

Statement

SNHR Condemns SDF's Continued Detentions of Civilians Since the Beginning of 2025 Over Voicing Their Opinion

At least **3,098 People**, Including **203 Children** and **109 Women**, of Those Arrested by SDF Since its Founding in January 2012 Up Until February 2025 Remain Forcibly Disappeared

Saturday 22 February 2025

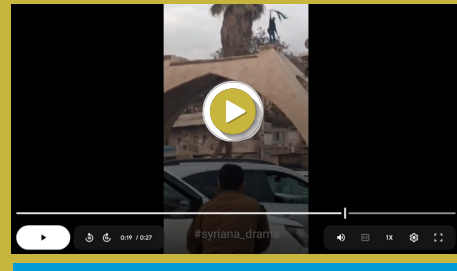


The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyzes in Syria.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented that in the weeks between the beginning of 2025 and mid-February, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) carried out sporadic detention operations in areas under their control in Hasaka and Raqqqa governorates, targeting at least six civilians, including a child. These arrests were carried out in response to the detainees removing banners and other items bearing SDF slogans from certain public locations and replacing them with the current Syrian national flag (the Syrian uprising flag) during public celebrations following the fall of the Assad regime.

According to information obtained by SNHR from reliable local sources, the detention operations involved SDF personnel using violence, and verbally insulting, and beating the detainees who were then taken to undisclosed locations. As of this writing, their fate remains unknown.

Video of SDF personnel shooting a civilian while he was removing SDF banners and flags from public sites and replacing them with the current Syrian national flag (the Syrian uprising flag) in Hasaka governorate



LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE VIOLATIONS

International human rights law strictly prohibits arbitrary detention and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. These acts constitute grave violations of Article (9) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees every individual the right not to be subjected to arbitrary arrest and prohibits detention without fair legal procedures.

SNHR'S POSITION

SNHR strongly condemns all forms of arbitrary arrest and detention carried out by armed groups affiliated with the SDF, which have witnessed a notable increase in recent times. SNHR must stress that using violence against civilians and targeting them over their views represent blatant violations of their fundamental right to peaceful expression. SNHR also stresses the urgent need to put an end to these practices immediately.

Given the SDF's continuing control of areas outside the authority of the transitional government and the group's exercise of de facto self-administration, the violations committed against civilians in these areas are considered to be legally accountable in accordance with international law. In the context of ongoing negotiations between the transitional govern-

ment and the SDF regarding the future of these areas, SNHR emphasizes the need for clear measures to ensure accountability for those responsible for these violations and prevent their recurrence. These should be part of efforts to reunify the country, uphold the rule of law, and reveal the fate of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons.

Demands and recommendations

1. To the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)

- Exert further pressure on the SDF to immediately release all arbitrarily detained individuals and disclose the fate of forcibly disappeared persons.
- Include the documented violations in the reports of the UN Human Rights Council and relevant international mechanisms, including the COI.

2. To the Syrian transitional government

- Prioritize the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in negotiations with the SDF.
- Provide legal and psychological support to the families of detainees and the forcibly disappeared, and work to properly document cases in cooperation with human rights organizations.

3. To civil society and international human rights organizations

- Document and gather evidence on SDF violations and present them to the relevant international bodies.
- Provide legal support to victims and their families and contribute to efforts to hold perpetrators of violations accountable.
- Raise awareness about the dangers of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance and advocate for human rights protection across all Syrian regions.

4. To the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

- Immediately release all detainees held by the SDF and disclose the fate of the forcibly disappeared.
- Halt all forms of arbitrary detention related to freedom of expression and ensure respect for the fundamental rights of civilians.
- Conduct independent investigations and hold those responsible for arbitrary arrests and the violations taking place in the course of these arrests to account.
- Ensure compensation for victims for the material and moral damage they have suffered.



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No justice without accountability

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