

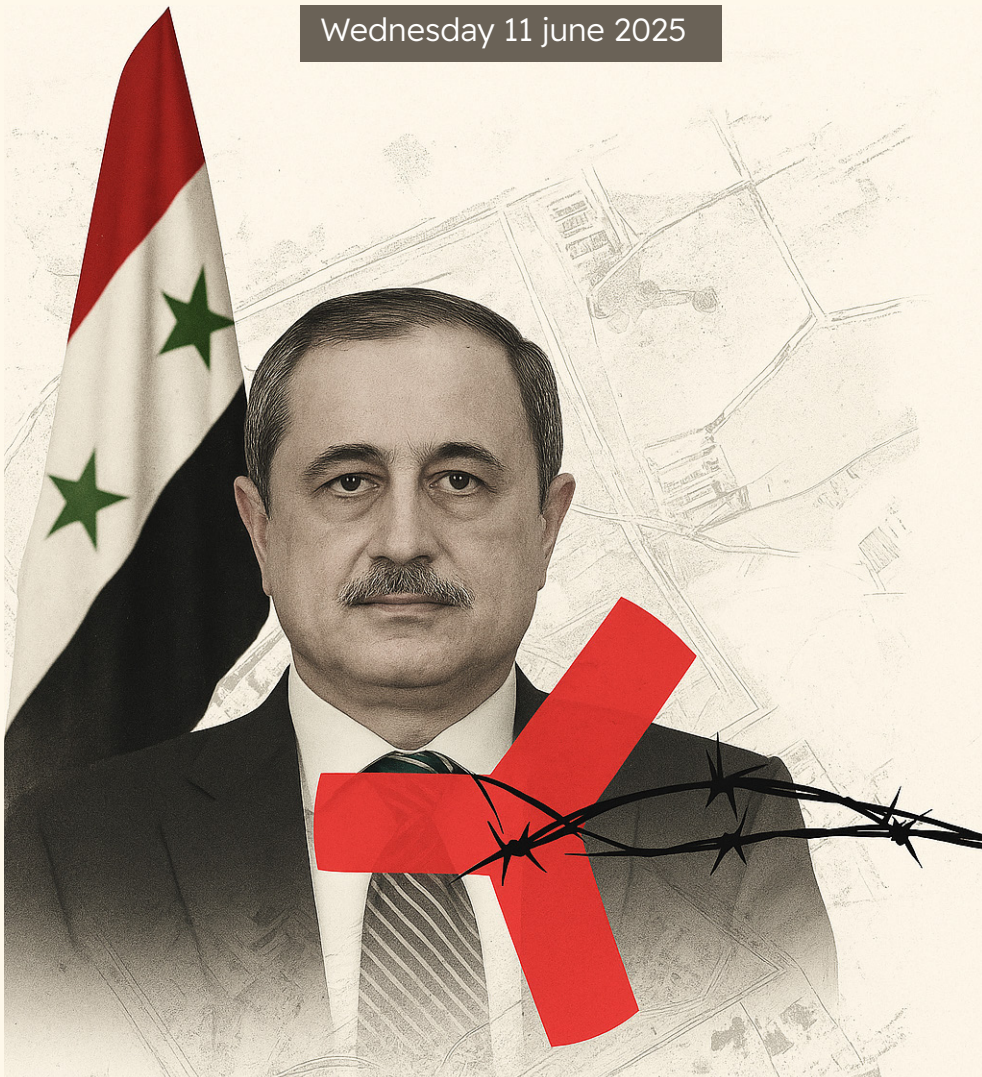


الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mohammad al-Shaar: An Abominable
Record of Numerous Crimes Against
Humanity That Incur Enduring Legal
Liability**

Under al-Shaar, the Syrian Ministry of Interior
Was Responsible for Nearly **Quarter of A Million
Violations** Which Necessitates Accountability

Wednesday 11 June 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 analyses in Syria.

