

Statement

At Least **Eleven American Citizens**
Have Been Killed or Forcibly
Disappeared during The Armed
Conflict in Syria; Most of Them
by the Assad regime and ISIS

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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 US MILITARY INTERVENTION AND THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST ISIS – SEPTEMBER 2014

Following the rapid expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its seizure of large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq during the summer of 2014, former US President Barack Obama announced a comprehensive strategy to combat the group on September 10, 2014. This was followed on September 23 by the launch of a US-led military campaign, marking the beginning of a large-scale international intervention.

The United States established a coalition that initially included more than 60 countries, later expanding to include approximately 83 countries and organizations, with the stated goal of “destroying ISIS” through a multi-pronged strategy that included airstrikes, support for local forces on the ground, cutting off the group’s sources of funding, combating the flow of foreign fighters, and countering its ideology.

In Iraq, the United States relied on the principle of “collective self-defense” at the request of the Iraqi government. In Syria, the intervention sparked legal controversy in the absence of the Assad regime’s approval or an explicit mandate from the Security Council. Washington relied on the principle of the Syrian government’s “inability or unwillingness” to confront the ISIS threat.

This intervention marked a turning point in the course of the armed conflict in Syria, adding a new military and political dimension and having humanitarian and human rights repercussions, including those linked to violations against American civilians.

DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

Based on the Syrian Network for Human Rights’ database and daily monitoring and documentation, this statement highlights the most prominent violations that civilians with American citizenship were subjected to in Syria, whether in terms of killing or enforced disappearance.

A- Extrajudicial Killings

SNHR documented the killing of at least **six American civilians** between March 2011 and May 2025, including one woman. Responsibility for their death was attributed as follows:

- **Bashar al Assad Regime forces:** 3 civilians, including a woman who died due to torture, and a journalist.
- **ISIS:** 3 civilians, including 2 journalists and a medica/air worker.

B- Enforced Disappearance Cases

SNHR documented at least **five American civilians**, including one woman, who remain forcibly disappeared. Responsibility for their disappearance is attributed as follows:

- **Bashar al Assad Regime forces:** 4 civilians, including one woman.
- **Other parties:** one case.

C- Conclusions

1. The targeting of civilians, including US citizens, demonstrates the Assad regime's and ISIS's disregard for the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law.
2. Enforced disappearance is an ongoing crime that does not expire with time, and legal liability remains in place until the fate of the victims is revealed.
3. The Assad regime government, as the de facto authority, bears the primary responsibility for protecting civilians, and it has flagrantly failed to do so.

D- Recommendations

To the UN Security Council

Imposing targeted sanctions on individuals involved in serious violations, primarily the Assad regime's security and military leaders.

To the international community

Providing technical and financial support to human rights organizations documenting human rights violations in Syria.

To the US Government

- Intensify search and investigation efforts into the cases of American citizens killed or forcibly disappeared in Syria.
- Provide legal, material, and moral support to the families of the victims.



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No justice without accountability

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