

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women:

SNHR's 13th Annual Report on Violations Against Females in Syria

At Least **29,064 Females** Have been Killed in Syria since March 2011, including **117** Who Died due to Torture, While 11,268 Females Are still Detained/ Forcibly Disappeared, and **11,553 Incidents** of Sexual Violence Against Females Have Been Documented



Monday 25 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.

Contents

I. Wide Range of Violations Against Women in Syria Committed in the Last 13 Years.....	1
Extensive effects of violence.....	1
Ongoing challenges.....	1
Systematic violations against women.....	2
Humanitarian conditions deteriorate in 2024 with dwindling resources.....	2
The funding crisis and its ramifications.....	2
Close coordination with international and UN entities and committees in support of women’s rights in Syria.....	3
SNHR’s role on enforced disappearance.....	3
Empowering female survivors of violence.....	3
Collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls.....	4
II. Detailed Account of the Violations Against Females as Documented on SNHR’s Database	5
A. Extrajudicial killing.....	5
B. Arbitrary arrest/detention and enforced disappearance.....	9
C. Female deaths due to torture.....	12
D. Sexual violence against females.....	14
E. Attacks on medical facilities.....	15
III. Outline of the Most Notable Patterns of Gross Violations by the Parties to the Conflict Against Females Since March 2011 Up Until November 2024.....	18
A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias).....	18
B. Russian forces.....	26
C. Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).....	27
D. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).....	29
E. All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA).....	35
F. Other parties.....	39
IV. Discriminatory Restrictions and Procedures Against Women.....	43
Camps designated for women in northwestern Syria.....	40
Camps housing families with alleged links to ISIS in northeastern Syria.....	41
Specified recommendations.....	42
V. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	43
Conclusions.....	43
Recommendations.....	46
Acknowledgment.....	49

I. WIDE RANGE OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN IN SYRIA COMMITTED IN THE LAST 13 YEARS

On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on November 25 each year, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) releases its annual report on violations against females as part of its continuing efforts to document violations against Syrian women and girls. As in previous years, SNHR's 13th annual report sheds light on the ongoing effects of these violations of women's lives, fundamental freedoms, and human rights, as the conflict enters its 14th year.

Extensive effects of violence

Systematic violence against women has had devastating ramifications, including breaking up and dismantling families, with children left with nobody to care for or support them. There have been also significant adverse effects in the social, psychological, and economic realms, in addition to the suffering endured by Syrian society as a result of the loss of the vast potential of female victims in all fields. These violations have only grew worse over time, with women forced to deal with numerous daunting challenges, including being deprived of their housing and property rights, as documented in past reports, which have highlighted the hardships more and more women have been forced to endure simply to secure the most basic rights, especially given the increasing numbers of widows and wives of forcibly disappeared men, who've been forced as a result to provide for their families under unimaginably difficult conditions.

Furthermore, women activists have faced additional challenges including threats, defamation, and restrictions, as well as discriminatory decisions targeting their freedoms, which undermined their crucial role society and the services they usually provide, whether solely for other women or also for wider society.

Ongoing challenges

Under such conditions, women have been struggling to secure their fundamental rights in the face of various restrictions ranging from restrictions on movement to legal challenges, and financial and security conditions. These restrictions have made it difficult for women to attain their rights, protection, or essential assistance, without which they are living in a hostile environment that lacks even the most basic sense of security and dignity, further exacerbating their daily suffering.

Systematic violations against women

This report summarizes the grave violations perpetrated against females, utilizing SNHR's standard, rigorous methodology in documenting crimes. In that, this report focuses on analyzing and categorizing data on violations by each of the parties to the conflict to underline how women have been a systematic target of human rights violations, leaving them in catastrophic humanitarian conditions that have only grown steadily worse as the conflict has continued.

Humanitarian conditions deteriorate in 2024 with dwindling resources

The prolonged nature of the Syrian conflict, with the resulting massive and repeated displacement waves, have devastated the country's economy and infrastructure. As a result, the need for humanitarian assistance, particularly for women and girls, has grown rapidly, putting great strains on aid efforts directed at vulnerable groups.

These needs have grown more pressing and dire throughout 2024. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 1,951 families have been displaced in northwestern Syria after fleeing Syrian regime attacks, since October 14. By October 16, over 4,000 individuals had arrived in northwestern Syria after fleeing the recent Israeli offensive on Lebanon, according to estimates by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 80 percent of the displaced were women and children,

Meanwhile, the northeastern Syria region saw yet another escalation in hostilities in August 2024 between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Arab tribal forces, backed by Syrian regime forces and pro-regime Iranian militias. Hundreds of civilians have been forced to flee various villages and towns, including the SDF-held Theyban, al-Keshkiya, Abu Hamam, al-Bseira, al-Zer, al-Sabha, al-Dahla, and Jedid Bakkara due to these areas being targeted in artillery attacks by regime forces. Meanwhile, the regime-held towns of al-Boulayl, al-Toub, Buqrus, al-Dwair, and al-Kashma have also seen displacement waves due to being targeted with mortar shells by the SDF stationed across the Euphrates River from these towns.

The funding crisis and its ramifications

[The humanitarian response plan in Syria proposed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) is struggling with severe funding shortages, which are impeding humanitarian groups' ability to provide basic services, particularly in relation to healthcare, education, and food aid. As the year draws to a close, the funding provided to date for the budget of next year's humanitarian response plan has not even covered one-third of the budget requirements.

This significant funding gap, coupled with the ongoing military attacks in various regions, is already having a devastating impact on women and girls, obstructing the delivery of essential services to them. As the global political focus shifts to new conflicts, hundreds of thousands of Syrians face the risk of neglect and abandonment, leading to further marginalization of the most vulnerable groups.

Close coordination with international and UN entities and committees in support of women's rights in Syria

SNHR has been working closely with UN and international entities to promote women's rights in Syria and combat the violations suffered by them. Chief among those bodies are the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and UNICEF.

SNHR continues to provide detailed reports and data to the international community on violations against females in the Syrian conflict. These reports have become a primary source of data, used to support international efforts to prosecute perpetrators of violations, highlight the magnitude of the human catastrophe, and expose those responsible.

SNHR's role on enforced disappearance

With regard to cases of enforced disappearance of women and girls, SNHR supplies periodic and comprehensive information to the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, while also working on documenting these cases in detail, and briefing the relevant UN rapporteur on any new developments, including the:

- UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism.
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health

Empowering female survivors of violence

SNHR places special emphasis on international advocacy events that give female survivors of violence a platform to deliver their voice to the international community. Through these activities, women who were affected by various forms of violence in Syria are invited to participate in international forums and express and share their experiences directly. SNHR constantly tries to reach more survivors from various Syrian communities to enrich the diversity of engagement and raise international awareness on the staggering volume of violations.

Collaboration with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls

SNHR always strives to foster its close coordination with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences, as well as any other entities with similar goals. In this, the group tries to use these collaborative efforts to build a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing violence against women in the context of the Syrian conflict, with particular focus on the civilian, cultural, economic, political, and social aspects.

As Fadel Abdulghany, SNHR Executive Director, says:

“ This report is a sobering remainder of the devastating effects suffered by Syrian women for the last 13 years of conflict. This report clearly shows that women have been and continue to be a primary target of these grave violations that amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Syrian regime’s responsibility for the majority of these crimes is undeniable. Documenting these crimes is a step towards accountability. We call on the international community to act to ensure justice for victims and hold perpetrators accountable for these crimes which are not subject to any statute of limitation. Justice and peace in Syria cannot be realized without acknowledging the suffering of women and putting an end to the violations against them. ”



II. DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE VIOLATIONS AGAINST FEMALES AS DOCUMENTED ON SNHR'S DATABASE

This report draws upon, the exhaustive and accurate documentation methodology adopted by SNHR in monitoring violations against women and girls in Syria. These violations, which are characterized by their recurrent and violent nature, and have varied over time in their severity and scale, have also a variety of current and future ramifications for women and girls, and for the whole of Syrian society in a broader sense.

Categorization of violations

Data shows that extrajudicial killing is the deadliest violation suffered by females in Syria in terms of its recurring nature. That is to say that the number of female victims of extrajudicial killing exceeds the number of documented female victims of any other violation, with arbitrary arrest, which usually turn into enforced disappearance, coming second. Other main violations include:

- Torture.
- Sexual violence.
- Conscription of female children and their deployment in armed conflict, a violation that threatens their childhood and puts them in grave danger.
- Attacks on medical facilities, particularly maternity units and women's hospitals, in light of which healthcare services for women have deteriorated, further exacerbating their suffering amid the ongoing conflict.

A. Extrajudicial killing

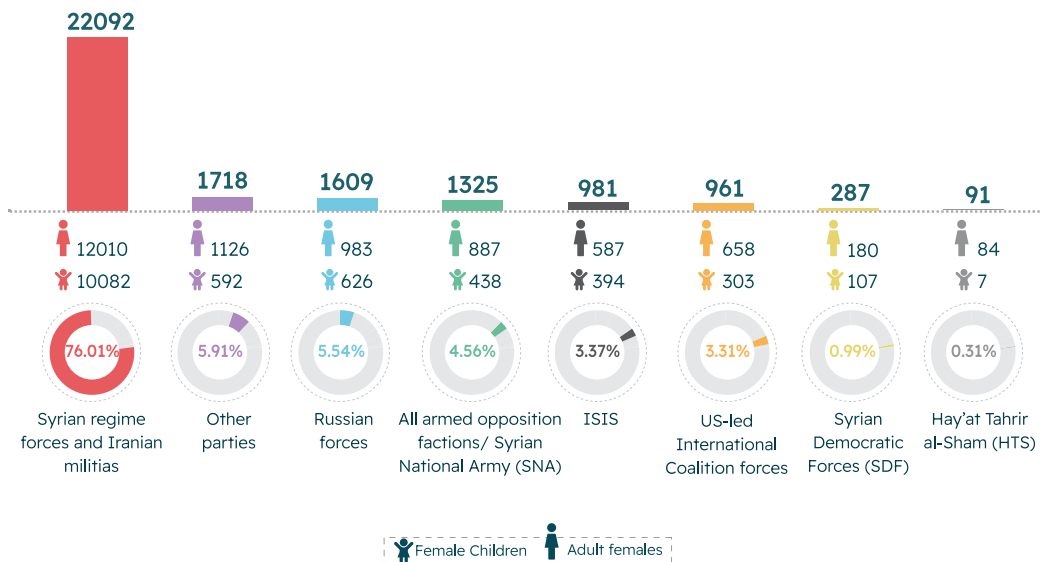
SNHR has documented the killing of **29,064 females** at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 and November 25, 2024, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)¹:**
22,092 females – 12,010 adult females and 10,082 female children.
- **Russian forces:**
1,609 females – 983 adult females and 626 female children.

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.

- **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')**: 981 females – 587 adult females and 394 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)**:² 91 females – 84 adult females and seven female children.
- **All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA)**:³ 1,325 females – 887 adult females and 438 female children.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**: 287 females – 180 adult females and 107 female children.
- **US-led International Coalition forces**: 961 females – 658 adult females and 303 female children.
- **Other parties**: 1,718 females – 1,126 adult females and 592 female children.

