional** seizure orders on transferrable and non-transferrable assets have been issued by the Syrian regime's Ministry of Finance in Rural Damascus governorate between January 2024 and June of the same year.

Another recent issue highlighted by the SNHR head was the elections for the Fourth People's Assembly of Syria which was held on July 15, 2024. Mr. Abdulghany described the elections as void and illegitimate, [as detailed by another recent SNHR report released on July 24, 2024](#), which closely analyzed the outcome of these elections.

“All of these violations and the way they have gone on for years have generated more forcibly displaced persons,” he stressed, adding, **“There are today about 6.5 million IDPs in Syria, with declining levels of humanitarian assistance due to shrinking funds, as many donor states are currently more preoccupied by other conflicts such as the ones in Ukraine and Gaza.”**

Mr. Abdulghany added that university students have suffered numerous violations over the past years since the start of the popular uprising in Syria in March 2011. On this issue, SNHR has documented many types of violations against university students, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, death under torture, and attacks on universities, among others.

In the second part of his address, Mr. Abdulghany underlined the importance of the documentation process, stressing that it must be guided by strict protocols and criteria, through which the complete authenticity and safety of evidence can be ensured, so that this data can be used in issuing worthwhile statements and reports that international organizations, foreign ministries, and courts will take into serious consideration. He further noted that the documentation process is an especially complex and strenuous one, which, if not carried out properly, can harm victims, undermine credibility, and waste evidence.

Mr. Abdulghany concluded his address by providing a number of recommendations to the UN and the UK government, including:

- The UK government and the UN must recognize that the Syrian regime's various security apparatuses which are implicated in crimes against humanity are working as part of one, unified body.
- UN agencies and bodies, and member states, must immediately end all forms of cooperation and engagement with the NUSS, including inviting its members to attend other international conferences, events, or forums, since it is involved in crimes against humanity.
- The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), and the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), must launch special investigations into the role played by the NUSS in the violations committed against university students, in order to release a special report on the subject, and issue clear messages to other UN organs and world states.
- Donor states must make any aid provided to Syrian educational institutions conditional upon these institutions being completely disassociated from the NUSS and human rights violations.
- The EU and other regional bodies must impose sanctions on the NUSS leaderships and members who have been involved in human rights violations.

To watch the event in full, please visit this [link](#).



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