

SNHR's Monthly Report

on Arrests/Detentions in Syria

At least

213

**Arbitrary Detentions
Recorded in October 2024**

The Syrian Regime Arrests
17 Refugees Who Returned
from Lebanon

Monday 04 November 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.

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I. Overview of Arbitrary Arrest and Enforced Disappearance in Syria

Since the very start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011, arbitrary detention has been one of the primary violations committed by the Syrian regime against civilians. Accordingly, as the demonstrations calling for political change expanded and spread across Syria, so too did the numbers of arbitrary detentions, whose rates have increased steadily as the Syrian conflict has continued. In most cases, these arrests have been carried out in a manner that more closely resembles an abduction than an arrest, with no judicial warrant being presented, while the targets of these arrests are selected based on security memorandums issued by the regime's various security authorities.

As the database compiled by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) shows, about 73 percent of all arbitrary detentions carried out in Syria subsequently turn into enforced disappearances. The Syrian regime is responsible for about 88 percent of all the arbitrary arrests documented on our regularly updated database. Naturally, given these staggering rates of arbitrary arrest, the number of Syrian citizens classified as missing has skyrocketed, so much so that this can be called a phenomenon in itself. Indeed, Syria is one of the worst countries worldwide in terms of the numbers of 'disappeared' citizens.

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.

The Syrian regime surpasses many of the world's other authoritarian regimes by virtue of having absolute hegemony over the legislative and judicial branches of government. The regime has wielded this hegemony to pass a multitude of laws and decrees that violate international human rights law, as well as the principles of law and the parameters of arrests and interrogation established in domestic legislation and in Syria's 2012 Constitution. The most notable of these violations are contained in Act No. 19 of 2012, known as the Counterterrorism Act, which is used as grounds for trying most detainees (in addition to the Syrian Penal Code which is used as grounds to try detainees accused of crimes against state security and national security as specified in said code), and its subsequent amendment, the Military Penal Code, and the Counter-Cybercrime Act.

The Syrian regime has weaponized its arsenal of laws through the use of exceptional courts, such as the Counterterrorism Court, which was the subject of a previous human rights reports report as an example of legal brutality used by authorities to eliminate political opponents and prosecute civilians. Meanwhile, the Military Field Court is one of the worst exceptional criminal courts established in Syrian history. The rulings passed by these courts have been used by the regime as instruments to disappear and kill activists and dissidents. Even though the court itself was disbanded in accordance with Legislative Decree No. 32 of 2023, its rulings remain in effect as of this writing. With the disbandment of the Military Field Court, all the cases previously handled by it were referred to the regime's Military Judiciary, which is no less awful. The Military Judiciary prosecutes and handle those cases in accordance with the Military Penal Code of 1950 and its subsequent amendments.

Moreover, the Syrian regime has legitimized the crime of torture, disregarding the existence of several texts in Syrian law that explicitly outlaw arbitrary arrest and torture, including Article 53 of the current Syrian constitution, and Article 391 of the Public Penal Code, which provides that anyone who uses coercion during interrogation shall receive a timed prison sentence ranging from three months to three years. Despite these proscriptions, however, other quasi-legal texts have been introduced, including

Act No. 16 of 2022 on Criminalizing Torture, all of which explicitly contradict the aforementioned legal articles. SNHR previously released a report exposing the dysfunctional nature of its implementation, where it promotes impunity, and reflects how the legislative process has been ineffective in addressing torture.

In effect, the officers, personnel, and affiliates of the regime's security authorities enjoy impunity from any prosecution by the judiciary, unless through special approval. For instances of the articles conferring this impunity, one can cite Article 16 of Legislative Decree No. 14 of 1969 on regulating the work of the General Intelligence Directorate, and Article 74 of the Internal Regulations for the State Security Administration, as established by Legislative Decree No. 549 of 1969. It is noteworthy that both those laws are secretive and have not been published by the official state gazette for the public to see, contravening the constitutional principle of the rule of law. Similarly, officers affiliated with the Military Security Intelligence Directorate and the Air Force Security Intelligence Directorate also enjoy a large degree of impunity due to their military status. As such, they can only be prosecuted by the Military Judiciary, which may only happen on the orders of the General Commander of the Army and Armed Forces or the Chief of the General Staff, according to article 53 of the Military Penal Code and Military Procedural Law (Law No. 61 of 1950). Meanwhile, the Political Security Directorate is affiliated with the Ministry of Interior. In September 2008, Legislative Decree No. 64 of 2008 was promulgated, establishing that the officers and personnel of the Political Security Directorate also fall under the jurisdiction of the Military Judiciary, thereby further promoting their impunity.

Since March 2011, the Syrian regime has promulgated about 24 amnesty decrees that have been largely similar. Those decrees have focused on the release of perpetrators of offenses and felonies. As such, these decrees exclude the overwhelming majority of detainees who have been referred to exceptional courts or have yet to stand trial, who effectively became forcibly disappeared persons. In November 2022, we released a report entitled, ['Breaking Down the Amnesty Decrees Issued by the Syrian Regime Between March 2011 and October 2022'](#), in which SNHR stressed that amnesty decrees only result in a very limited number of releases, while the regime continues to enforce its arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance policies regardless of the amnesty decrees.