Contents:

I. Major General Mohammad al-Shaar Was A First-Rank Assad Regime Official Responsible for Crimes Against Humanity Against Syrians	1
A. A security, military and political profile of Mohammad al-Shaar	2
B. Mohammad al-Shaar and Legal Liability for the Violations Committed by His Ministry	2
II. Violations for Which the Ministry of Interior Was Responsible During al-Shaar’s Tenure Between April 2011 and October 2018	4
A. A total of 10,542 civilians killed by Ministry of Interior-affiliated personnel in the course of suppressing demonstrations	4
B. Deaths due to torture and enforced disappearance inside security branches operated by the Ministry of Interior... 5	5
C. A total of 1,608 civilians arrested at Immigration and Passports Department, including 14 who subsequently died due to torture and 673 who were subsequently classified as forcibly disappeared persons	6
D. At least 110 detainees killed in civilian prisons - including 17 by firing squad, and 93 due to torture, medical negligence, or malnutrition	6
E. The Ministry of Interior is complicit in the execution of at least 843 defected military and police officers.....	7
F. Over 11,267 executive measures taken to seize properties, 115,836 travel bans, and 112,000 search warrants issued by the Ministry of Interior	8
G. Tampering with forcibly disappeared persons’ records at the civil registry offices.....	8
H. Tens of thousands of forcibly displaced persons extorted and deprived of official documentation	9
I. The Ministry of Interior was involved in the forced displacement of residents of besieged areas	9
III. Conclusions and Recommendations	11

I. MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMMAD AL-SHAAR WAS A FIRST-RANK ASSAD REGIME OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AGAINST SYRIANS

On February 4, 2025, [videos circulated](#) on the media that shows Major General Mohammad al-Shaar claiming to have surrendered to the General Security Directorate in Syria. Al-Shaar had been hiding since the fall of Bashar Assad's regime on December 8, 2024. There was no official statement from the General Security Directorate addressing this matter. Al-Shaar, a former interior minister in the Assad government, is a senior Assad regime official who is responsible for serious human rights violations during his leadership in the security and military apparatus, particularly during his tenure as interior minister from April 2011 to October 2018.

Prior to surrendering, al-Shaar gave [media interviews](#) in which he tried to deny Ministry of Interior's involvement in crimes and violations in Syria since 2011, including those committed inside prisons under the ministry's authority. As attested by the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database, however, al-Shaar, as Minister of Interior, was a direct supervisor of systematic repression policies, which included extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, and the killing of detainees during prison mutinies in prisons. civil, as well as complicity in unlawful executions. During his leadership, the Ministry of Interior also participated in numerous forced displacement operations targeting areas besieged by Assad regime forces for years.

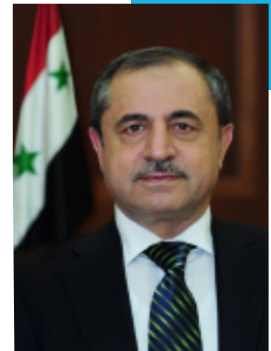
Under his leadership, the Ministry of Interior has also played a key role in implementing the decisions of exceptional courts such as the Military Field Court and the Terrorism Court, resulting in the seizure of dissidents' property, the issuance of travel bans, and tampering with the records of forcibly disappeared persons in civil registry offices. In addition, the ministry has been involved in suppressing mutinies inside civilian prisons using live ammunition, and depriving detainees held there of their most basic rights, as well as obstruction of thousands of forcibly displaced people's access to official documents and financial extortion

According to the SNHR's database, a total of **256,364** documented violations can be linked to Ministry of Interior-affiliated agencies under the tenure of Mohammad al-Shaar. The details of these violations are accurately recorded and catalogued by type and nature. This figure does not include tens of thousands of victims of forced displacement, whom the Ministry played various roles in their displacement, nor thousands who were denied their basic rights to obtain their official documents, as well as thousands of detainees who faced harsh conditions in civilian prisons operated by the Ministry of Interior.