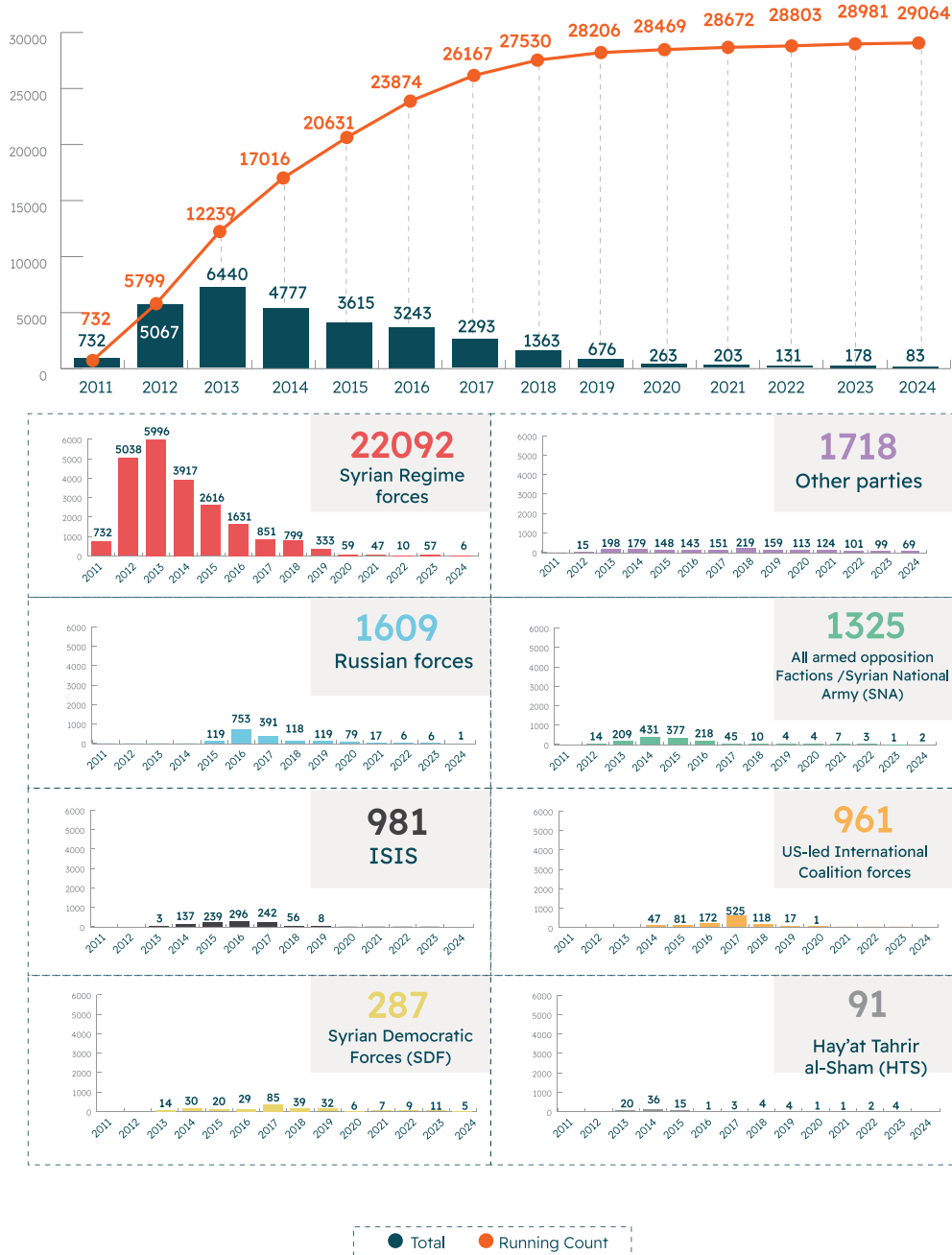


As shown above, the Syrian regime is responsible for roughly 76% of all cases of extrajudicial killing involving females, far surpassing all other parties to the conflict. Additionally, over 23 percent of these victims were female children. This suggests that the Syrian regime has been targeting females, both adults and children, in a deliberate and calculated manner.

2. Designated as a terror group by the UN.

3. Armed opposition factions founded since 2011 across Syria. Many of these 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 formulation incorporating all the armed opposition factions active at the time.

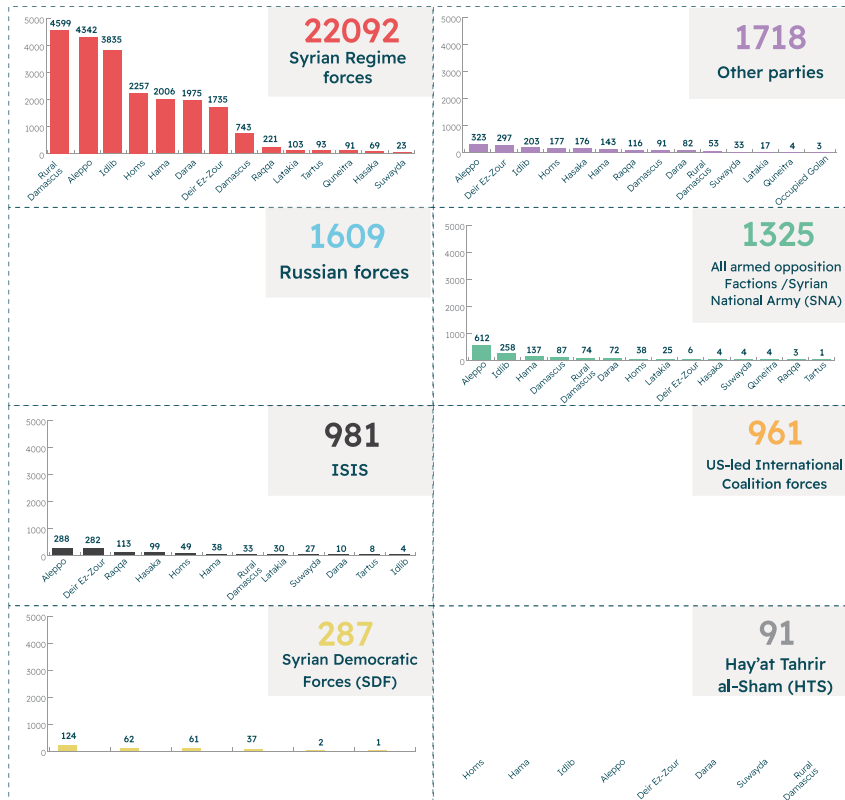
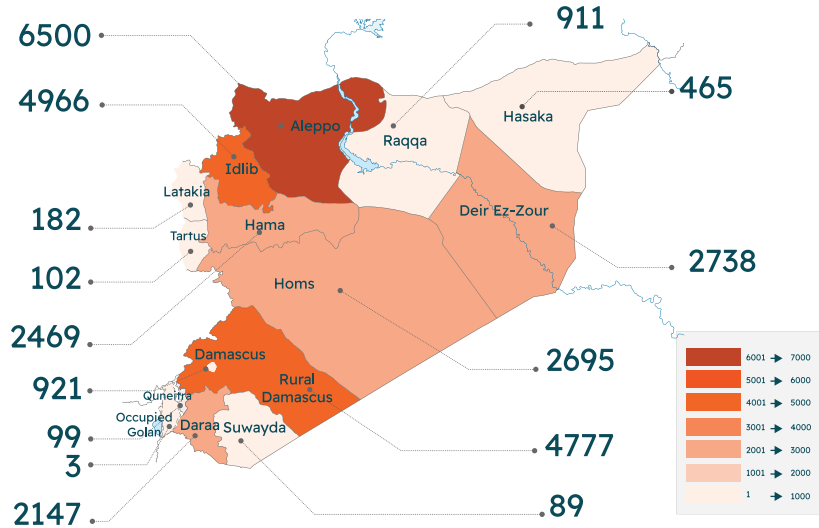
Female deaths at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by year as follows:



Analysis of the data above shows that the year 2013 was the worst to date in terms of female deaths (6,430 female deaths), with 93 percent of these inflicted by Syrian regime forces; this was followed by 2012, then 2014, and then 2015. The Syrian regime was responsible for over half of all the female deaths we documented in every one of these years, which underlines the fact that females have been targeted in a deliberate and systematic way.

The data also shows a downward trend in the number of female deaths with each passing year. Still, the continued killings highlight the lasting effects of the conflict and its profound impact on females in Syria.

Female deaths at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces are distributed by governorate as follows:

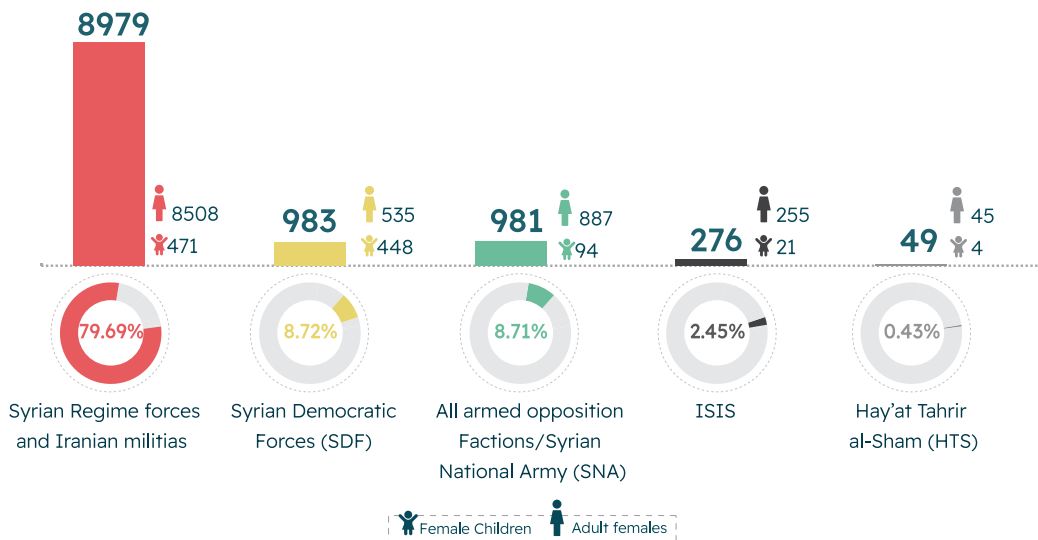


The map above shows that Aleppo governorate has seen the highest number of female deaths, followed by Idlib, then Rural Damascus (Rif Dimshaq), with these being the governorates that saw the most brutal offensives by regime force. This highlights the negative consequences of these offensives, particularly for females, in the areas worst affected by the Syrian conflict.