Other parties to the conflict:

As SNHR's data shows, all parties to the conflict have been involved in the practice of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance as ways of terrorizing Syrian society and consolidating control. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and all armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA), have carried out practices similar to those of the Syrian regime, albeit in a far less frequent and systematic manner than the regime. These practices all constitute violations of international human rights law, and, in the context of the armed conflict, violations of international humanitarian law.

In light of all these facts, SNHR ensures that we regularly update and catalogue any new developments on our database, using the data stored there in compiling our periodic and annual reports on enforced disappearance and torture. In this, we aim to highlight the widespread and negative impact of these practices that result in further profound suffering for the victims. Another goal in compiling data on these issues is to close the wide gap between the victims and the violations they suffered, on one hand, and the continued failure to hold the perpetrators accountable on the other.

II. Report Methodology

For many years, SNHR has released monthly reports, analyzing and providing figures on the state of arbitrary arrest/detention in Syria. Accordingly, this report summarizes the arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and releases documented by SNHR in the month of October 2024, drawing upon the data and information collected and documented by SNHR's team on the ground. This data is obtained from various sources, including eyewitnesses, local activists, victims, and their families, in line with strict documentation procedures. We also strive to update data whenever required to ensure its accuracy and reliability. The last stage of the documentation process is cataloguing the data on violations on our database and in our archives in various forms, including written accounts, audio interviews, video interviews, and reports.

In classifying an incident as an arbitrary arrest/detention and/or enforced disappearance, we adhere to precise standards based on the relevant rules of international law and the body of principles on arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance. More particularly, we rely on the five categories adopted by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Meanwhile, in cases of enforced disappearance, we use the definition established by the Declaration on the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which was adopted in accordance the UN General Assembly resolution 47/133 on December 18, 1992, as "a body of principles for all states".

Exceptions

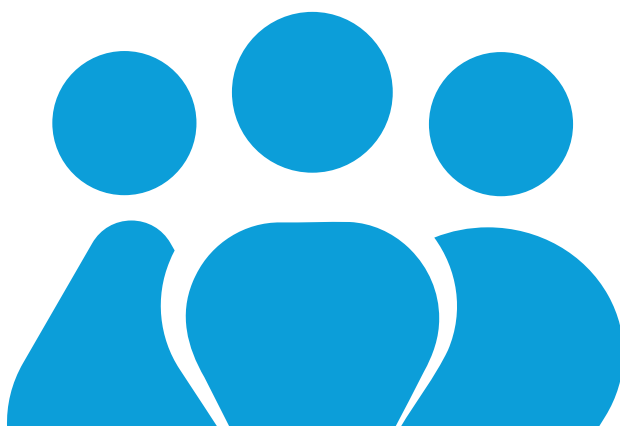
- The incidents and cases of arrest that have been documented by SNHR and included in this report do not include abductions carried out by parties which we have not yet been able to identify. However, it should be noted that we do document such incidents on our database, continue to follow up on such cases, and refer to these cases in special reports.
- This report does not include arrests involving individuals detained for committing criminal offenses, such as murder, theft, narcotics-related crimes, and other crimes that have no political nature or are unrelated to the armed conflict or dissident activism.

In this report, we categorize the data documented on SNHR's database according to the four parties to the conflict which are responsible for violations related to arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance, namely Syrian regime forces, the SDF, all armed opposition factions/SNA, and HTS. We also categorize arrests based on the location where each one took place, rather than by the detainee's governorate of origin, and distinguish between adult, child, female and male victims. This report also includes a cumulative chart showing arrest rates throughout the year, which we update every month, enabling us to make accurate comparisons of how the arrest rates have developed over the year. Moreover, we provide details of the releases from the various detention centers, and catalogue each of these according to their contexts and causes.

While we have always attempted to highlight notable cases that we encounter in our work in order to put a human face to these abstract figures and to prevent victims from being turned into faceless statistics, some of the individuals involved in these cases have faced threats, harassment, and persecution for speaking out about what took place. Therefore, we took the decision to omit possible identifying details in most cases to protect victims' privacy and security.

This report also provides a summary and analysis of the patterns seen in arbitrary arrests/detentions and enforced disappearance carried out by the parties to the conflict. In accurately identifying these patterns, we draw upon both the information available and the expertise gained by SNHR's team in monitoring the nature of these practices for over 13 years. The report also touches upon the laws and decrees promulgated by the parties to the conflict in relation to issues of arrest and enforced disappearance in the period included in the report.

In light of the exceptional difficulties and the extensive scale of violations, this report only reflects the bare minimum of the violations that occurred which we were able to document. We must stress that the actual figures may be far higher.