A. A SECURITY, MILITARY AND POLITICAL PROFILE OF MOHAMMAD AL-SHAAR

Major General Mohammad Ibrahim al-Shaar, born on October 1, 1950, in the Haffa area in rural Latakia governorate, graduated from the Military Academy in 1971 and then joined the Assad regime's Military Security Intelligence Directorate, where he held several prominent security positions including:

- Security Director in the Lebanese city of Tripoli.
- Head of the Military Intelligence Security branch in Tartus.
- Head of the investigation and then head of the Military Security Intelligence branch in Hama.
- Head of the Military Security Intelligence branch in Aleppo.
- Head of the Branch 227th of the Military Security Intelligence Directorate in 2006.
- Head of the Military Police Directorate in Syria.



↑  Mohammad Ibrahim al-Shaar

Despite reaching retirement age, on April 14, 2011, he was appointed Minister of Interior and a member of the Crisis Cell, Syria's highest security body at the time. He served as Minister of Interior until October 2018. In addition to his security and military positions, al-Shaar held leadership positions in the ruling Baath Party under the Assad family, most notably as a member of the party's country leadership for several years.

In May 2011, Major General Mohammad al-Shaar was designated for sanctions by the European Union and the United States, along with a number of senior Syrian officials, including Bashar Assad, for his involvement in the violent treatment of protesters. These sanctions were among the first international measures taken in this context. Switzerland has imposed similar sanctions on him for the same reason.

B. MOHAMMAD AL-SHAAR AND LEGAL LIABILITY FOR THE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY HIS MINISTRY

The Minister of Interior bears direct and indirect legal responsibility for serious violations committed by the Ministry's organs during al-Shaar's tenure in office, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The aspects of this responsibility can be defined as follows:

1. Direct Liability

Direct liability arose when the Minister of Interior has issued express orders, approved violations, or knew of them and has taken no action to stop them or hold those responsible to account. Given the scale of the violations recorded, it is clear that the Minister of Interior:

- Supervised the ministry's security and police agencies, such as Political Security and Criminal Security, that were implicated in torture and enforced disappearances.
- Was aware in advance of the repressive practices carried out by the ministry, especially in light of documented human rights and international reports on these violations.
- Failed to take any measures to prevent extrajudicial killings, systematic torture, or enforced disappearances, indicating his active role or deliberate inaction.

2. Indirect liability (command responsibility)

According to international law, civilian and military leaders are held responsible for crimes committed by their subordinates if they do not take the necessary measures to prevent them or hold the perpetrators accountable. In this context, the Minister of Interior has the command responsibility for:

- Failing to punish or hold accountable security personnel involved in serious violations, which proves his complicity or negligence in the performance of their job duties.
- Failing to issue clear guidance to curb arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings.
- Overseeing agencies that have implemented arbitrary decisions, such as property seizure, travel bans, and security prosecutions against political opponents

Legal accountability

Based on the evidence and facts documented on SNHR's database, the Minister of Interior bears direct legal responsibility for violations committed by his ministry's agencies. The magnitude of these violations and their persistence over eight years, without any measures taken to stop them, confirms that the Minister was either directly involved or negligent in the performance of his duties.

Under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the interior minister may be charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes, making him legally accountable before national and international courts.

Generally, SNHR's legal accountability is outlined as follows:

“In no case can perpetrators of grave violations be forgiven or pardoned by the Assad regime’s first-rank leaders, no matter how much they try to justify their actions or escape responsibility. These crimes, which include extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and forced displacement, are not individual cases, but are part of a systematic policy aimed at crushing dissent and terrorizing society as a whole. Crimes against humanity and war crimes have no statute of limitations, and no political settlement or considerations of interest can grant impunity to those whose hands are stained with the blood of innocent people. Genuine justice requires that they be held accountable in accordance with the law, and that victims and their families be redressed to ensure that these atrocities are not repeated in the future.”