B. Arbitrary arrest/detention and enforced disappearance

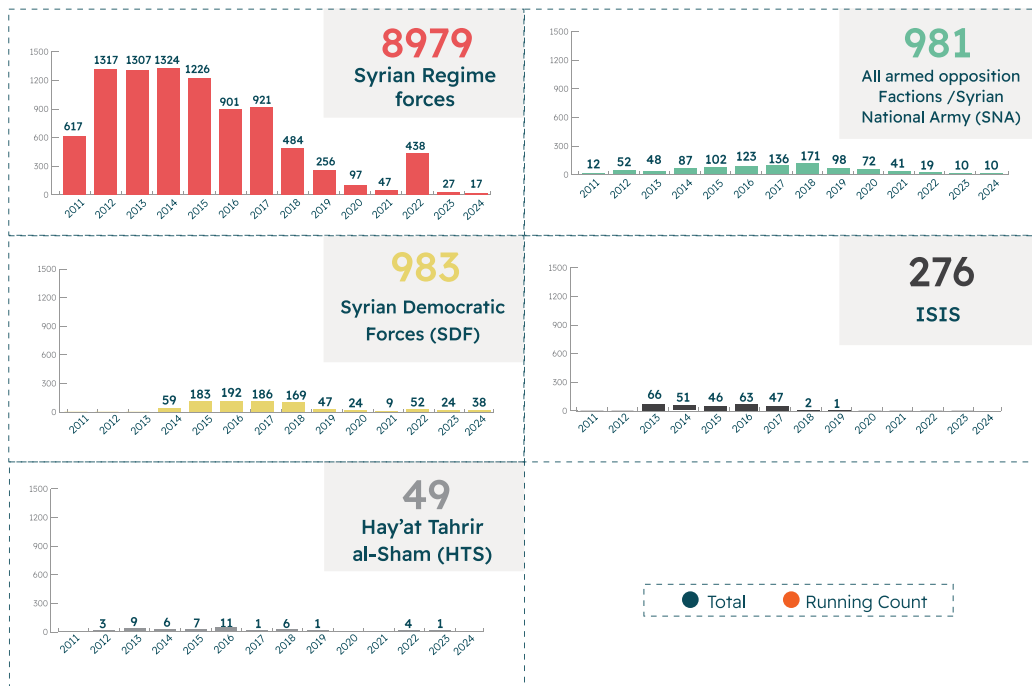
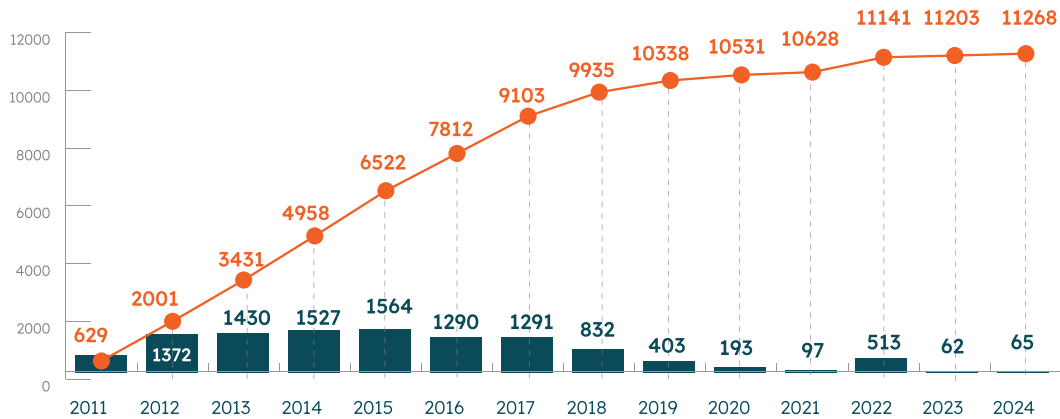
As SNHR's database attests, no fewer than **11,268** of the females arrested, detained, and/or forcibly disappeared by the parties to the conflict and controlling force in Syria since March 2011 are still under arrest, in detention or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024, with these being distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 8,979 females – 8,508 adult females and 471 female children.
- **ISIS:** 276 females – 255 adult females and 21 female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):** 49 females – 45 adult females and four female children.
- **All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA):** 981 females – 887 adult females and 94 female children.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):** 983 females - 535 adult females and 448 female children.



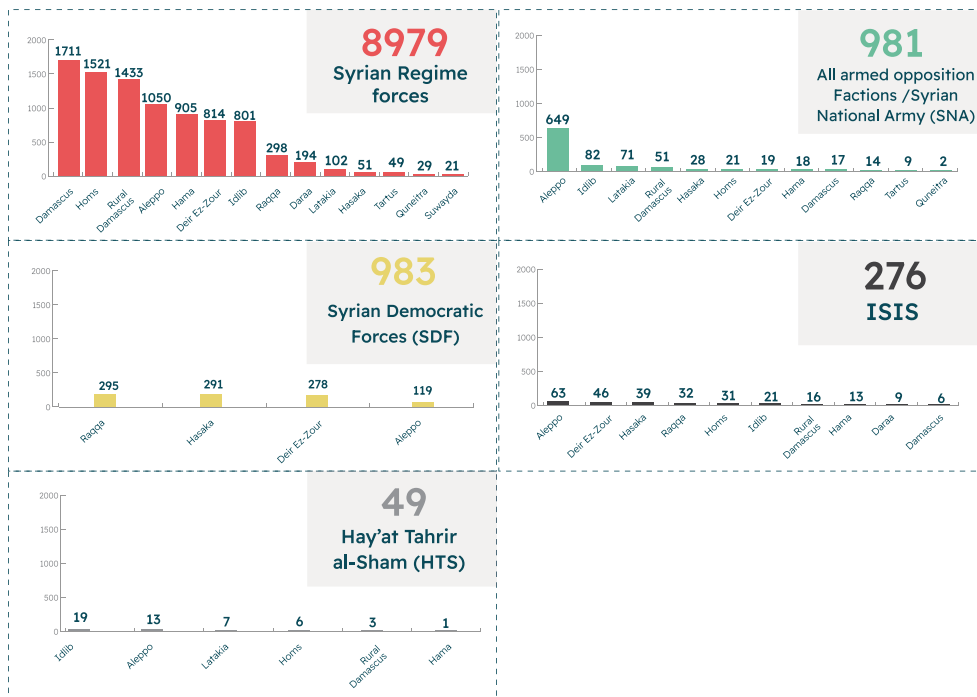
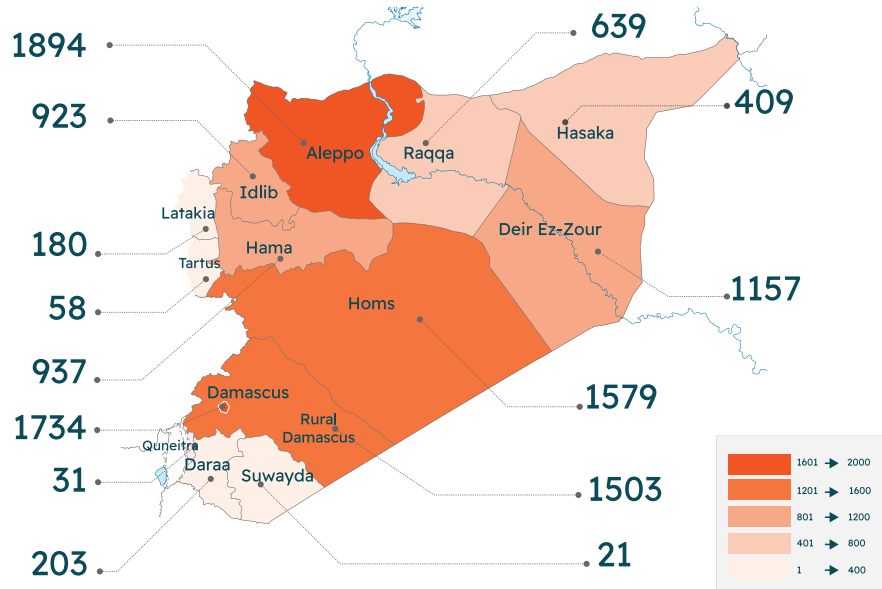
As the chart shows, the Syrian regime is responsible for no fewer than 80 percent of all arrests and enforced disappearances involving females. In this, the regime's manner of specifically targeting women stands out in comparison to the other parties to the conflict. This also indicates that the Syrian regime has been pursuing, arresting, and disappearing women and girls under various pretexts in a deliberate and calculated manner, which we will outline in this report, meaning that women have been arrested by the regime in keeping with calculated and deliberate strategies.

Cases of arrest/detention and/or enforced disappearance involving females at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by year as follows:



As the chart shows, 2015 was the worst year to date in terms of arrests targeting females, with roughly 78 percent of all arrests of females that year carried out by Syrian regime forces; this was followed by 2014, then 2013, and 2012. The Syrian regime was responsible for over half of all the arrests of females which we documented in all of these years.

Cases of arrest/detention and/or enforced disappearance of women and girls at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by governorate as follows:

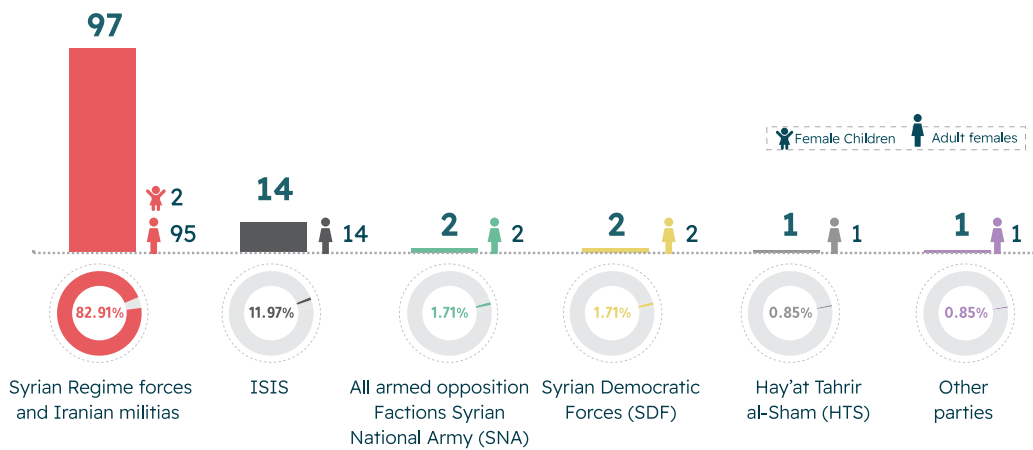


As the map shows, the highest number of female arrests was documented in Aleppo governorate, followed by Damascus, then Homs, then Rural Damascus.

C. Female deaths due to torture

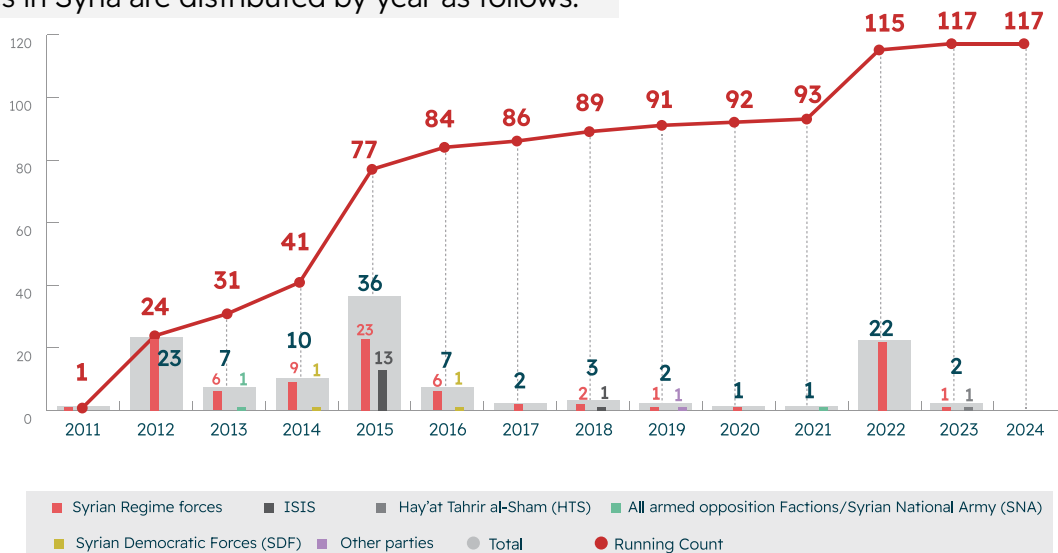
Between March 2011 and November 25, 2024, we documented the deaths of no fewer than **117 females** due to torture in the detention centers operated by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 97 female deaths due to torture – 95 adult females and two female children.
- **ISIS:** 14 female deaths due to torture.
- **SDF:** Two female deaths due to torture.
- **Armed opposition/SNA:** Two female deaths due to torture.
- **HTS:** One female death due to torture.
- **Other parties:** One female death due to torture.