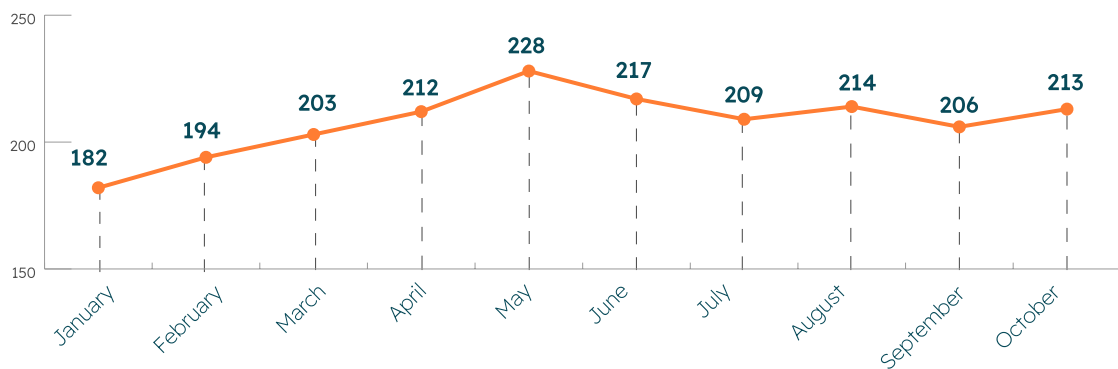


III. Arbitrary Arrests, Enforced Disappearances, and Releases in Syria in October 2024

A. Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances since the start of 2024

SNHR has documented no fewer than 2,078 cases of arbitrary arrest/detention since the beginning of 2024 up until the end of October, with those arrested/detained including 100 children and 58 women (adult female). Of these 2,078 cases, 1,689 have been subsequently classified as enforced disappearances.

Arbitrary arrests/detentions carried out by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in 2024 are distributed as follows:

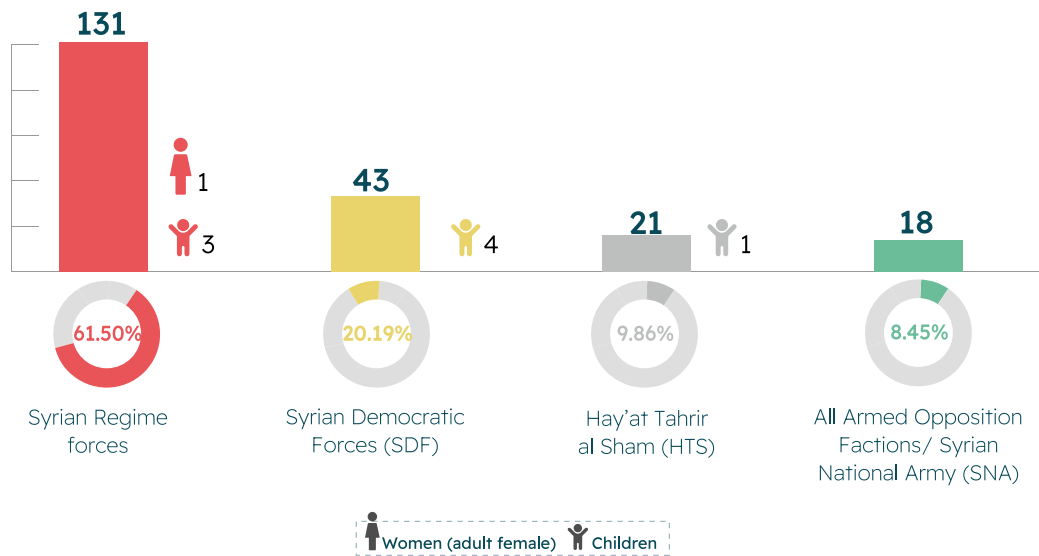


As the graph shows, May saw the highest monthly number of arbitrary arrests documented so far this year, followed by June, due to Syrian regime forces carrying out arrests/detentions involving the forcible repatriation of refugees from Lebanon by the Lebanese army, whose forces carried out raid and arrest campaigns targeting Syrian refugees and deported them to the Syrian-Lebanese border. Meanwhile, SDF personnel continue to carry out arrests for the purpose of military conscription in areas under the group's control. In Idlib too, HTS has arrested/detained individuals who participated in anti-HTS demonstrations.

B. Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances in October 2024

In September 2024, SNHR documented no fewer than 213 cases of arbitrary arrest/detention, with those detained including eight children and one woman (adult females). Of these, 194 have been subsequently classified as enforced disappearances.