II. VIOLATIONS FOR WHICH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WAS RESPONSIBLE DURING AL-SHAAR’S TENURE BETWEEN APRIL 2011 AND OCTOBER 2018

As attested by SNHR, under the tenure of Major General Mohammad al-Shaar’s tenure, the Ministry of Interior committed serious human rights violations, including nine systematic patterns that were widely practiced. SNHR notes that these violations do not include facilitating the passage of militias across the border or facilitating or condoning the drug trade, although they fall within the jurisdiction of, and the scope of responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior.

A. A total of 10,542 civilians killed by Ministry of Interior-affiliated personnel in the course of suppressing demonstrations

SNHR documented the killing of **10,452 civilians**, including 803 children and 737 women, by the Ministry of Interior’s police and political security forces in the course of suppressing and shooting demonstrations in various Syrian governorates from April 14, 2011, to November 2018. Under the command of Major General Mohammad al-Shaar, the ministry has been directly overseeing these operations.

B. Deaths due to torture and enforced disappearance inside security branches operated by the Ministry of Interior

The criminal and political security branches in Syria are under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Interior, where the criminal branches investigate criminal offenses, while the Political Security branches monitor political activities and prosecute dissidents. During Mohammad al-Shaar's tenure as interior minister, these agencies were implicated in serious human rights violations, including torture and enforced disappearances. Accordingly, the ministry bears responsibility for these crimes by virtue of these agencies' administrative subordination to the Ministry of Interior.

1. Branches of the Criminal Security Department

Criminal Security branches investigate criminal offenses such as murder, theft, and crimes related to criminal law. In the case of Syria, however, these branches have been implicated in serious human rights violations, including torture and enforced disappearances.

- SNHR documented the killing of at least 32 people under torture within criminal security branches between April 14, 2011, and November 2018.
- SNHR also documented that at least 326 people, including 12 children and nine women, who were arrested by Criminal Security branches during the same period are still forcibly disappeared persons.

2. Political Security Directorate

While Political Security is affiliated with the Ministry of Interior, this agency was concerned with security surveillance and prosecution of dissidents, and has been implicated in the repression of political freedoms, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearances.

- SNHR documented the killing of at least **83 people**, including three children, under torture inside Political Security branches, between April 14, 2011, and November 2018.
- SNHR also documented that at least **1,459 people**, including 23 children and 14 women, who were arrested by the Assad regime's Political Security branches during the same period are still forcibly disappeared persons.

C. A total of 1,608 civilians arrested at Immigration and Passports Department, including 14 who subsequently died due to torture and 673 who were subsequently classified as forcibly disappeared persons

SNHR documented that at least **1,608, people**, including 18 children and 198 women, in addition to 73 people who had previously agreed to security settlements, were arrested at Immigration and Passport Departments in several Syrian governorates to handle paperwork.

Although these arrests were carried out by the Assad regime's security services, the Ministry of Interior, to which the Immigration and Passport Departments are administratively subordinate, bears direct responsibility for these violations, whether by facilitating or condoning these arrests.

- 921 individuals were released.
- Fourteen people died under torture or as a result of medical negligence in detention centers.
- Of those arrested between April 14, 2011, and November 2018, a total of 673 people are still forcibly disappeared.

D. At least 110 detainees killed in civilian prisons, including 17 by firing squad, and 93 due to torture, medical negligence, or malnutrition

The Ministry of Interior oversees the administration of civilian prisons in Syria. During al-Shaar's tenure as Minister of Interior, civilian prisons saw mutinies and protests carried out by detainees, with prisoners objecting to the poor conditions of their detention unfair trials.

The Ministry of Interior responded to these protests with excessive violence. This

included

- Firing live ammunition directly at detainees.
- Use of tear gas inside detention centers.
- Impose harsh collective punishments, such as denying detainees access to food, water, and electricity.

As attested by SNHR's database :

- At least **17 detainees** were shot dead by police during crackdowns on mutinies in civilian prisons.
- **163 detainees** were injured during such incidents.

