



## Invitation

# Syria's Dark Reality: Examining Systemic Torture and Exploring Justice and Accountability

which will be held on Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 1:00-2:30 PM,

EST (8:00-9:30 PM, Syria's time/7:00-8:30 PM, CET)

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) cordially invites you to attend the international event, "Syria's Dark Reality: Examining Systemic Torture and Exploring Justice and Accountability". The event, which is co-sponsored by the United States, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Qatar, the UK, and Canada will be held on Thursday, September 26, 2024, at 1:00-2:30 PM, EDT (8:00-9:30 PM, Syria's time/7:00-8:30 PM, CET) at the New York Hilton Midtown and will be streamed online as well.

This year marked 13 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, continuing relentlessly to this day. One such method the Assad regime has systemically employed to inflict massive suffering and sustain power is the use of torture. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) estimates that, since the beginning of the conflict, at least 15,334 people, including 199 children and 115 women, have died as a result of torture in Syria, with the regime responsible for the vast majority. In most cases, the regime does not notify victims' families of their deaths inflicting more suffering as families try to clarify the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones. The UN COI has documented the regime's continuing widespread and systematic patterns of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including acts involving enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, in detention facilities in Syria.

Most detainees in Syria have experienced one or more methods of torture with the regime employing 83 types of torture. The regime has tortured and killed its real and perceived critics, human rights defenders, journalists, and medical professionals. Syrian refugees returning to Syria also face torture, including to extract confessions, after being arbitrarily detained upon return. While the Assad regime is responsible for the vast majority of violations and abuses in Syria, non-state actors have also committed cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; physical abuse; and sexual violence against civilians. It is clear that since 2011, Syrians continue to face horrific human rights abuses perpetrated by the Assad regime and other parties. Impunity for atrocities is unacceptable and accountability is necessary to pursue the stability and peace that Syrians need and deserve.

This event will address the systemic use of torture in Syria and explore how the international community can continue to advance justice and accountability efforts for perpetrators.

The following themes and questions will guide the event:

**Patterns:** What are the trends of torture that Syrians face 13 years into the conflict?

**Missing Persons:** How does the use of torture impact the arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared in Syria? How is torture used against family members searching for their missing loved ones? In light of the establishment of the new UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria (IIMP), how can progress be made on this issue?

**Gendered Impact:** How is sexual violence weaponized in Syria? What are the unique challenges that women and girls face with torture?

**Displaced Persons:** How does the use of torture impact returning refugees and internally displaced persons both inside and outside regime-held territory?

**Accountability:** What tools are available to hold the Syrian regime accountable for torture and other abuses? Where are justice and accountability efforts heading, especially considering recent, increased diplomatic engagement with the regime?

### Speakers:

**Dr. Dafna H. Rand**

Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, USA.

**Beth Van Schaack**

Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice, USA.

**Natasha Franceschi**

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, USA.

**Isabelle Rome**

Ambassador at Large for Human Rights, France.

**Guusje Korthals Altes**

Director for North Africa and the Middle East, the Netherlands.

**Luise Amtsberg**

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

**Faisal bin Abdullah Al Hanzab**

Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qatar.

**Stephen Hickey**

Director of Middle East and North Africa, United Kingdom.

**Dr. Martin Larose**

Director General, Middle East Bureau, Global Affairs Canada.

**Theo Boutruche**

Head of the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice Unit for the Syria Office, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

**Fadel Abdulghany**

Head of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR).

**Dr. Mahmoud Aswad**

Executive Manager, Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR).

**Mariam Kamalmaz**

Daughter of Forcibly Disappeared and Killed U.S. Citizen Majd Kamalmaz.

### Moderator:

**Emma Beals,** Syria Expert and Independent Consultant on Peace and Foreign Policy

### Location

New York Hilton Midtown & virtually

This will be a hybrid event, where attendants are welcome to join either in-person or tune in via Zoom.

If you are planning to attend in-person, please fill the form [via this link](#).

If you are planning to tune in via Zoom, please fill the form [via this link](#).



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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))