Arbitrary arrests/detentions documented in October 2024 are distributed according to the parties to the conflict and controlling forces as follows:



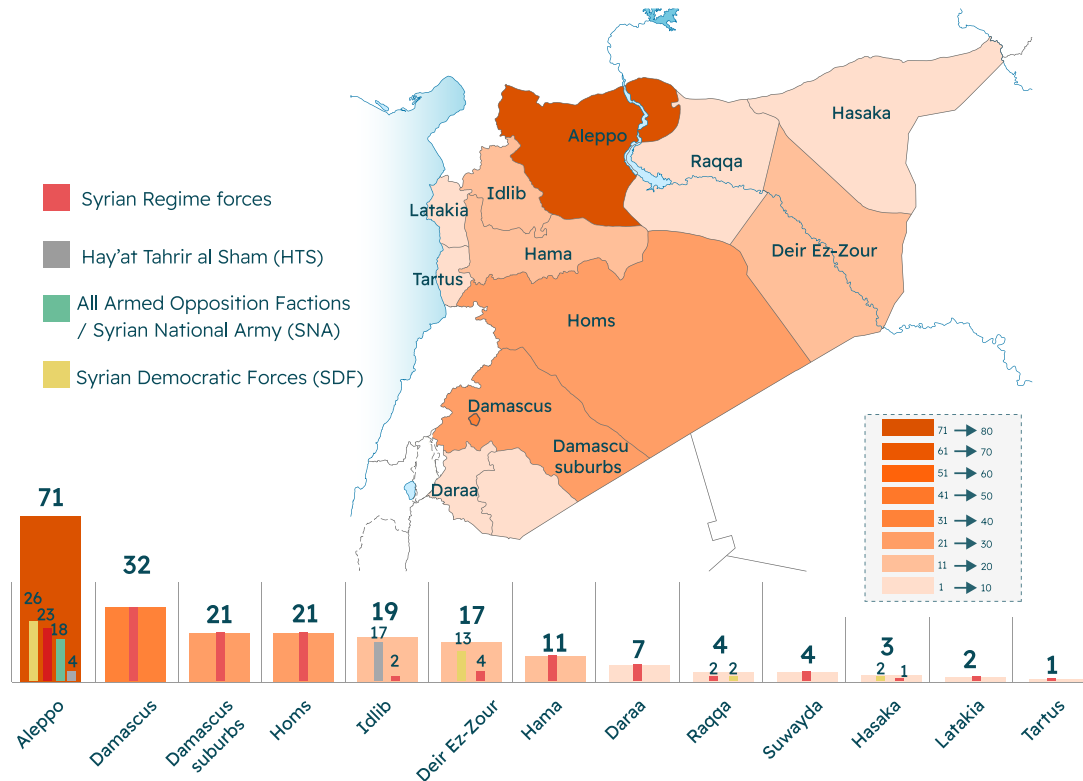
A. Syrian regime forces: 131 arrests, including of three children and one woman. Of the 131 people arrested, six have been released, while the remaining 125 have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared persons.

B. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): 21 arrests, including of one child. Of the 21 people arrested, four have been released, while the remaining 17 have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared persons.

C. All Armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 18 arrests. Of the 18 people arrested, three have been released, while the remaining 15 have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared persons.

D. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 43 arrests, including of four children. Of the 43 people arrested, six have been released, while the remaining 37 have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared persons.

Arbitrary arrests/detentions documented as being carried out in October 2024 by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria are distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



As the map above shows, Aleppo governorate saw the highest monthly number of arbitrary arrests/detentions, followed by Damascus governorate, then in descending order, Rural Damascus and Homs, Idlib, Deir Ez-Zour, and then Hama.

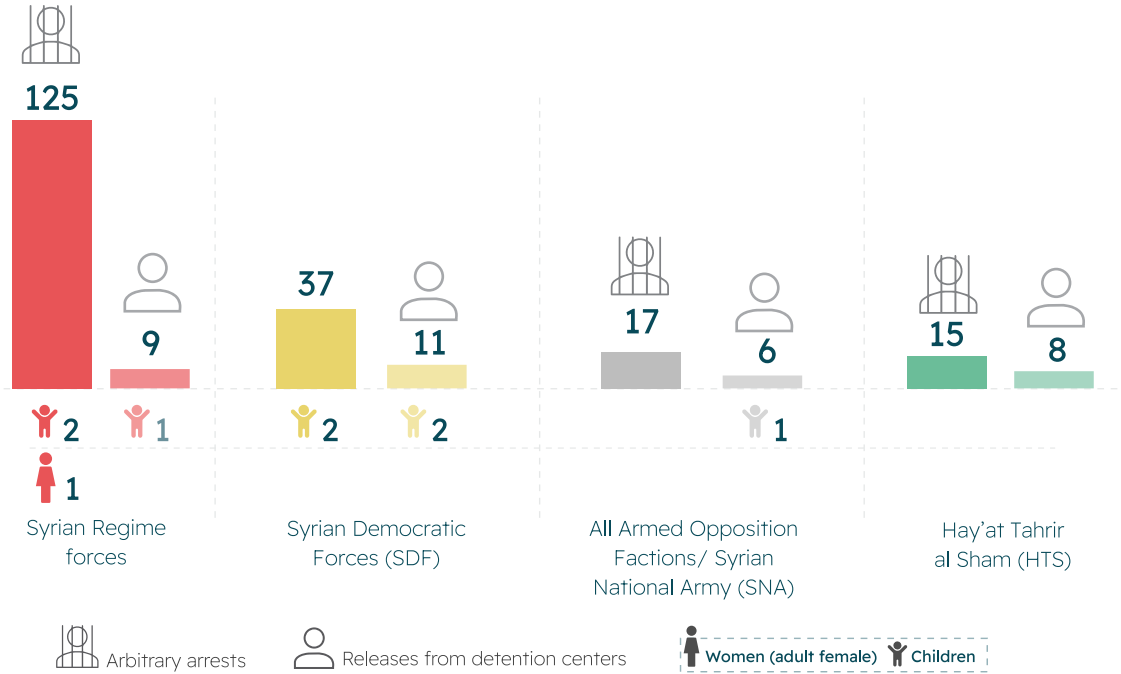
C. Releases from detention centers in October 2024