These violations took place between April 14, 2011, and November 2018.

In addition, after the suppression of the protests, detainees were subjected to arbitrary reprisals by the prison administration, including:

- Prolonged solitary confinement.
- Transferring them to prisons far from their families' areas in order to increase their suffering.
- Submit security reports to the Attorney General to tighten their sentences or extend their detention.

These events were mainly concentrated in prisons in [Homs](#), [Hama](#), [Suwayda](#), and [Aleppo](#), where SNHR issued detailed reports documenting these violations.

SNHR also documented the killing of at least **93 detainees** inside central prisons in various Syrian governorates between April 14, 2011, and November 2018, as a

result of:

- Systematic torture.
- Deliberate medical negligence, including refusal to provide healthcare to detainees or to respond to their critical health conditions.
- Malnutrition, which caused their health to deteriorate and led to their deaths.

E. The Ministry of Interior is complicit in the execution of at least 843 defected military and police officers

During his tenure as Minister of Interior, the Ministry of Interior turned a blind eye to executions of defected police and military officers, taking no measures to protect them or challenging unfair sentences handed down by Military Field Courts.

- According to the SNHR database, **843 defected police and military** were executed between March 2011 and October 2018.

- without any fair trial.
- Their bodies were not returned to their families who were not even even officially informed of the execution of the sentences.

F. Over 11,267 executive measures taken to seize properties, 115,836 travel bans, and 112,000 search warrants issued by the Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior played a major role in the implementation of judicial rulings issued by military and exceptional courts. During the tenure of Mohammad Al-Shaar, the Ministry implemented:

- At least **11,267** property seizure orders, with the Ministry being the executive instrument for seizing property and stripping Syrians of their assets, based on trials that lacked fair standards.
- **115,836** travel bans were used to prevent citizens from leaving the country and to immediately arrest those who participated in popular protests, restricting freedom of movement to tens of thousands in accordance with security warrants that were not based on legal evidence, but on confessions extracted under torture or on unreliable security suspicions.
- **112,000** search warrants issued by the Political Security Directorate, reinforcing security repression and prosecution.

G. Tampering with forcibly disappeared persons' records at the civil registry offices

The Ministry of Interior's civil registry offices registered large numbers of persons forcibly disappeared in detention centers as deceased. These practices began to be carried out at an accelerated pace in April 2018, during Major General Mohammad al-Shaar's tenure as Minister of Interior. However, some documents indicate that such practices date back to 2013, suggesting al-Shaar's involvement in both planning and implementation.

SNHR documented the registration of at least **1,661 forcibly disappeared persons** as deceased, including 50 children and 21 women, in addition to 16 medical and 10 media personnel, between the beginning of 2018 and the downfall of the Assad regime on December 8, 2024.

Since the tampering with the data of forcibly disappeared persons can be carried out through channels that fall within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, Mohammad al-Shaar is directly responsible for these practices, which are part of the policy of covering up crimes and violations committed against forcibly disappeared persons.

H. Tens of thousands of forcibly displaced persons extorted and deprived of official documentation

During his tenure as Minister of Interior, Mohammad al-Shaar played a key role in denying and obstructing thousands of forcibly displaced Syrians from accessing or obtaining official documentation, such as

- Passports.
- Identification cards.
- Marriage and newborn registration documents.

As these documents are issued by institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Interior, this denial has exacerbated the suffering of displaced people inside and outside Syria.

SNHR also documented that these displaced people were subjected to systematic financial extortion, as they were charged exorbitant fees for obtaining official documentation, despite the fact that it is the legal right of every citizen.

Thus, the Ministry of Interior has turned from a body responsible for protecting citizens' rights into an instrument of pressure and extortion, used to punish the forcibly displaced and impose further restrictions on their daily lives.

On October 17, 2024, SNHR released a report entitled:

'About 16 Million Syrian Citizens are Suffering as a Result of the Syrian Regime's Control Over Official Documents', highlighting the Assad regime's use of identity papers as a tool of war against opponents, and their financial extortion to obtain their basic documents.