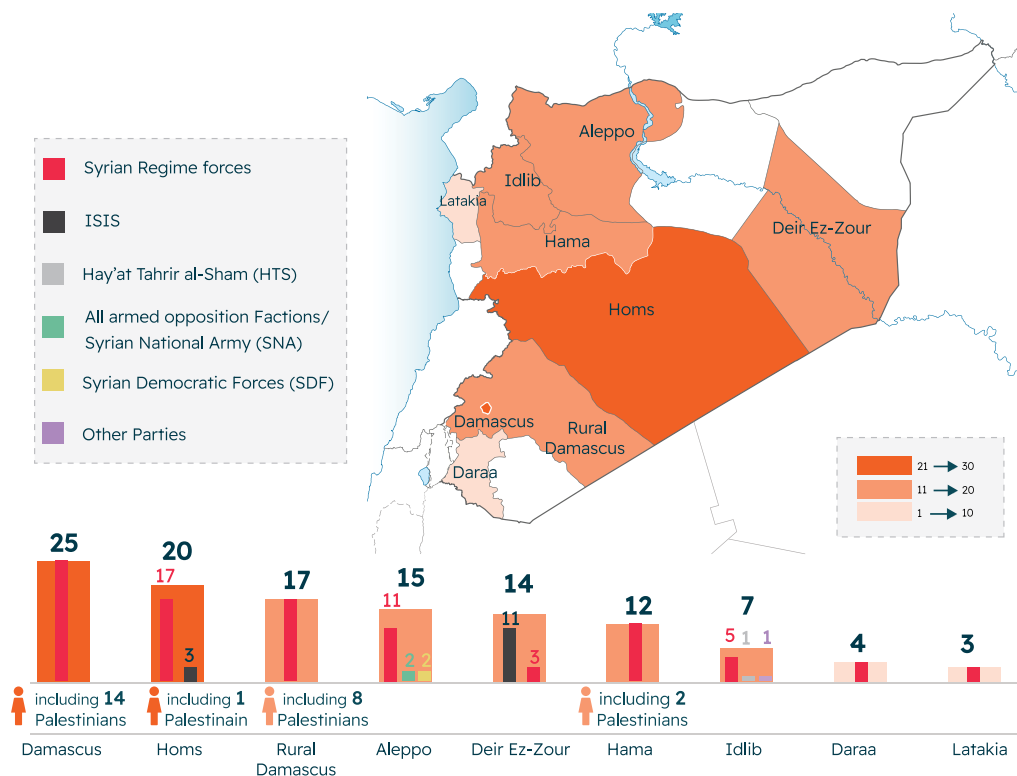
As the chart above shows, Syrian regime forces are responsible for approximately 83 percent of all female deaths due to torture in detention centers. This shows that the regime has used torture as a systematic method against females. The Syrian regime is followed by ISIS with 12 percent of the total.

Female deaths due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by year as follows:



As the chart above shows, 2015 was the worst in terms of female deaths due to torture accounting for 23 percent of the total, with the Syrian regime and ISIS being responsible for all cases recorded that year, followed by 2012, and then 2022. The Syrian regime was also responsible for all female deaths due to torture recorded in both of those years.

Female deaths due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed across governorates:

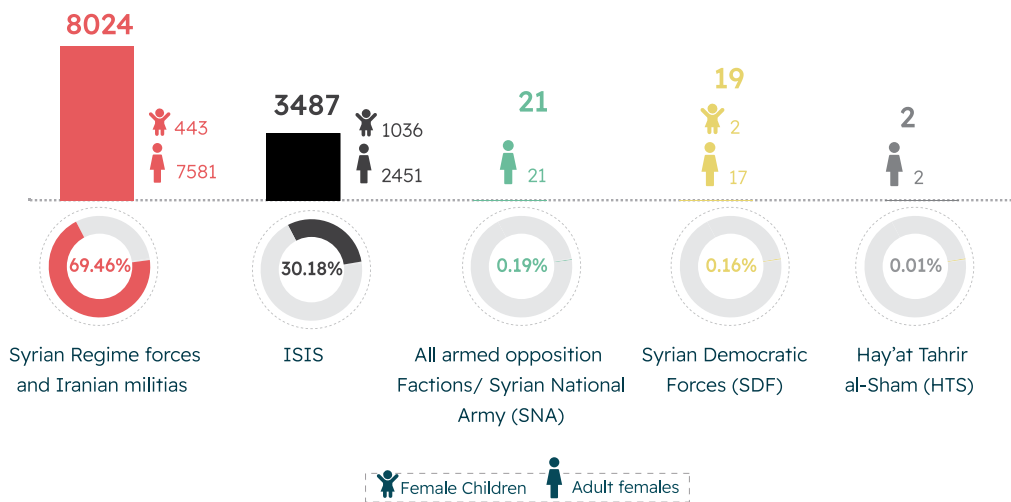


As the map above shows, Damascus recorded the highest number of female deaths due to torture, followed by Homs, then Rural Damascus, then Aleppo, and then Deir Ez-Zour.

D. Sexual violence against females

SNHR has documented no fewer than **11,553 incidents** of sexual violence against females, including female minors aged under 18, at the hands of parties to the conflict and the controlling forces between March 2011 and November 25, 2024, distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 8,024 incidents, divided into 7,581 involving adult females and 443 involving female children.
- **ISIS:** 3,487 incidents, divided into 2,451 involving adult females and 1,036 involving female children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):** Two incidents.
- **Armed opposition factions:** 21 incidents.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):** 19 incidents, dividing into 17 incidents involving adult females and two incident involving female children.

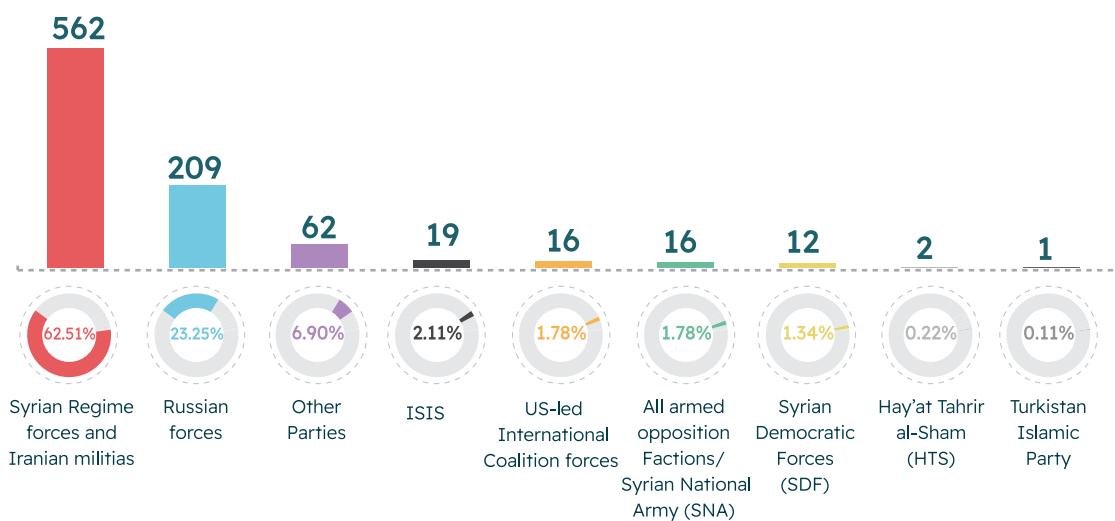


As the graph shows, the Syrian regime has been the party responsible for most incidents of sexual violence against women, accounting for about 69 percent of all sexual violence cases documented by SNHR, followed by ISIS with 30 percent of the total. Both of these parties used sexual violence as a strategic weapon of war and revenge to intimidate communities. ISIS is followed by the SDF and all armed opposition factions/SNA, which also used sexual violence as a discriminatory instrument to extort victims and their families. These figures show that sexual violence against females in Syria has been a distinct characteristic of the conflict.

E. Attacks on medical facilities

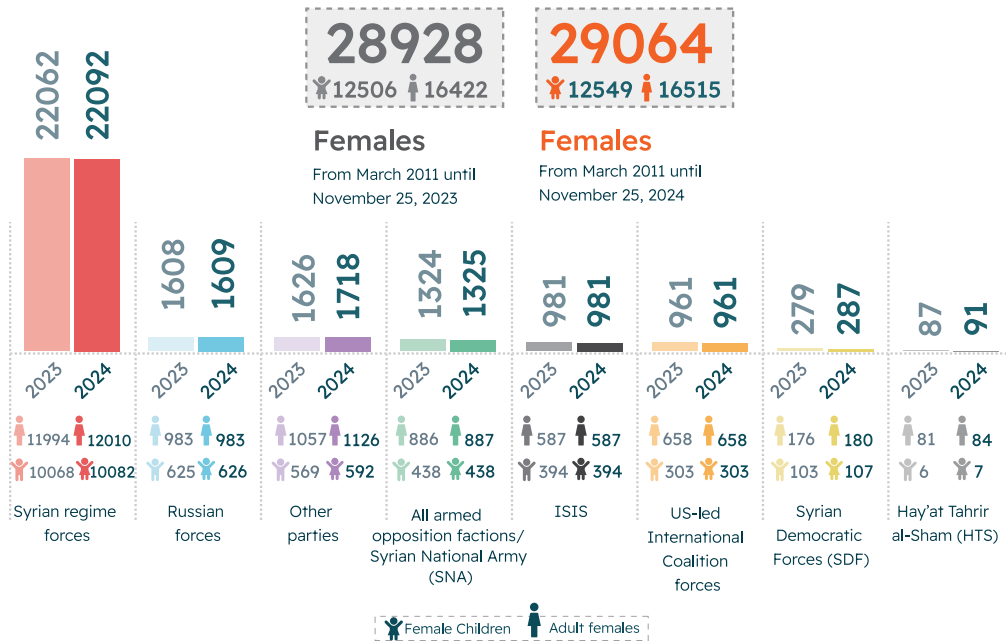
SNHR has documented no fewer than **899 attacks** on medical facilities at the hands of the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria from March 2011 up until November 25, 2024. Those attacks are distributed as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 562 attacks.
- **Russian forces:** 209 attacks.
- **ISIS:** 19 attacks.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):** Two attacks.
- **Turkistan Islamic Party:** One attack.
- **All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA):** 16 attacks.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF):** 12 attacks.
- **US-led International Coalition forces:** 16 attacks.
- **Other parties:** 62 attacks.



