



الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

On the First Anniversary of the Fall of the Assad Regime: Update on the Assad regime's Violations and a Renewed Call for Accountability through a Comprehensive Transitional Justice Process

Documentation of the Killing of **202,000 Civilians**, including **45,000** who Died under Torture, in addition to **160,000** Forcibly Disappeared Persons

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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 analyses in Syria.

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FIRST: INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL CONTEXT

On December 8, 2025, the first anniversary of the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime will be commemorated, ending an era of more than thirteen years of grave and systematic violations committed against the Syrian people. However, this historic moment should not be reduced to its political dimension alone; at its core, it remains a day of remembrance and accountability, on which Syrians recall the tens of thousands of victims of extrajudicial killings, torture to death in detention centers, and enforced disappearances, the fate of tens of thousands of whom remains unknown.

The previous regime left behind a heavy legacy of violations that, in many cases, amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, as documented by the International Commission of Inquiry and the Syrian Network for Human Rights throughout the years of the conflict. These violations affected millions of Syrians who were forced to flee their homes and were displaced, leaving behind their lives, property, and memories.

Commemorating this anniversary today compels us to question the trajectory of transitional justice and the imperative for current authorities and the international community to ensure genuine accountability for the crimes committed, to reveal the fate of the forcibly disappeared, and to provide redress for victims and their families. The transition from tyranny is not complete merely with the fall of its symbols, but also with dismantling the system of impunity that enabled it, and establishing the foundations of a state governed by the rule of law and equal citizenship.

This report seeks to update the tally of egregious violations perpetrated by the Assad regime. During the past year, we were able to document a huge number of violations carried out by the Assad regime – which we were previously unable to document – due to our free access to new victims and areas, and the disappearance of the barrier of fear among the victims of the Assad regime after its resounding fall.

SECOND: A PAINFUL TOLL OF THE VIOLATIONS OF BASHAR AL-ASSAD'S REGIME

One year after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, we review below the most prominent human and material losses caused by the regime, as documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, which left deep and far-reaching effects on Syrian society and the state for fourteen years:

1. Extrajudicial Killings:

- a. Civilian Victims:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has documented the killing of at least **202,021 civilians** by the Bashar al-Assad regime since March 2011, including 23,138 children and 12,036 women.
- b. Medical Personnel Victims:** According to the SNHR database, at least **662 medical personnel** have been documented as killed by Bashar al-Assad regime forces since March 2011.
- c. Media Personnel Victims:** The SNHR has recorded the killing of at least **559 media personnel** by Bashar al-Assad regime forces since March 2011.

2. Enforced disappearance:

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights database, one year after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, at least **160,123 people** remain forcibly disappeared after being arrested by Bashar al-Assad's regime since March 2011, including 3,736 children and 8,014 women (adult females).

3. Torture and ill-treatment:

According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights database, the number of victims killed as a result of torture and ill-treatment inside detention centers belonging to the Bashar al-Assad regime, from March 2011 until the moment of preparing this statement, is no less than **45,032 people**, including 216 children and 95 women (adult females).

4. Attacks on Vital Centers and Civilian Objects:

The Bashar al-Assad regime and its allies have targeted thousands of civilian facilities, causing severe humanitarian crises and mass displacement of the population. The following is a summary of attacks on key civilian facilities and objects:

- a. Medical Facilities:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented at least **566 attacks** on medical facilities in Syria by the Bashar al-Assad regime since March 2011, including hospitals, health centers, and first aid stations.

- b. Educational Facilities:** According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights database, at least **1,287** schools and kindergartens in Syria have been attacked by the Bashar al-Assad regime since March 2011, depriving thousands of children of their right to education.
- c. Places of worship:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights has recorded at least **1,042 attacks** on places of worship in Syria by the Bashar al-Assad regime since March 2011, including mosques and churches.