I. The Ministry of Interior was involved in the forced displacement of residents of besieged areas

During Major General Mohammad al-Shaar's tenure as Minister of Interior, the Ministry was actively involved in several forced displacement operations targeting areas besieged by Assad regime forces, where the Ministry contributed to large-scale displacements.

This was done through:

- Providing logistical support to the security and military agencies.
- Pressure the local population to force them to leave their areas.
- Directly supervise the operations to remove civilians towards northern Syria, as part of the Assad regime's strategy that aimed at changing the demographic composition of some Syrian areas.

Mohammad al-Shaar was part of the committees that struck the displacement agreements, or would send a representative of the Ministry of Interior to participate in their implementation, underscoring the Ministry's role in organizing and implementing systematic forced displacement. This has displaced hundreds of thousands of Syrians, exacerbating their suffering inside the country and in their areas of refuge.

Most prominent forced displacement operations:

A notable example of these practices was the displacement of the residents of Al-Wa'er neighborhood in Homs. Mohammad al-Shaar was personally present during the operation.

On April 18, 2017, SNHR released a [report](#) entitled:

'They Have No Choice,' which documented the forced displacement of [thousands of residents al-Wa'er neighborhood](#) who joined over 12 million Syrians who forcibly displaced at the time, as a result of the Assad regime's repressive policies.



↑ ⓘ Major General Mohammad al-Shaar with members of the Assad regime's Internal Security Forces in al-Wa'er neighborhood in Homs after the residents of the neighborhood were forcibly displaced to northern Syria – May 2017

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

CONCLUSIONS:

These violations expose the pivotal role played by Ministry of Interior under Mohammad al-Shaar in implementing policies of systematic repression and crimes against humanity. Its responsibility was not only limited to direct violations, but extended to empowering and sustaining the system of repression through legal, administrative and security tools. Under Syria's international obligations, the state is obligated to respect and protect human rights in accordance with the international conventions it has ratified, such as the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the UN Convention against Torture. The commission of these violations by the Ministry of Interior reflects a failure to meet these obligations.

1. The Ministry of Interior bears responsibility for consolidating the methodology of repression:

- Normalization of institutional violence: Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, and enforced disappearances have become systematic tools wielded by the Ministry of Interior, contributing to perpetuating an environment of impunity.
- Legitimizing violations: The Ministry has helped legalize repression through exceptional courts, such as the Military Field Court and the Counterterrorism Court, undermining justice and weaponizing the judiciary against dissidents.
- The use of administrative and security tools as repressive means: Such as seizing property, tampering civil records, and depriving citizens of official documentation, with the aim of isolating dissidents and punishing them economically and socially, and violating their rights to movement and property.

2. Long-term social and political implications:

- Dismantling the social fabric: Organized forced displacements have led to serious demographic changes, as the Ministry has sought to reshape the population layout to serve the interests of the regime, weakening social cohesion and creating unstable environments.
- Weakening state institutions: The Ministry of Interior's hegemony over the security, judiciary, and administrative apparatuses has turned state institutions into tools of oppression instead of bodies founded to protect citizens, which has increased distrust of official institutions.

3. Profound psychological effects on victims and their families:

Victims have suffered from:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of torture and physical and psychological abuse inside detention centers, which led to permanent disabilities and psychological and physical issues among survivors.
- Loss of trust in society and the law: The systematic targeting of detainees and dissidents has led to a sense of betrayal by the state and society, increasing rates of social isolation, depression and anxiety.
- Constant anxiety and feelings of insecurity: Victims lived in constant fear of being re-arrested or targeted even after their release.

