

Statement

the Assault by Members of the Internal Security Forces on a Judge While Performing His Duties in Aleppo

A Violation of the sanctity of the Judiciary
and the Principle of Judicial Independence
and Requires **Immediate Accountability**

Thursday 29 May 2025



Saturday evening, May 24, 2025, Judge Ahmed Mustafa Haskal, an investigating judge in Aleppo, was physically and verbally assaulted by members of the Internal Security Forces, affiliated with the Syrian government's Ministry of Interior, while carrying out his judicial duties in examining the body of a murder victim in the Sheikh Saeed neighborhood.

INCIDENT DETAILS: Based on reliable local testimonies provided by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, Judge Ahmad Haskal, accompanied by a patrol from the Internal Security Forces affiliated with the Ministry of Interior of the transitional government, traveled to Aleppo University Hospital to examine the body, which had been transported from the crime scene, in preparation for an official examination and the preparation of the necessary report.

Upon arriving at the hospital late at night, a dispute broke out between the judge and a security officer. The judge objected to the car leaving due to the late hour and requested that the body be taken directly to the forensic center.

The dispute quickly escalated into a verbal altercation, then a verbal assault, before escalating into a physical assault by the security officer against the judge. The judge was severely beaten, according to civilian eyewitnesses present at the scene. The remaining officers failed to intervene to stop the assault, and some even joined in later, after the judge attempted to defend himself.

Following the incident, Judge Haskal was taken to the Internal Security Department in the Al-Saleheen neighborhood, where he was placed in solitary confinement for approximately six hours. During this time, he was subjected to a second physical assault inside the department. He was released on the morning of Sunday, May 25, 2025, following the intervention of both the First Public Prosecutor and the First Investigating Judge in Aleppo.

EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE INCIDENT: The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented photos showing severe and scattered bruises on the judge's body, clearly indicating that he had been severely beaten.

On May 26, the Ministry of Justice of the Syrian Transitional Government issued a statement condemning the attack and announcing the opening of an urgent investigation in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, as well as the arrest of a number of those involved in the incident. The ministry also denied rumors circulating regarding Judge Haskal holding any position within the former regime's anti-terrorism court, affirming that these allegations, which were promoted as an attempt to justify the violation, were false.

EVALUATION AND LEGAL CONCLUSIONS:

- This incident represents a violation of the legal guarantees afforded to judges and a direct assault on one of the fundamental pillars of the rule of law. The violations committed in this context reveal a breach of several constitutional and legal principles, most notably:
- The independence of the judiciary, a principle established under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, obliges the executive authority to refrain from any interference in judicial affairs or threat to the safety of judges.
- Judges may not be arrested or otherwise harmed due to their judicial duties, except within the framework of clear legal procedures that guarantee the right to defense and accountability before the competent judicial council.
- The prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, including any cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, is a fundamental principle of international law and binding on the transitional government, which bears legal responsibilities towards civilians and state employees.
- Rejecting arbitrary detention outside the scope of an independent judiciary, which violates Article 9 of the International Covenant itself, and if repeated, represents a worrying indicator of the prevalence of impunity within the security services.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY SNHR

To ensure that such gross violations are not repeated, the Syrian Network for Human Rights recommends the following:

1. Open an independent and transparent judicial investigation that includes all those involved in the assault and detention, including administrative officials at the Internal Security Department in the Al-Saleheen neighborhood.
2. Refer anyone proven to be involved to a public trial before the competent judiciary, emphasizing that internal administrative handling is insufficient to achieve general deterrence or the required justice.
3. Review coordination systems between security agencies and the judiciary to ensure respect for judicial duties, particularly in cases of a serious nature.

4. Form an independent oversight committee to monitor the performance of internal security agencies and submit periodic reports on violations committed against civilians and workers in the judicial and medical sectors.
5. Issue a binding procedures manual for security personnel, including clear protocols for dealing with judges and emphasizing adherence to the UN Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary.
6. Organize periodic training programs for security personnel on human rights principles, focusing on respect for the state's institutional structure and preventing the use of violence or insult against representatives of other authorities.
7. Publishing the results of investigations to the public in a transparent manner will contribute to strengthening confidence in the institutions of the transitional government and represent a clear break with the practices of repression and impunity that prevailed under the previous regime.
8. Establishing an effective mechanism for receiving judicial complaints from judges, enabling them to report any threats, interference, or abuse in the performance of their duties, and ensuring their full legal and security protection.



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No justice without accountability

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