In October 2024, SNHR documented no fewer than 34 releases from the various parties' detention centers in Syria, including of four children.

The releases by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria documented in September 2024 are distributed as follows:

- A. **A. Syrian regime forces:** Nine releases, including of one child.
- B. **B. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):** Six releases, including of one child.
- C. **C. All Armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA):** Eight releases.
- D. **D. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):** 11 releases, including of two children.

Comparison between arbitrary arrests and releases from detention centers documented in October 2024 for each of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria:



As the chart shows, the number of arbitrary arrests far surpasses the number of releases from detention centers, with the number of releases equaling approximately 30 percent of all the detentions documented on average; this once again confirms that at least two or three times as many people are being detained as are released, primarily by the Syrian regime, which indicates that these arrest and detention practices are standard policy in comparison with the extremely limited numbers of people released by all parties to the conflict, but mainly from regime detention centers.

IV. Most Notable Patterns of Arbitrary Arrests and Releases by the Parties to the Conflict and Controlling Forces in Syria in October 2024

In October, the parties to the conflict continued their policies of persecuting civilians in areas under their control, carrying out more arbitrary detentions citing various pretexts and causes. This once again confirms a crucial and inescapable truth which we have reiterated many times in the past: no Syrian citizen can feel safe from arrest since these are carried out without any legal grounds or any oversight by any independent judiciary. Below are some noteworthy observations concerning the detentions carried out by the parties to the conflict this month:

A. Syrian regime forces¹

1. Arbitrary arrests

- We documented more arrests/detentions of refugees returning from Lebanon, as they fled the escalating Israeli offensive that has been going on since September 23. These arrests took place at the regular and irregular border crossings separating Lebanon and Syria. Most of those arrested were taken to the security and military detention centers in the governorates of Homs, Damascus, and Aleppo. SNHR documented the arrest of at least 17 refugees, including one woman, returning from Lebanon, most of them originally from Idlib governorate, on the pretext of having failed to join the army or reserve forces as required by the regime's conscription policies, as well as entering the country irregularly.
- Our teams also recorded arrests/detentions targeting civilians by regime forces, including children, on the pretext of being affiliated with ISIS. These arrests/detentions were carried out during a raid and arrest campaign by personnel from the Syrian regime's Air Force Intelligence Directorate in the National Hospital in Suwayda city.
- We documented widespread arrests/detentions of civilians by regime personnel in the governorates of Rural Damascus, Damascus, Hama, and Aleppo on the pretext of military service evasion, having failed to join the regime's military or reserve forces as part of its mandatory military service policy. Most of these arrests were carried out during raids or at checkpoints, and even targeted individuals who had previously agreed to settle their security status with the regime in the areas that saw settlement agreements. Many of these arrests were carried out by personnel from the regime's security branches for the purpose of extorting ransom money from the victims' families.

Through these arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances carried out in October, [the Syrian regime again violated the order of the Hague-based International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) issued on November 16, 2023, on requesting provisional measures in the case brought by Canada and the Netherlands against the regime on the application of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. According to the ICJ's court order, the Syrian Arab Republic, as part of its obligations under the Convention against Torture, is compelled 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, the document continued, 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." The entire process of unlawful detention/arbitrary arrest by the regime is an interconnected series of actions which constitute multiple forms of torture. In these

1. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the regime's security apparatus. As a result, the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic/dynastic dictatorial rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade that exists merely for show. The Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides. The Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security office, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the president assisted by the heads of the security branches.

While we are aware that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government', we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

arrests, which are more akin to abductions than to legitimate arrest procedures, the Syrian regime does not comply with the arrest conditions specified in the Syrian Constitutions and Syrian laws.² These arrests also involve the use of excessive violence and beatings of various forms and levels of severity, which usually start from the very first moments of the arrests, and continue throughout the duration of the detention, during which detainees are subjected to inhumane and cruel conditions, as well as being referred to [exceptional security courts](#) whose proceedings resemble interrogation in security branches rather than any legitimate trial process.