Families of victims suffered from

- Long-term psychological suffering: Not knowing the fate of their missing loved ones has caused a constant state of grief and chronic anxiety for the families, in what can be called as an 'unresolved mourning', which can cause some of the most severe types of psychological trauma affecting humans.
- Extortion and security harassment: Many families have suffered financial extortion and security threats while trying to search for the fate of their children or retrieve their belongings and official documents.
- Denial of civil and social rights: Travel bans and security restrictions have limited victims' families' ability to access education work, or even move freely, further marginalizing them within society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SNHR recommends that the current transitional government in Syria take the following measures to ensure justice and accountability for crimes and violations committed by the Ministry of Interior during Major General Mohammad Al-Shaar's tenure

1. Hold Major General Mohammad Al-Shaar accountable:

- Take all necessary legal measures to hold Mohammad al-Shaar accountable for crimes and violations committed by the Ministry of Interior under him, including extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary executions, and seizure of property, in accordance with international standards of justice and accountability.
- Reject any attempts to grant him legal impunity or political settlements that would lead to his evasion of justice.
- Ensure that Mohammad al-Shaar does not escape justice in accordance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

2. Conduct a thorough investigation into the role of the Ministry of Interior:

- Launch a comprehensive investigation into the Ministry of Interior's role in systematic repression, including its security services, particularly the Criminal Security and Political Security.
- Investigate all security and administrative officials involved in violations related to the Ministry.

3. Protect victims' rights, and ensure redress and reparation for the victims:

- Ensure justice for victims by providing them with fair compensation, as well as legal guarantees that violations will not be repeated.
- Take measures to assist survivors of arbitrary detention and torture, including psychosocial and legal support.

4. Reform the Ministry of Interior and its agencies:

- Dismantle and restructure the Ministry of Interior, and exclude all individuals implicated in serious crimes and violations.
- Ensure that the Ministry is subject to independent oversight mechanisms to prevent the recurrence violations in the future.

5. Cancel all arbitrary measures issued by the Ministry of Interior:

- Cancel property seizure orders, lift travel bans and security prosecutions that have been used as repressive tools against dissidents, and ensure fair compensation for the victims of these arbitrary practices.
- Restore the civil rights of citizens who were deprived of them as a result of the practices of the Ministry of Interior under Mohammad al-Shaar.

6. Intensify international efforts:

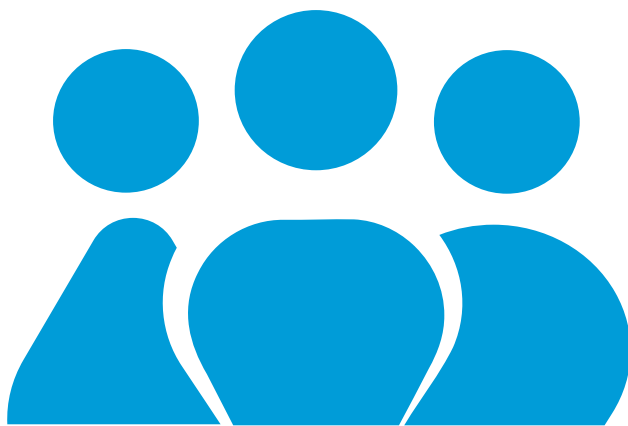
- Strengthen cooperation with international organizations concerned with human rights, such as the UN and the EU, to ensure the implementation of international sanctions against Mohammad al-Shaar and prevent him from escaping justice.

7. Support human rights organizations and civil society:

- Provide technical and logistical support to human rights bodies working to document crimes and prepare legal files against those involved in violations.
- Activate the role of civil society in monitoring any judicial procedures to ensure their integrity and non-politicization.
- Strengthen evidence-gathering and documentation efforts to support opportunities for prosecution before national and international courts.

8. Establish a national transitional justice mechanism:

- Establish an independent national body to document the crimes of the former regime and hold those responsible accountable, as part of a transitional justice process that ensures truth, justice for victims, and prevention of impunity.





SYRIAN NETWORK
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



info@snhr.org
www.snhr.org

No justice without accountability

© Syrian Network For Human Rights
(SNHR), June 2025