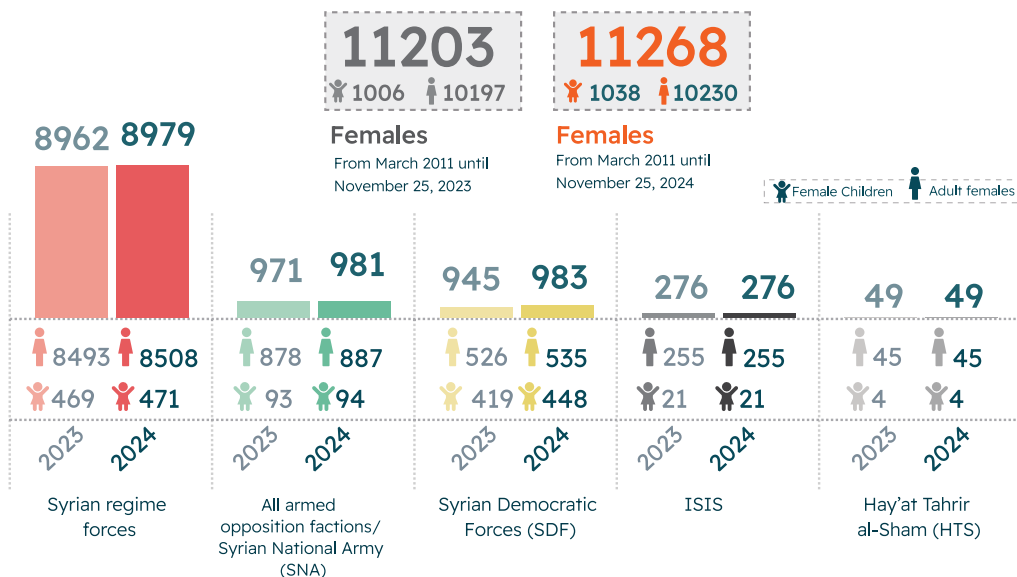
As shown in the chart above, Syrian regime forces have been responsible for 62 percent of all attacks on medical facilities in Syria to date, followed by Russian forces with 23 percent, while other parties have been responsible for significantly fewer attacks. This highlights that medical facilities have been targeted by the parties with the greatest military capabilities. This significantly large number of attacks against the already scarce and limited number of medical facilities has further reduced the already inadequate levels of healthcare and essential services provided for women

Comparison between female victims killed by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria between March 2011 as of November 25, 2023, and as of November 25, 2024



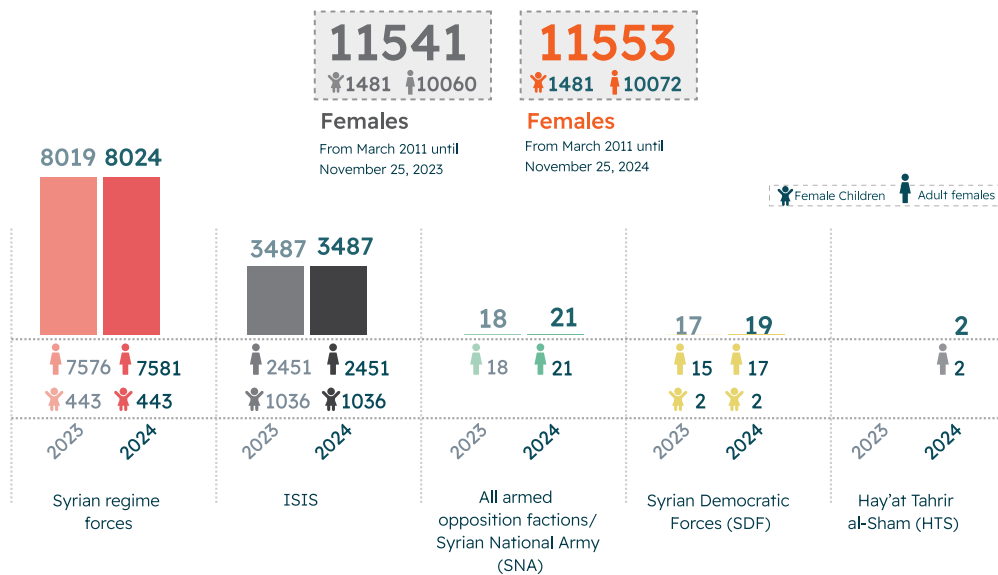
Comparing the data from those two periods shows that Syrian regime forces continue to be responsible for the highest number of female deaths, with 2024 seeing 30 more victims than 2023. The number of female deaths at the hands of other parties also increased by 92 from 2023. This increase is explained by the increasing numbers of incidents of explosions of leftover war remnants, such as landmines and unexploded ordnance that targeted civilians, particularly women and children, in areas that saw extensive military offensives, or which have yet to stabilize following the end of hostilities.

Comparison between the number of females who have been arrested since March 2011 and are still detained and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2023, and as of November 25, 2024



As shown on the chart above, the most notable year-on-year increase in the number of female detainees still detained and/or forcibly disappeared was seen in regime detention centers, with an increase of 17 cases (8,962 in 2023 to 8,979 in 2024). This shows that arrest and enforced disappearance practices are still continuing.

Comparison between the number of incidents of sexual violence against females by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since March 2011 as of November 25, 2023, and November 25, 2024



As shown on the graph, the number of incidents of sexual violence against females, especially by Syrian regime forces, increased, providing further evidence that regime forces continue to use sexual violence against women in areas under their control. Regime forces are followed by all armed opposition factions/SNA and SDF.

III. OUTLINE OF THE MOST NOTABLE PATTERNS OF GROSS VIOLATIONS BY THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT AGAINST FEMALES SINCE MARCH 2011 UP UNTIL NOVEMBER 2024

Gross violations against females by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria continued to take place in 2024. These violations ranged from killing, inflicting serious injuries, and maiming, to conscription, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, and sexual violence. The incidents documented this year confirm that females continue to suffer on a daily basis, while still struggling to cope with the devastating impact of the conflict on their lives and future. Below is a summary of the various violations by each of the parties to the conflict.

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2024:

In 2024, Syrian regime forces and their allies continued to carry out military offensives in various regions, resulting in numerous civilian deaths, including females. As SNHR's database attest, at least six females were documented as killed at the hands of Syrian regime forces since the beginning of 2024 up until November 25, 2024. According to our monitoring, there have been several distinctive patterns in the killings committed by the Syrian regime this year, which include:

- **Indiscriminate shelling:** Syrian regime forces carried out indiscriminate attacks on populated areas, especially in northwest Syria. The most notable of these attacks occurred in the village of Kafriya in northern rural Idlib and its outskirts, and the village of al-Dahla in eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. These attacks, which targeted residential neighborhoods using artillery shells and rocket launchers, resulted in horrific massacres, which saw female deaths in the areas of Idlib, Aleppo, and rural Deir Ez-Zour.
- **Civilian casualties during regime infighting:** Several injuries and deaths of civilians, including women, were documented during clashes between two groups affiliated with Syrian regime forces (from the Military Security Intelligence and State Security directorates) in the town of al-Sanamayn in northern rural Daraa.
- **Deaths from previous injuries:** SNHR documented cases of women dying from injuries sustained during earlier indiscriminate artillery attacks by Syrian regime forces on residential neighborhoods outside its control, particularly in the Idlib and Deir Ez-Zor regions.

Consistent regime approach to kill females since March 2011

Syrian regime forces have employed various methods, both indiscriminate and targeted, to kill civilians, including women, through aerial and ground attacks using a wide range of weapons. These methods included:

- **Missiles and artillery shells.**
- **Indiscriminate weapons,** such as barrel bombs, cluster munitions, chemical weapons, and landmines.

These attacks have often targeted densely populated areas, such as markets, camps, and residential neighborhoods. The regime also resorted to “double-tap strikes,” hitting the same location within a short period of time with airstrikes and artillery to maximize casualties.

Gender-based and sectarian targeting of women

The killing strategies utilized have extended beyond randomness to include direct targeting of females based on gender and discriminatory practices. This has been particularly evident during massacres of a sectarian or retaliatory nature in areas that witnessed widespread protests against the regime.

Figures and implications

As SNHR's database attest, about 78 percent of female deaths in Syria were committed by Syrian regime forces, making it the party with greatest responsibility for these violations compared to other conflict actors. Females constituted about 11% of the total civilian casualties caused by the regime, reflecting the systematic nature of the targeting.

Temporal peaks of violations

These strategies intensified during the years 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015, particularly in areas outside the regime's control, with these years seeing the highest annual tolls of victims documented to date.

Types of weapons and casualties

- Barrel bombs: Killed at least 2,453 females from July 2012 to November 25, 2024.
- Chemical weapons: Claimed the lives of 336 females due to asphyxiation from December 23, 2012, to November 25, 2024.
- Cluster munitions: Caused the deaths of 314 females from July 2012 to November 25, 2024.
- Sieges and obstruction of aid: Resulted in the deaths of 352 females due to food shortages and lack of assistance in besieged areas.
- Remnants of war: Continue to cause female casualties through the explosions of landmines and other war ordnances.

As SNHR's database confirms, at least **22,092 females** have been killed by Syrian regime forces between March 2011 and November 25, 2024, divided into:

- 12,010 adult females.
- 10,082 female children.

2. Arrest/detention, enforced disappearance, and torture

In 2024:

In 2024, Syrian regime forces continued to carry out arbitrary detention campaigns targeting women and girls in areas under their control. These arrests were conducted by various security agencies, including the:

- Military Security Intelligence Directorate.
- State Security Directorate.
- Air Force Intelligence Directorate.
- Political Security Intelligence Directorate.

Additionally, military units such as the regime's Fourth Division and local pro-regime militias were involved in these arrests. As SNHR's data shows, at least 17 females of those arrested by regime forces since the start of 2024 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024.

Motives behind arrests

- **Pressure on wanted individuals through their relatives:** Women were targeted by regime forces to pressurize their relatives into surrendering themselves. These cases were particularly prevalent in Damascus.
- **Detention of women refugees forcibly repatriated from Lebanon:** Arrests included women among the refugees forcibly returned from Lebanon by the Lebanese Army and Lebanon's General Security. These returnees were detained upon entering Syria.
- **Detentions during returns from areas outside regime control:** SNHR documented cases of arrests targeting women and girls returning with their families to regime-controlled areas, especially at checkpoints erected on the entry points to Damascus. Although most of these detainees were released after several days, they endured various violations during their detention.

Consistent regime strategy for arresting and forcibly disappeared females since March 2011

Since the start of the conflict in 2011, Syrian regime forces have systematically targeted women through using arrest and enforced disappearance as tools of control and intimidation. These arrests have often gone on to be categorized as enforced disappearances.

Methods used

According to a detailed report by SNHR in February 2024 entitled '[Unshakable Voices: Syrian Women Who Overcame Trauma of Detention and the Tribulations Following Their Release](#)', the methods of arrest included:

- Detaining women and girls at checkpoints, border crossings, or while traveling between cities.
- Security ambushes and entrapping women through deception.
- Raids on their homes, residences, workplaces, or even universities.
- Storming opposition events, such as protests and sit-ins.
- Abducting women and girls from public streets or other locations and summoning them for interrogation.
- Targeting women engaged in humanitarian activities, such as assisting displaced persons or the injured.
- Detaining women during visits to detention centers to see relatives or after leaving besieged areas.

Main patterns of targeting women

SNHR's database shows that women have been targeted based on various factors, including:

- Gender, sectarian affiliation, and geographic origin.
- Their roles in civil, media, and human rights activities.
- Their participation in peaceful protests and humanitarian endeavors.

Post-release challenges

The suffering of women does not end upon their release. Former detainees face additional violations, including:

- Difficulty readjusting to daily life.
- Persistent social stigma and discrimination.
- Long-term psychological and physical effects.

Figures

As of November 25, 2024, at least **8,979 females** among those arrested by regime forces since March 2011 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared. These are divided into:

- 8,508 adult females.
- 471 female children.

Female detainees endure harsh conditions, including:

- Physical and psychological torture.
- Exceptional trials that may result in execution.
- Being kept in inhumane environments characterized by overcrowding, neglect, and mistreatment.

Widespread torture and detention centers unsuitable for women

Female detainees have faced continuous violations, including various forms of physical, psychological, and sexual torture on a widespread scale. Reports reveal that detention centers operated by the regime employed 72 different methods of torture, coupled with inhumane detention conditions ranging from overcrowded cells to deliberate medical negligence, and denial of basic hygiene and ventilation needs.