2. Releases from detention centers

We continue to monitor releases from the various detention centers operated by regime forces. In October 2024, we documented the release of nine individuals, including one child. These releases are divided according to their context as follows:

- We documented the release of one detainee in connection with the amnesty decree promulgated by the Syrian regime on April 30, 2022 (Decree No. 7 of 2022). The detainee in question was released from the government complex in Daraa city. It is noteworthy that the application of Amnesty Decree 7/2022 is, to this day, evidently conditional on the end of the prison sentences of those detainees who were partially included in this amnesty.
- In Damascus governorate, we documented the regime's release of two detainees from regime detention centers. The detainees in question were released after serving the full term of their arbitrary sentence. As such, these releases were not related to any of the amnesty decrees that have been promulgated to date, with the detainees having been imprisoned for about one year in regime detention centers.
- We also documented the separate releases of six individuals, including one child, all of whom had been held for a few days without trial. Most of these detainees came from the governorates of Damascus and Daraa, with the majority having spent the duration of their detention in regime security branches.

B. SDF

1. Arbitrary arrests

The SDF also continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in October 2024. In pursuit of these policies, SDF personnel continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and detentions, targeting civilians on the pretext of fighting ISIS, with some of these arrest campaigns backed by US-led Coalition helicopters. We also documented arrests/detentions of civilians over accusations of working with the SNA. Moreover, we documented more arrests/detention of civilians for forced conscription, with these detainees taken to SDF military training and recruitment camps, which are concentrated in SDF-controlled areas of Aleppo governorate. There were also arrests/detentions targeting civilians for their participation in anti-SDF demonstrations that protested the school curriculums being taught in school in SDF-held areas, with these arrests being concentrated in Manbij city in rural Aleppo governorate.

2. For an outline of the parameters of arrest in the Syrian law, please see our periodic reports on arrests and detention in Syria: <https://snhr.org/blog/category/report/monthly-reports/detainees-and-enforced-disappearances-monthly-reports/>

Meanwhile, the SDF also continued abducting children with the objective of conscripting them, with these children being sent to military training camps. The parents and families of these conscripted children are not allowed to contact them, with the SDF also refusing to disclose their fate.

2. Releases from detention centers

In October 2024, we documented the release of 11 individuals, including two children, from SDF detention centers. They were released for periods ranging from a few days to three months, and the majority of these released were originally from the two governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Aleppo.

C. HTS³

1. Arbitrary arrests

HTS also detained more civilians in October 2024. These arrests, which were concentrated in Idlib governorate and some areas of rural Aleppo governorate under the group's control, targeted media activists, political activists, and local dignitaries. Most of these arrests were carried out in connection with the detainees expressing opinions critical of HTS's management of areas under its control. These detentions are routinely and arbitrarily carried out in the form of raids in which HTS members storm their victims' homes, often breaking down the doors, or abducting their victims in the street or while they're passing through temporary checkpoints. We also documented arrests/detentions mostly carried out as part of raids and mass arrests, or at checkpoints in Idlib governorate that targeted individuals over their participation in the recent anti-HTS protests in the governorate. Most of these arrests were concentrated in Idlib governorate. We also recorded arrests/detentions of a number of individuals over their alleged affiliation with the anti-HTS Tahrir Party. These arrests were concentrated in Idlib governorate.

2. Releases from detention centers

In October 2024, we documented HTS' release of six individuals, including one child, from its detention centers in Idlib governorate, with the released detainees having been detained for periods ranging from a few days to four months, without any clear charges being brought against them.

D. All armed opposition factions/SNA⁴

1. Arbitrary arrests

Armed opposition factions/SNA continued carrying out arbitrary arrests/detentions and kidnappings in October 2024, including of women. Most of these detentions were conducted on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime or the SDF. In addition, we documented detentions that exhibited an ethnic character, with these incidents concentrated in areas under the control of the armed opposition factions/SNA in Aleppo governorate. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the sole legitimate

3. Designated as a terror group by the UN.

4. All armed opposition factions founded since 2011 across Syria. Many of those formations are no longer active, and many were not structured around a central command. Towards the end of 2017, the Syrian National Army (SNA) was founded as an umbrella formation incorporating all active armed opposition factions established to date.

administrative body with the authority to carry out arrests and detentions through the judiciary, as well as being carried out without any clear charges being presented against those being detained. We also documented raids and arrests by SNA personnel targeting civilians who were accused of working with the SDF, with these arrests being concentrated in some of the villages which are administratively part of Afrin city in Aleppo governorate. We also recorded arrests/detentions by SNA personnel of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to their houses in SNA-held areas, with these arrests being concentrated in Afrin city.

2. Releases from detention centers

In October 2024, all armed opposition factions/SNA released eight individuals from their detention centers, after detaining them for periods ranging from a few days to a few months, without bringing any clear charges against them or putting them on trial. Most were released only after their families had been extorted into paying sums of money to secure their release.

