

Statement

Perpetrators of Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Must be Held Accountable



Monday 23 December 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.

All of those who have voiced support for the crimes committed by the Assad regime; including artists, politicians, and writers, must publicly apologize and ensure reparations for any harm they caused.

DOCUMENTING VIOLATIONS AND HOLDING PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE

The deposed Assad regime has committed innumerable grave crimes, including crimes against humanity, that have affected millions of Syrians. Tens of thousands of regime personnel took part in the commission of these violations. For 14 years, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented violations on a daily basis, building a comprehensive database containing the details of millions of documented incidents. SNHR has also worked to identify the individuals responsible for these crimes, creating a list containing about 16,200 names of some of those involved or implicated, including:

- **6,724 members** of the former regime's formal military and security forces.
- **9,476 members** of the auxiliary forces, including militias and supporting groups, which fought alongside the regime's formal forces.

In light of the enormous challenges facing the accountability process, SNHR must underline the importance of intensifying and focusing legal and judicial efforts on holding accountable first- and second-tier senior leadership officials from the former regime's military and security apparatus, since these were the figures primarily responsible for devising and approving the plans for these crimes who directly supervised their commission.

Simultaneously, avenues must be created to enable all victims to file lawsuits against the aggressors who were directly responsible for their suffering regardless of these figures' rank or position, whether they played a supervisory role or directly perpetrated the crimes.

MULTI-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

In addition to military and security personnel, however, there are other figures whose involvement and support for the regime took different forms. These include actors, artists, writers, and politicians who supported and promoted the crimes of the deposed regime in various ways. In some cases, such figures encouraged and instigated the killing of Syrians and promoted actions that increased their already terrible suffering, to varying degrees. As such, these individuals' actions must be tried before the law as part of the transitional justice process.

ESSENTIAL STEPS TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE

The decision of some TV channels and media figures to platform and interview prominent figures notorious for their fanatical support of the Assad regime has caused rage and disgust among thousands of victims who have voiced their frustration on social media. After speaking with some of these victims, SNHR has concluded that, in addition to the need for punishment for the crimes of the former regime's army and security personnel, those civilian figures and propagandists who were involved in supporting and promoting the deposed regime, must take the following steps before making any media appearances or participating in public affairs, whether political, social, or creative in nature, and that media outlets must refuse to give them any platform until and unless they have first taken these steps:

1. Publicly and directly apologize

- Each of these figures must publish a sincere and public apology on their various personal channels, including their social media accounts, which must include:
- Acknowledgment of their responsibility for supporting the Assad regime's crimes.
- Sincere expressions of remorse.
- Explicit acknowledgment of the consequences of their actions.
- A pledge to never repeat these actions.

These apologies must have a sincere tone and manner demonstrating humility and remorse for supporting a murderous, dictatorial regime that committed barbaric crimes.

2. Contribute to reparations

These efforts include:

- Provide financial support for the victims.
- Contribute to rebuilding the affected communities.
- Fund survivor initiatives and educational programs for victims' families.
- Volunteer to provide services for the victims and their families.

3. Contribute to uncovering the truth

These figures must:

- Provide their testimonies to truth commissions.
- Support educational and awareness campaigns that shed light on their own actions and the harm they caused.
- Call for holding those directly responsible for crimes and violations accountable.

4. Refrain from accepting leadership positions

These figures must pledge to never accept any leadership position in future Syrian government or public affairs

5. Stop appearing on the media

Refuse to participate in interviews or appear on any public media or at cultural forums before taking the steps outlined above.

RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIA OUTLETS AND CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC INSTITUTIONS

- All stakeholders in the Syrian state must ensure that those figures who promoted and supported the Assad regime have taken all the steps outlined above before giving them any opportunity to participate or collaborate in any activity.
- Media outlets must refuse to interview, host or platform these figures before taking these steps. Doing so without any such prior atonement by these individuals sends a negative and insulting message to millions of victims by implying that these outlets are turning a blind eye to those figures' previous statements and actions or downplaying their consequences.
- The act of condemning the deposed regime's crimes following its collapse does not in itself relieve these individuals from their legal and ethical responsibility for their earlier support or promotion of those crimes. As such, these figures must at least take the five steps outlined above.
- Media institutions have a responsibility to shun any attempt to whitewash or be parties to whitewashing of the image of any figures involved in supporting the regime's crimes, and to uphold ethical standards that promote justice and accountability. These institutions play a crucial central role in a comprehensive accountability process which they must perform assiduously, and must refuse to allow themselves to be instruments for rehabilitating perpetrators and supporters of crimes against Syria's people.



SYRIAN NETWORK
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



info@snhr.org
www.snhr.org

No justice without accountability

© Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR),
December 2024