Lack of basic women's rights in detention centers

Detention centers lack the necessary infrastructure and systems to protect the rights of female detainees, exposing them to additional violations. Major issues include:

- **Absence of female supervision**

In most military and security detention centers, all operations—including searches, interrogations, and transfers—are conducted by male officers, exposing women to blatant gender-based violations.

- **No detention centers specifically for women**

Women are often held in small cells within male sections. Civil prisons, while having dedicated women's sections, lack proper facilities compared to male sections.

- **No facilities for pregnant women or mothers with children**

Detention centers fail to provide necessary medical care for pregnant women, while mothers are forced to endure harsh conditions with their children.

These horrendously dire conditions, alongside a complete lack of privacy or any consideration for basic human needs, inescapably force women to endure harrowing additional challenges in detention centers.

Newly revealed deaths of forcibly disappeared females acknowledged, and new cases documented

Since 2018, SNHR has been documenting cases of forcibly disappeared persons subsequently being registered as dead in the civil registry records by the regime, without the victims' cause of death being disclosed or their bodies being returned to their families.

- A total of 23 forcibly disappeared females have been registered as dead in the civil registry record by the regime since 2018 up until November 25, 2024.
- In all these cases, the causes of death were not disclosed, and the victims' bodies have not been returned to families, perpetuating the already traumatized families' state of uncertainty and intensifying their suffering.

Leaked Caesar photos and identifying victims

SNHR has managed to identify 11 of the female victims who appeared in the so-called [Caesar photos](#) of regime victims' bodies that were leaked from the Syrian regime's military hospitals.

- These photos, which show about 6,786 documented victims, provide clear evidence of the systematic use of torture in regime detention centers.
- Victims have been identified accurately through analyzing photos and relatives' accounts.

Job dismissals and property confiscation targeting activists in Suwayda

Since early 2024, the Syrian regime issued [employment dismissal orders](#) against individuals, both male and female, who participated in anti-regime protests in the governorate of Suwayda, which began in August 2023.

- These actions targeted several women activists as punishment for their peaceful activism.
- The punitive measures also included property confiscation, which constitutes a blatant violation of property rights enshrined in international law.

Analysis and impact

- Dismissal and property confiscation orders serve as punitive tools to silence the voices of women demanding reform and change.
- Such practices further intensify the discrimination and marginalization against women, depriving them of social, economic, and political rights.
- These policies also violate women's right to public participation, further entrenching repression and authoritarianism in Syrian society.

3. Sexual violence

Sexual violence is one of the most heinous violations committed by Syrian regime forces against women and girls. This form of violence is part of a broader systematic, widespread attack on the civilian population, amounting to crimes against humanity. Multiple forms of sexual violence have been documented, with sexual violence being used as a means of revenge, punishment, humiliation, and to extract information. These forms include:

- Forced stripping.
- Physical harassment.
- Beating of genitals.
- Rape and threats of rape.
- Psychological and verbal abuse.
- Sexual extortion.
- Accusations against detainees of engaging in prostitution.

Lack of accountability and stigma

The absence of legal accountability perpetuates these practices, as victims face societal discrimination and stigma that exacerbate their suffering. Fear and psychological trauma prevent many women from reporting the sexual violence they have endured, further aggravating its impact on victims and their families and resulting in many crimes being left undocumented.

Figures

According to SNHR, more than **8,024 cases** of sexual violence against females have been documented, including:

- 884 cases of sexual violence in detention centers.
- 445 cases targeting girls under the age of 18.

Although there has been a noticeable decrease in the documented incidents of sexual violence against women by Syrian regime forces in 2024, this does not indicate that such violations have ceased. Evidence suggests the likely continuation of these practices, particularly in harsh detention conditions. However, challenges in accessing information hinder the proper documentation of these cases.

4. Attacks on medical facilities

The attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces on health facilities and hospitals are part of a strategy aimed at depriving civilians of essential services. These attacks have had a particularly harsh impact on women, depriving many of access to necessary healthcare, particularly in the fields of reproductive health and childbirth.

Health impact

- **Reproductive health and childbirth**

Many women have been unable to obtain appropriate medical care during pregnancy or childbirth, leading to severe health complications, including maternal and infant deaths.

- **Lack of alternative services**

The destruction of medical facilities has led to significant challenges in accessing alternative facilities, increasing women's struggles to access basic medical services.

- **Psychological and emotional impact**

Women have suffered immense psychological stress due to the loss of healthcare services, alongside persistent anxiety about their lives and their children's wellbeing.

Figures

Since March 2011, regime bombardment operations have completely or partially destroyed at least **562 medical facilities**.

- Most of these facilities were rendered out of service, directly affecting women and healthcare workers.
- This destruction intensified the healthcare crisis, leaving women facing heightened risks in the absence of an adequate medical infrastructure.

B. Russian forces

1. Extrajudicial killing

Women constitute approximately 30 percent of the total number of victims of attacks by Russian forces since the launch of the Russian military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015. This high percentage reflects a clear pattern of targeting women in Russian military operations.

Russian forces follow a strategy of intensive bombardment using air force and military bases, targeting areas under opposition control. This has resulted in widespread destruction and further mass displacement of civilians.

According to SNHR's data, Russian airstrikes have caused the deaths of:

- A total of **1,609 females** since the start of the Russian intervention until November 25, 2024, divided into:
- **983** adult females.
- **626** female children.
- **One female** has been documented killed by Russian forces since the start of 2024.

Cluster munitions

SNHR has documented at least **237 attacks** by Russian forces involving the use of cluster munitions, despite these weapons being internationally prohibited.

- These attacks resulted in the deaths of 28 adult female.
- Cluster munitions attacks have targeted civilian infrastructure and residential areas, causing numerous civilian casualties, including women and girls.

Impact of attacks

Data suggests that the targeting of females in Russian attacks has not been random but is rather part of a strategy to pressure the civilian population and dismantle the social fabric in areas outside the Syrian regime's control.

2. Attacks on medical facilities

Since the beginning of the Russian military intervention in 2015, Russian forces have systematically targeted medical facilities in areas outside regime control, using both guided and non-guided weapons. These attacks have resulted in the partial or complete destruction of numerous facilities and the deaths of several healthcare workers, including women.

Figures

As SNHR's database attests, as of November 25, 2024:

- Russian forces have targeted at least 209 medical facilities.
- These attacks have disrupted healthcare access for women and girls, exacerbating their physical, mental, and emotional suffering.

Impact

- **Physical and mental health**

Russian attacks on medical facilities have worsened females' health crisis, particularly as healthcare services deteriorated, leaving pregnant and injured women without adequate care.

- **Disruption of health services**

The attacks have caused a severe shortage of healthcare services dedicated to women, and further complicated access to essential care in affected areas.

C. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)

1. Extrajudicial killing

Since its establishment as Jabhat al-Nusra in January 2012, HTS has conducted numerous military operations that have resulted in civilian casualties, including women and girls. In this, the group has relied on strategies involving indiscriminate shelling with locally made, unguided weapons, in addition to:

- Infighting with other armed opposition factions in densely populated areas.
- Random shooting during house raids and pursuits of wanted individuals in areas under its control.

Figures

According to SNHR's database, HTS have been responsible for:

- The deaths of 91 females since its establishment in January 2012 up until November 25, 2024. These are divided into:
 - 84 adult females.
 - Seven female children.

2. Arrest/detention, enforced disappearance, and torture

Since its establishment in January 2012, HTS has employed various strategies to target females, including:

- Abductions.
- Arbitrary detention.
- Imprisonment in harsh conditions.

On March 5, 2024, the HTS' Salvation Government issued a general amnesty for detainees in its detention centers, including those held on criminal charges. According to monitoring, however, no women were released pursuant to this decision. Overall, as of November 25, 2024, at least **49 of the females** arrested by HTS since its foundation in January 2012 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared. These are divided into:

- 45 adult females
- 4 female children

Detention conditions and torture

- Detainees are subjected to physical and psychological torture.
- They are denied communication with their families.
- There are no designated women's detention centers, resulting in women and girls being imprisoned in inappropriate facilities, such as:
 - Sections within male detention centers.
 - Unprepared military facilities.

Deaths due to harsh conditions

SNHR has documented the death of one woman as a result of torture or medical negligence in HTS detention centers.

Women linked to extremist organizations

- The figures above do not include the thousands of women whom HTS has detained on suspicion of being affiliated with extremist groups such as ISIS, Hurras al-Din, or Jund al-Aqsa.
- These women are held in detention camps under extremely harsh conditions, with no clarification of their fate or provision of adequate humanitarian care.
- Access to these camps remains highly restricted, as HTS prevents humanitarian and human rights organizations from entering them, further obscuring the situation of the detained women.

3. Attacks on medical facilities

SNHR has documented at least **two attacks** on medical facilities by HTS since the group's establishment up until November 25, 2024.

- These attacks were carried out in the course of HTS' indiscriminate military operations.
- They constituted clear violations of the right to healthcare in the affected areas.

D. Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2024

There have been no significant changes to SDF policies in areas under the group's control in 2024. In other words, the SDF has continued to commit grave violations against civilians, including women and girls. SNHR has detected a number of patterns in the extrajudicial killings committed by the SDF:

- **Targeting females with gunfire**

There have been documented cases where young girls were killed by SDF patrols during raids and while chasing wanted individuals.

- **Deaths of women due to prior injuries**

Some women have lost their lives due to injuries sustained from previous gunfire by SDF forces, especially during the group's targeting of areas controlled by Syrian regime forces.

- **Victims killed in indiscriminate bombardment**

SDF personnel have bombed densely populated residential areas along the banks of the Euphrates River in Deir ez-Zor, resulting in casualties among women and girls.

Figures

SNHR has documented the killing of at least five females at the hands of SDF since the start of 2024 up until November 25, 2024.

Amnesty Act No. 10 of 2024

On July 17, 2024, SDF issued a general amnesty law for crimes committed prior to this date. However, no women or girls were released pursuant to this act, according to what SNHR has documented.

SDF practices that resulted in female deaths

1. Indiscriminate bombardment

SDF has targeted areas outside their control, leading to casualties among women and girls.

2. Clashes and raids in populated areas

During clashes and incursions in densely populated areas, civilians, especially women, have been at risk of injury and death.

3. Deliberate sniper operations

Cases of sniper operations targeting civilians, including women, have been documented, particularly in areas adjacent to territories controlled by the SDF's rivals.

4. Gunfire from checkpoints

SNHR has documented cases in which SDF personnel stationed at checkpoints run by the group have opened fire at civilian vehicles, resulting in casualties among females.

5. Random shooting during house raids

During house raids and searches, indiscriminate gunfire by SDF personnel has caused the death of several women.

Statistics since establishment

SNHR has documented the killing of at least **287 females** since the establishment of the People's Defense Units (YPG) in July 2012 up until November 25, 2024. These are divided into:

- 180 adult females.
- 107 female children.

2. Arrest/Detention, enforced disappearance, and torture

In 2024

Throughout 2024, SDF continued to implement policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, particularly targeting women through various forms of abuse. According to the SNHR, the main patterns of detention this year included:

- **Detention at checkpoints**

Cases were documented in which women were targeted for detention while passing through checkpoints, with some subjected to extortion by SDF personnel.

- **Detention to pressure their families**

There were recorded instances of women and their children being detained to pressurize their husbands or relatives into surrendering.

- **Detention for criticizing living conditions**

SDF targeted women affiliated with other Kurdish parties who voiced criticism of the deteriorating living conditions in SDF-held areas.

Figures

According to SNHR's data, at least **38 of the females arrested by the SDF** since the start of 2024 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024.