V. SNHR's Vision of and Approach to the Issue of Arbitrarily Arrested Detainees and Forcibly Disappeared Persons at the Domestic and International Levels

Since the beginning of the **Syrian popular uprising for democracy in March 2011**, SNHR has placed great emphasis on the issue of **detainees and forcibly disappeared persons** in Syria, bearing in mind the **humanitarian and human rights-related factors** surrounding this issue. To ensure that this sensitive issue is given the appropriate high priority, SNHR has assembled a working team consisting of highly trained and qualified members with **legal and technical expertise**. This team has been working tirelessly **to document and record violations**, beginning with **establishing a database** for detainees and forcibly disappeared persons. These documentation efforts are then used as foundation for periodically released detailed reports, that aim to **protect the rights of victims** and their families and to expose **the perpetrators of violations**.

Since the issue of **missing and forcibly disappeared persons** is one of the **most persistent, complex and dangerous issues** that continues to plague Syrian society, SNHR has strived to work in coordination with the **various international and UN entities** to document and combat this harrowing phenomenon. These partners include the Independent **International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)**, the **International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)**, the **UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)**, and the **UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria**. SNHR's work in this field involves collecting and analyzing evidence and information on enforced disappearance cases and related violations, and providing the international community with **accurate reports and information** based on these investigations. As such, SNHR's reports have become **a vital instrumental and reputable source** of information on these issues internationally.

Successes and accomplishments

As mentioned above, thanks to our invaluable expertise and **strict compliance** with international standards, SNHR's data has come to be regarded as a reputable **principal** source of information for many UN bodies, being used and cited in numerous UN statements and resolutions, including draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria ([A/C.3/78/L.43](#)), passed by a vote on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, condemning the **Syrian regime's** continued serious violations of international law. This resolution also acknowledged that the documented number of detainees in Syria exceeds **135,000**. Relatedly, the resolution holds the regime responsible for the systematic use of **enforced disappearance**, which, it notes, constitutes a crime against humanity.

Meanwhile, [the case brought against the Syrian regime at the Hague-based International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) on the Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic) draws upon the data and evidence supplied by SNHR. Elsewhere, SNHR, through its many partnerships, has contributed to numerous legal cases brought against individuals responsible for human rights violations in regime detention centers under the principle of universal jurisdiction in Europe and to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act in the US, as well as other cases, all of them steps on the path to justice and accountability.

Documenting victims

In the years since its foundation, SNHR has established multiple **accurate procedures** to document and provide details on victims in detention centers, building on our **ever-expanding wealth of experience** gained through closely monitoring [enforced disappearance cases](#). SNHR has maintained a longstanding and close working relationship with the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, requires maintaining **constant communication** with the families of 'missing' and 'disappeared' persons to build **comprehensive files** for every case. This data is sent to the UN special rapporteur who can then contact the Syrian regime to enquire about some of the cases submitted. Furthermore, SNHR corresponds with the two **UN special rapporteurs on torture, counterterrorism, and mental health** to follow up on such cases.

Facilitating communication with victims

In addition to the above, we have created [a special online form](#) on our website for detainees' families to report their loved ones' cases; once the family members complete this form, it's then sent automatically to our team working on the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons. SNHR has also always tries to ensure that we're easily accessible for the **families**, through **facilitating various means of communication**, including phone numbers, our **official channels online**, or through our team members who are scattered across Syria, who work on **collecting information** and providing support for the families.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- **The issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons** is one of the most crucial human rights issues in Syria **which there has been no progress in resolving** despite its inclusion in several UN Security Council resolutions, as well as in UN General Assembly resolutions, in **Kofi Annan's plan**, in the statement of cessation of hostilities issued in February 2016, which states that "all parties undertake to work for an **early release of any arbitrarily detained persons, particularly women and children**", and in **UN Security Council resolution 2254** of December 2015, article 12, which states that **all detainees, especially women and children, must be released immediately**. Despite all these resolutions and other official statements, **no progress has been made** on the issue of securing the release of detainees in any of the rounds of negotiations sponsored by international parties regarding the conflict in Syria. **The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** has been unable to conduct periodic visits to any of these detention centers, which constitutes a violation of **international humanitarian law**.
- Based on the **data documented by SNHR on arbitrary arrest, torture and enforced disappearance**, the Syrian regime has not ended torture practices and has failed to take any steps to comply with **ICJ Order for provisional measures since its issuance on November 16, 2023**. Even worse, the regime continues to imprison **at least 136,614 arbitrarily arrested detainees/ forcibly disappeared persons** in its detention centers, under abusive and harsh conditions, all of whom are still being subjected to torture, which further confirms that the **Syrian regime continues to explicitly contravene the UN Convention against Torture**, which the regime ratified in 2004, and that it continues to **fail to comply** with any of its provisions.
- SNHR believes that the Syrian regime has **not fulfilled any of its obligations** under any of the **international treaties and conventions** which it has ratified, particularly the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**. The regime has also violated several articles of **the Syrian Constitution itself, with hundreds of thousands of detainees being detained** without any arrest warrant, held for many years, without charges, and prevented from appointing a lawyer and from receiving family visits. Meanwhile, **68.25 percent of all detentions** documented have subsequently been categorized **as cases of enforced disappearance**, with detainees' families being denied any information on their loved ones' whereabouts, while anyone making inquiries about the detainees faces the **risk of being arrested themselves** for doing so. The Syrian regime has also violated the right to liberty enshrined in **Article 9 of the ICCPR** through the **widespread practice of arbitrary and unlawful detentions**.
- **HTS** imposes absolute authority over the large areas it controls and the residents therein. The group, which has a **political entity and has developed a highly hierarchical structure**, is therefore **obliged to implement the provisions of international human rights law**. Nonetheless, **HTS committed widespread violations**, including **arrests and enforced disappearances**.
- All armed opposition factions/SNA have carried out **arrests and torture practices** against some residents in areas under their control.

- The SDF has **violated many basic human rights** and perpetrated numerous violations such as **torture and enforced disappearance**. They also have a political entity with a largely hierarchical structure and are, therefore, also obliged to **apply the provisions of international human rights law**.

Recommendations

UN Security Council

- The UN Security Council should monitor 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 demand immediate cessation of the crime of enforced disappearance.
- Take action under Chapter VII of the **Charter of the United Nations** to protect detainees from certain death inside detention centers, and put an end to the **epidemic of enforced disappearance** that continues to plague Syria, posing a threat **to the security and stability of society**, act to end torture and deaths due to torture inside Syrian regime detention centers, and to save whoever is left among the detainees as quickly as possible.

UN Human Rights Council

- Follow up on the issue of **detainees and forcibly disappeared persons** in Syria and highlight this issue in all annual meetings.
- Promote cooperation and coordination **with active local human rights groups in Syria**.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. **SNHR** is willing to cooperate and provide more evidence and data.

UN and international community

- Immediately begin applying pressure on all parties to ensure that they immediately **reveal their detention** records according to a fixed timetable. In the meantime, detention places should be revealed immediately, and **humanitarian organizations and the ICRC** must be allowed to visit them directly.
- We call on the official appointed to take charge of the detainee file at the UN Special Envoy's office to include **the issue of the detainees during the upcoming round of Geneva talks**, as this issue is of **far greater importance than almost all others to the Syrian people**.
- **Stop refoulment of Syrian refugees**, since the situation in Syria continues to be unsafe, and apply pressure to achieve **a political transition** that would ensure the automatic and safe return of millions of refugees.

- Support organizations working to **document cases of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture**, support **accountability** mechanisms and its mechanisms, and support **victim rehabilitation programs**.

UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

- Increase the capacity of the team working on the issue of **forcibly disappeared persons in Syria** at the special rapporteur's office, especially in light of the high numbers and wide scope of enforced disappearance cases in the country.

UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria

- **Identify those responsible** for enforced disappearance in Syria, and provide all forms of support and protection for the victims and their families.
- Look into all the cases included in **SNHR** reports. We are more than willing to provide more details and data.

Russian regime

- Demand that its ally, the Syrian regime, disclose the fate of nearly **96,000 forcibly disappeared persons** and immediately release **tens of thousands of arbitrarily detained persons and detainees** whose sentences have ended, before demanding that those states which imposed sanctions on the Syrian regime lift them.
- **Support a genuine political transition away** from the dynastic dictatorship of one family and its brutal security services in Syria towards democratic rule, which is the only way to achieve **security, stability, and reconstruction in the country**.

All parties to the conflict and the controlling forces

- **Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances** must be ended immediately; **the fate of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons** must be revealed; the families of those still alive should be allowed to visit them immediately, **and the bodies of detainees who have died as a result of torture should be returned to their families**.
- Unconditionally release all detainees who have been imprisoned merely for **exercising their political and civil rights**, release women and children, people with special needs, the sick, and the elderly, and stop using any detainees as prisoners of war.
- Allow independent **international monitors**, such as those with the COI and the ICRC, to access **all detention centers** and improve the conditions of places of detention to meet the international legal standards.

- **A UN committee** must be formed to **monitor and periodically assess the release of detainees** according to a timetable that must be presented by all the detaining parties, primarily Syrian regime forces.
- Publish **a comprehensive register** containing all the detainees' data together with details of the reasons for their detention, their current locations, and the sentences issued against them.
- All sentences issued by the regime's **Military Field Court and Counterterrorism Court** must be suspended and repealed, since they fail to comply with domestic and international legislation, as well as failing to provide guarantees of a fair trial.
- End the policy of **carrying out arrests without presenting legal warrants**, release all detainees imprisoned without judicial charges, and ensure that detainees appear before courts within short, reasonable periods of time.

Acknowledgment and Solidarity

We wish to extend our most sincere thanks to survivors and to victims' family members and friends, as well as to eyewitnesses and local activists, for their significant and invaluable contribution to this report, in collecting and verifying data. We stand in complete solidarity with the detainees and the forcibly disappeared persons and their families.



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No justice without accountability

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