Targeting females through abductions and detention by the SDF

SDF personnel have employed various systematic practices targeting females, including girls. Notable patterns include:

1. Terrorism charges

SDF has resorted to accusing women of terrorism as a pretext for detention, especially against women suspected of having links with ISIS or other groups which are rivals to the SDF.

These detentions have often subsequently been categorized as enforced disappearances. Many victims and their families reported that the charges against them were based on fabricated reports and lacked any clear evidence.

2. Kidnapping and detention for recruitment purposes

SDF has abducted and detained girls for conscription purposes.

3. Gender- and ethnicity-based targeting

Women have been detained as hostages to pressurize their relatives into surrendering themselves or paying ransom.

Some cases involved targeting women based on their ethnicity.

4. Detention due to political opinion and activism

The SDF has detained female activists or critics of its practices through house raids, arrests in the street, in workplaces, or at checkpoints.

5. Movement and violating policies

Women have been detained while traveling to SNA-held areas or for attempting to enter SDF-held areas without a guarantor.

Detention conditions

Female detainees in SDF centers endure harsh conditions, including:

- Overcrowding, poor ventilation, and lack of hygiene.
- Physical and psychological abuse.
- Multiple forms of torture, such as:
 - Brutal beatings.
 - Nails being pulled out.
 - Hair shaving.
 - Solitary confinement.
 - Denial of medical care and food.

In many cases, detainees are not formally charged, and they do not receive fair trials, resulting in prolonged and unjustified detentions.

Figures since establishment

- SNHR has documented that at least **983 of the females** arrested by the SDF since the YPG was founded in July 2012 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024. These are divided into:
 - 535 adult females.
 - 448 female children
- The deaths of two women due to torture or medical negligence in detention centers operated by SDF have been documented in the same period.

3. Discriminatory decisions against women

On September 29, 2024, the SDF's 'General Women's Coordination' in Deir Ez-Zour issued a decision banning the wearing of the niqab inside the SDF's Autonomous Administration departments and institutions.

Analysis

- **Privacy invasion**

Imposing such restrictions violates personal freedoms guaranteed by international human rights law.

- **Social impact**

Decisions like this can create social tensions, especially in communities with cultural and religious diversity.

The decision is interpreted as part of discriminatory policies that may marginalize certain religious or cultural groups.

4. Recruitment

In 2024

The SDF continued to enforce conscription policies in 2024, including the conscription of minors and girls. These policies involved abducting females for conscription purposes, with their families threatened to prevent them from filing complaints with human rights organizations.

According to SNHR's data, at least **83 cases** of child conscription by the SDF, including of females, have been documented so far this year as of November 25, 2024. Of these cases, four of the conscripts have been discharged, while 79 children are still active in SDF ranks.

Recruitment Patterns

1. Military Conscription

- SDF personnel abduct girls from schools, public streets, and other public places, to take them to training camps often far from their places of residence.
- In some cases, girls are moved to areas controlled by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq.
- Families are prevented from contacting their daughters for extended periods lasting as long as months or years to prevent the possibility of them returning to their families.

2. Voluntary recruitment through influence

- SDF uses persuasive tactics, such as influencing girls' beliefs and offering financial incentives to them and their families, to encourage recruitment.

3. Mixed methods

- Girls may be initially abducted and later persuaded to join SDF ranks by offering them financial and moral incentives.

Training and Roles

- Girls are trained to carry arms and perform combat tasks.
- They are indoctrinated with PKK ideology and used in various combat roles.
- Recruitment rates have increased during periods of military escalations against SDF-controlled territories.

Exploitation of females in recruitment

SDF exploits females, including girls, to strengthen its combat structure and maintain control over its territories.

- Females are considered a key part of the SDF's systematic recruitment strategy, with the support of the PKK.
- Multiple SDF-affiliated entities carry out recruitment operations, including:
- "Jwanen Shorshker" (Revolutionary Youth).
- Women's Protection Units (YPJ).
- People's Defense Units (YPG).

Figures

As SNHR's database attests:

- A total of **323 cases** of conscription of girls by SDF have been documented.
- **Eight girls** have died on the battlefield.
- About **171 girls** have been discharged, while 152 girls are still active in the SDF's ranks.

Unmet International Obligations

Despite the [SDF's Autonomous Administration signing the Joint Action Plan with the UN in June 2019](#) to end child recruitment and discharge any conscripted children, and despite the YPG and YPJ signing deeds of commitment with the Geneva Call organization to ban the use of children in wars,

- Conscription has continued, at even higher rates.
- While the SDF has established a Child Protection Office to receive complaints, many families of recruited girls have received no responses to their inquiries about their children's fates.

5. Targeting medical facilities

Medical facilities in SDF-held areas have been subjected to repeated attacks due to indiscriminate bombardment, which caused severe damage to healthcare infrastructure.

Figures

SNHR has documented at least **12 attacks** on medical facilities as of November 25, 2024.

These attacks resulted in:

- Disruption of basic health services.
- Worsening humanitarian suffering, especially for women, who were directly affected by the loss of reproductive health and medical care services.

Impact

- The targeting of medical facilities has increased the suffering of women and vulnerable groups, who have lost access to necessary healthcare amid difficult living conditions and ongoing security risks.

E. All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA)

1. Extrajudicial killing

In 2024

SNHR has documented the killing of two women by all armed opposition factions/SNA since the start of 2024 up until November 25, 2024. These two deaths took place amid infighting between two SNA groups in the rural areas of Izaz city in northern rural Aleppo governorate. These two women deaths were among a number of civilian deaths recorded.

SNA practices in targeting and killing civilians, including females

- **Indiscriminate bombing**

All armed opposition factions/SNA used non-guided locally made weapons in indiscriminate bombardment operations that resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children.

- **Clashes**

Clashes, whether internally within SNA groups or between SNA and their rivals, that took place in densely populated areas caused injuries among civilians.

- **Random gunfire**

Opposition-held areas have seen incidents of random gunfire during public fights, posing a threat to the lives of women and children in particular.

- **Impact on civilians**

Women and children were put at risk, including physical injuries and psychological suffering.

These practices violated civilians' right to safety and dignified living, exacerbating the deterioration of their daily lives.

Figures

SNHR has documented the killing of **1,325 females** at the hands of all armed opposition factions/SNA since March 2011 up until November 25, 2024. These are divided into:

- 887 adult females.
- 438 female children

2. Detention, enforced disappearance, and torture

In 2024

All armed opposition factions/SNA continued arbitrary arrest and abduction campaigns in 2024, targeting civilians, including women. These violations focused on individuals coming from regime-held areas regime to opposition-held areas for purposes such as:

- Visiting relatives.
- Attempting to irregularly cross into Türkiye.

Detention conditions

- Women have been held in inhumane conditions, without clear charges and without receiving fair legal trials.
- Detention periods ranged from weeks to months.

Ethnic targeting

- There have been arrests targeting women based on their ethnic backgrounds in opposition-held areas in Aleppo governorate.
- These arrests have often been carried out without judicial oversight or the presence of the relevant police forces.
- Factions have used arrests for intimidation purposes, such as pressuring civilians, seizing their properties, or extorting them.

Figures

As SNHR's database attests, at least **17 of the women** arrested by all armed opposition factions/SNA since the start of 2024 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024.

Widespread targeting of females through abduction and detention

Throughout the past few years, all armed opposition factions/SNA have implemented systematic policies involving abductions and detention of women, exploiting the lack of clear organizational structure to regulate their practices and the absence of an independent judiciary to ensure transparency and justice. The pretexts and motives given for these violations have changed with shifts in territorial control and the dismantling of many groups involved in such operations, yet the overall approach has remained consistent.

Main patterns

1. Detention based on ethnicity and gender for extortion purposes

- Some opposition factions have adopted abduction and detention policies to exploit women, demanding large ransoms from their families.
- A number of cases have been documented where factions used women to pressurize families into giving up their properties or forcing them to leave their homes.
- Most of these operations have exhibited an ethnic character and were concentrated in Afrin in northern rural Aleppo governorate.

2. Detention in the context of restriction of movement

- Women coming to opposition-held areas, both with and without their children, have been targeted, with some targeted while attempting to cross the border into Türkiye.
- Women in detention have faced harsh conditions, with factions exploiting their situation by charging fees for their release or for allowing them to pass through.

3. Detention on security charges

- Many women have been accused of collaborating with the SDF or its institutions, especially in Afrin.
- Some women have subsequently been categorized as forcibly disappeared persons following their arrest on such charges.

4. Detention due to media or humanitarian activism

- Women working in media-related or humanitarian positions have been subjected to arrest or abduction.
- These operations have included women who expressed opposition to the opposition factions' practices in areas under those factions' control.

Detention conditions

During their detention, women have suffered harsh conditions in unprepared detention centers operated by the factions that carried out the arrest. These include:

- **Lack of basic facilities**
 - Detention centers lacked even the most basic forms of healthcare or nutritional care.
- **Methods of torture**
 - Violations included:
 - Severe beatings.
 - Electric shock.
 - Death threats.
 - Solitary confinement.
 - Detainees have been deprived of healthcare, sufficient food, and, in some cases, contact with their children if detained with them.

Figures

- As SNHR's database attests, at least **981 of the females** arrested by all armed opposition factions/SNA since March 2011 are still in detention and/or forcibly disappeared as of November 25, 2024. These are divided into:
 - **887 adult females.**
 - **94 female children**
- Most of those detained have subsequently been classified as forcibly disappeared persons.
- Two women have died in detention centers operated by all armed opposition factions/SNA due to torture or medical negligence.

3. Targeting medical facilities

Indiscriminate attacks by and clashes involving all armed opposition factions/SNA have caused severe damage to medical facilities, which significantly impeded these facilities' ability to provide healthcare services for civilians.

Figures

As SNHR's database shows:

At least **16 attacks** on medical facilities have been carried out by all armed opposition factions/SNA since March 2011 up until November 25, 2024.

These attacks have resulted in:

- Disruption of services
- Complete destruction of some facilities

Impact

- These violations have deprived some civilians, particularly women, of access to basic healthcare.
- Humanitarian suffering in affected areas has intensified, as obtaining access to healthcare services has become a challenging ordeal for civilians.

F. Other parties

1. Extrajudicial killing

SNHR's documentation contains various categories including female deaths that cannot be directly assigned to a specific party. This category includes deaths by bombings by unidentified parties, by gunshots by unidentified parties, by landmines of unidentified source, or by drowning, as well as those killed as a result of gunfire of attacks carried out by Jordanian, Turkish, Lebanese, or Israeli forces.

Within this category, SNHR has documented the killing of no fewer than **1,718 females**, divided between 1,126 adult females and 592 female children, as of November 25, 2024

2. Targeting medical facilities

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2024, SNHR documented no fewer than **62 attacks** on medical facilities among the attacks by unidentified parties. These incidents have adversely affected women's rights to healthcare, further exacerbating their mental and physical suffering, while also halting essential services in the areas that experienced these attacks.

IV. DISCRIMINATORY RESTRICTIONS AND PROCEDURES AGAINST WOMEN

Camps designated for women in northwestern Syria

Widows' camps, as they are commonly known, are camps founded in 2014 to shelter women and their children in northwestern Syria. There are over 50 such camps, which are concentrated in HTS-held areas.

These camps are run by the HTS Salvation Government's Ministry of Development and Humanitarian Affairs and its Camps' Affairs Directorate. Women resort to these camps when they lose their husbands and can find no alternative to obtain housing or a livelihood.

Restrictions

While living conditions vary from one camp to another, most of these camps impose strict restrictions on women, such as:

- **Restricting freedom of movement**
 - Existing and returning to these camps is conditional upon obtaining permission from the camp administrators.
 - In some camps, visitors, including male relatives, coming from outside the camp are prohibited.
- **Work ban**
 - Many of these camps do not allow women to work outside, denying them the opportunity to improve their economic and social conditions.

Ramifications

- **Exclusion and discrimination**
 - Women feel discriminated against and marginalized as a result of these policies, which undermine their economic and social independence.
- **Extortion and violations**
 - In some cases, women have suffered extortion and blackmail by the individuals overseeing these camps.
- **Increased rates of child labor and marriage of minors**
 - As a result of these restrictions, rates of child labor and marriage of minors have increased as a desperate response to the difficult living conditions.

Camps housing families with alleged links to ISIS in northeastern Syria

Ever since the defeat of ISIS in 2019, thousands of families with alleged links to the group have been detained, regardless of the nature or even accuracy of these alleged links, in mass camps, such as al-Hawl and al-Rouj camps in northeastern Syria, which are under the supervision of the SDF.

Living conditions

Women in these camps suffer extremely difficult living conditions, including:

- **Lack of healthcare and education**
- **Lack of security**
 - Many cases of violence and crimes against women victims have been documented.
 - SDF are responsible for establishing security, yet the group has largely failed to do so.
- **No known timeline for release**
 - The lack of any time frame for ending detention only increases the suffering of women who are living in a constant state of uncertainty and fear.
- **Violations against children**
 - We have documented many cases in which boys have been separated from their mothers and taken to detention centers for adults, which:
 - Deprives mothers of any means of communication with their children.
 - Intensifies the psychological suffering of both mothers and children.

Mass detention of various groups of women

Women are held in these camps without any distinction between the various groups, which has led to

- 1. Mixing women actually linked to ISIS with others with no relation to the group**
 - This includes women who had in fact joined the group, who married ISIS members, and others who were accused on clear evidence of having links to ISIS.
- 2. Complicating rehabilitation and reintegration**
 - Failure to separate the various groups has complicated the implementation of rehabilitation programs
 - It also made it difficult to assess cases individually to ensure fairness.

Psychological and social ramifications

- **The stigmatization of an “ISIS family”**
 - Use of this term puts a permanent stigma on women and children, putting them at risk of retaliation and social exclusion.
- **Dehumanization**
 - This branding intensifies the feeling of exclusion for women and children, making their reintegration into society extremely difficult.

Specified recommendations

1. Improve camps' management

- Ensure transparent and humane management of widows' camps and detention camps.
- Provide living conditions that respect human dignity.

2. Segregate between various groups

- Assess each case in detention camps individually to accurately evaluate the level of each adult's responsibility and association with ISIS.

3. Improve protection and care

- Provide security and physical and psychological healthcare for detained women and children.
- Support rehabilitation programs to ensure that women and children can safely return to society.

4. End generalizations and branding

- Cease the use of terms such as 'ISIS families' that only increase social exclusion and intensify the suffering of women and children.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. Violations of international instruments

- The Syrian regime and the other parties have contravened many binding international instruments such as:
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): Prohibits torture and arbitrary detention.
- UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: Prohibits torture and inhumane treatment
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Guarantees the protection of children against violence and conscription.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Prohibits discrimination and violence against women
- These violations also include breaches of the laws of war and customary international law through targeting civilians and using children in the conflict, further intensifying victims' suffering.

2. Failure to address women's specific needs

- Conflict parties, particularly the Syrian regime, have disregarded Rule 134 of customary international humanitarian law, which provides for addressing the special needs of women affected by armed conflicts in areas such as protection, health, and assistance.

3. Violations against women under Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions

- Violations included:
- Attacks on life and physical integrity, including killing, maiming, and torture.
- Violations of personal dignity, including degrading treatment, rape, and forced prostitution.

4. Systematic patterns of discrimination

- Data revealed discriminatory patterns against women, violating the CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against and UN Security Council resolution 1325, which emphasizes the protection of women in armed conflicts.

5. Crimes against humanity

- A number of types of violations have been committed in a widespread and systematic manner, including:
 - Killing.
 - Torture.
 - Rape.
 - Forced displacement.

6. War crimes

A number of types of violations have been committed by all parties to the conflict, including the Syrian regime, qualifying as war crimes, including:

- Sexual violence.
- Killing and mutilation.
- Cruel treatment.
- Violations of personal dignity.

7. Detention of women under inhumane conditions

Detained women are not being treated according to their gender as required under international humanitarian law. Aspects of such treatment would include:

- Being held in separate facilities from men.
- Being searched by female personnel.
- Providing additional food for pregnant and nursing women.

8. Girl conscription

- SDF, in particular, has violated the rights of girls through military conscription.
- Conscripting children is prohibited under customary law (Rules 136 and 137 of customary international humanitarian law) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Article 4-1 of the above-mentioned Protocol states that “Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years.”

9. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)

- Recruiting children under 15 years or using them in armed conflict constitutes a war crime in both international and non-international armed conflicts.

10. Failure to meet women's humanitarian needs

- Ignoring the needs of women in camps and detention centers constitutes a violation of customary international humanitarian law (Rule 134: "The specific protection, health and assistance needs of women affected by armed conflict must be respected.").
- CEDAW emphasizes the need to protect women from discrimination and violence and to ensure their participation in all areas of public life.

11. Targeting medical facilities as a war crime

Attacks on medical facilities, particularly affecting pregnant and breastfeeding women, constitute a violation of customary international law, which prohibits targeting medical facilities or using them for military purposes.

12. Stigmatization of women associated with armed groups

Social stigmatization of women and children with alleged links to ISIS violates:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 2): Prohibiting discrimination against children based on their parents' status or family background.
- CEDAW: Prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, including discrimination based on familial or social associations.

Reality in Syria

Despite the existence of an international legal framework designed to protect human rights, particularly women's rights, violations against females in Syria have persisted for over 13 years. None of the conflict parties adhered to international laws and conventions ratified by the Syrian regime, such as:

- CEDAW.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The UN Convention Against Torture.

Patterns of violations

- Crimes against humanity: Including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and child conscription.
- War crimes: Committed in the context of armed conflict, and including grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights laws.

Recommendations

International community and UN Security Council

1. Impose sanctions on violators

- Implement travel bans and freeze assets of individuals and entities involved in violations of women's rights.

2. Enhance protection and education programs for women refugees

- Provide special support to women refugees through protection and education programs while funding health and education sectors in host countries.

3. Protect displaced women

- Allocate additional funding to establish safe spaces and provide comprehensive support for internally displaced women and those in neighboring countries, with a particular focus on psychological and healthcare needs.

4. Monitor women's rights internationally

- Hold the Syrian regime accountable for its violations against women and support international efforts to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against humanity at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

5. Promote joint efforts

- Establish an international coordination platform involving the UN, relief organizations, and donor countries in order to unify efforts in supporting Syrian women, with a focus on transparency and program oversight.

UN and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

1. Coordinate relief efforts for women

- Allocate adequate resources to support conflict-affected women, prioritizing survivors of sexual violence by providing medical and psychological support.

2. Establish safe shelters for women

- Set up shelters specifically designated for conflict-affected women, ensuring their safety and access to necessary healthcare and social services.

3. Publish periodic reports on women's conditions

- Issue regular reports highlighting violations against women to maintain global attention on the issue.

Donor countries and the European Union

1. Increase aid for Syrian women

- Allocate financial and technical assistance to support Syrian women, particularly in areas where human rights violations are still ongoing.

2. Fund violation documentation programs

- Support efforts to document violations against women, including collecting evidence and preparing legal files to be submitted before international courts.

3. Empower refugee women in the workforce

- Design programs to help refugee women acquire skills to enter the job market, focusing on local industries and handicrafts.

4. Support education and awareness initiatives

- Fund projects providing educational opportunities for Syrian girls, particularly in affected areas, and including basic education and vocational training.

5. Establish a special fund for female survivors of violence

- Create an international fund to support survivors of sexual violence and torture, focusing on psychological, social, and economic rehabilitation.

Neighboring countries

1. Protect women refugees' rights

- Ensure Syrian women's right to asylum and prevent refoulment.
- Enhance family reunification programs and facilitate related legal procedures.

2. Strengthening legal protection

- Enact laws or directives to protect women refugees from exploitation and refoulment, ensuring transparent and fair asylum procedures.

3. Support the UNHCR

- Provide financial and logistical support to the UNHCR to maintain the provision of essential services for women refugees, including education and healthcare.

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

1. Create a safe environment for women refugees

- Enhance efforts to ensure a stable and secure environment for women, focusing on healthcare and education.
- Implement programs to support survivors of sexual violence and torture.

2. Strengthen gender-based violence protection programs

- Increase efforts to reduce gender-based violence in camps, including training staff and service providers to ensure a safe environment.

3. Establish support centers within camps

- Set up specialized centers within camps offering comprehensive services for women, including psychological, health, and legal support.

Relief organizations

1. Support female survivors

- Provide comprehensive rehabilitation programs for survivors of sexual violence and torture, including psychological, social, and medical support.

2. Empower women in entrepreneurship

- Support small, women-led projects in camps and affected areas to promote self-reliance.

3. Community awareness

- Organize awareness campaigns targeting local communities and refugees on women's rights, child marriage risks, and child labor.

All conflict parties

1. The Syrian regime's compliance with the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women

- Comply with obligations under the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women and other international instruments put in place to protect women and girls.

2. End targeting of women and girls

- Demand that the Syrian-Russian alliance and Iranian militias stop targeting women and girls, and avoid attacking schools, hospitals, and populated civilian areas.

3. Release detained women

- Immediately release women detained in the context of the conflict, as well as ensuring that detention conditions meet international standards.

4. End torture of detained women

- End torture and violations in detention centers, ensuring women are detained separately from men.

5. Respect procedural rules in women trials

- Guarantee fair trials in line with international standards, protecting women's legal rights during trial.

6. End girl conscription

- Stop recruiting underage girls and release all child soldiers under 18.

7. Create an international monitoring mechanism

- Allow independent mechanisms to monitor women's and girls' rights and allow regular visits to detention centers and affected areas.

8. Avoid military use of civilian facilities

- Refrain from using schools and hospitals for military purposes to ensure the safety of women and girls.

9. Provide psychological support to affected women

- Collaborate with humanitarian organizations to offer psychological support to survivors, particularly those who endured sexual violence.

Regional organizations (e.g., Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation):

1. Launch support initiatives for Syrian women in Arabic and Islamic states

- Establish a regional fund to assist Syrian women affected by the conflict, focusing on material, psychological, and social support.

2. Conduct awareness and advocacy campaigns

- Organize regional campaigns on the regional level to highlight violations against Syrian women and mobilize political and humanitarian support.

3. Enhance coordination with Syria's neighboring countries

- Work with Syria's neighbors to improve conditions for women refugees, particularly regarding legal protection, education, and healthcare.

International and regional women's organizations

1. Promote global solidarity

- Organize international conferences and campaigns to support Syrian women's rights, with focus on sexual violence, child marriage, and social discrimination.

2. Support women leaders

- Provide grants and training opportunities for Syrian women activists in civil society to enhance their leadership roles.

International educational institutions

1. Offer scholarships

- Allocate scholarships for Syrian women at international and regional universities, prioritizing those affected by the conflict.

2. Launch tailored educational programs

- Support distance learning programs for Syrian women in besieged areas or camps.

International media

1. Highlight Syrian women's issues

- Produce reports on violations faced by women in the Syrian conflict.

2. Raise awareness through campaigns

- Launch awareness campaigns on Syrian women's rights to increase public awareness and attention, and to put pressure on the parties responsible for violations.

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No justice without accountability

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