5. Use of Internationally Prohibited and Indiscriminate Weapons

The Bashar al-Assad regime and its allies have used various types of internationally prohibited and indiscriminate weapons, resulting in the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians and widespread destruction of infrastructure. The following is a summary of the regime's use of the four most prominent types of these weapons:

- a. Barrel Bombs:** Since July 2012, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented the Assad regime's use of at least **81,954 barrel bombs**. These bombs have killed 11,092 civilians, including 1,821 children and 1,782 women.
- b. Chemical Weapons:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented at least **217 chemical attacks** carried out by the Bashar al-Assad regime, the first of which began in the al-Bayada neighborhood of Homs on December 23, 2012. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 1,514 people, including 1,413 civilians, among them 214 children and 262 women, in addition to **11,080 people** suffering from symptoms indicative of exposure to toxic chemicals.
- c. Cluster Munitions:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights recorded at least **254 cluster munition attacks** carried out by Bashar al-Assad regime forces since their first use in July 2012, resulting in the deaths of **835 people**, including 337 children and 191 women. Furthermore, the remnants of these munitions remain a constant threat to the lives of civilians.
- d. Incendiary weapons:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights database has documented at least **52 attacks** with incendiary weapons targeting civilian areas, carried out by the Bashar al-Assad regime since March 2011.

6. Forced Displacement:

Widespread violations, primarily those perpetrated by the Bashar al-Assad regime and its allies, have resulted in the internal displacement of approximately **6.8 million people** and the flight of around **7 million** others to other countries, making the Syrian people one of the most displaced populations in the modern world.

The violations committed by the Assad regime and its allies have not been limited to bombing, destruction, and displacement of the population. They have extended to the enactment of a system of laws and legislation that violate the most basic principles of human rights, with the aim of seizing the property of the displaced and refugees and depriving them of their property rights and their right to return.

It is worth noting that the Syrian Network for Human Rights follows a precise and rigorous methodology in documenting violations, based on international law and standards adopted by the United Nations and international organizations. Based on this methodology, the above figures represent the minimum number of violations that the network was able to access and document, while available data indicates that the actual numbers are much higher. The Network also confirms that the overall casualty count includes only civilians, or those who were in a civilian situation at the time of the killing, and does not include fighters and military personnel (whether from armed opposition factions or from the forces affiliated with the Bashar al-Assad regime) who died while participating in combat operations or while present in military headquarters and points.

THIRD: THOSE COMPLICIT IN THE VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY THE BASHAR AL-ASSAD REGIME

The grave violations committed by the Bashar al-Assad regime were not merely the result of isolated individual decisions made by regime leaders, but rather the outcome of a widespread system of complicity involving tens of thousands within the state apparatus and its institutions. Comparative studies of authoritarian regimes confirm that the survival of these regimes depends on networks of collaborators that extend beyond the direct perpetrators of the crimes, encompassing diverse institutional, social, economic, and cultural structures.

In the Syrian case, the network of complicity extended to include the following groups:

- **Members of the security services and military:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented approximately **16,200 individuals** involved in the Assad regime's system, including 6,724 members of the official forces and 9,476 members of pro-regime militias. Their roles included carrying out arbitrary arrests, practicing torture in detention centers, and participating in bombings and attacks on civilians.
- **Judges and the Judiciary:** The judiciary was used as a tool to legitimize repression, as the courts, especially the Terrorism Court and the Field Courts, issued arbitrary rulings on a political basis, and a large number of judges and members of the Public Prosecution played a key role in covering up violations and giving them a formal "legal" character.
- **Civil servants:** Civil state institutions contributed to facilitating violations by maintaining records of detainees and missing persons, concealing information about their deaths or fate, manipulating property records, covering up confiscation and looting of the property of opponents and displaced persons, and even using orphanages and care institutions to conceal the identity of the children of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons.

- **Economic, cultural, and artistic figures:** Literature on repressive regimes shows that these regimes need symbolic and social support to survive. A number of artists, businesspeople, intellectuals, and media figures have often played roles in normalizing and legitimizing repression by creating a «social cover» that lends violations an air of acceptability or normalization. This includes businesspeople who amassed their wealth through privileges and monopolies granted to them by the previous regime, as well as sham civil society organizations run by figures close to the regime, such as Asma al-Assad, which were used to polish the image of the authorities and cover up their long record of human rights abuses.

FOURTH: PERPETRATORS OF CRIMES ARE INELIGIBLE FOR HUMANITARIAN ASYLUM UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights' documentation of violations committed by the Bashar al-Assad regime is the result of ongoing documentation work the Network has been conducting daily since March 2011. The Network has built a massive database on violations in Syria, including millions of data points on victims, the forcibly disappeared, detainees, and attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. The Network has also issued more than 1,800 reports and statements, including daily and monthly reports, establishing a well-documented human rights narrative spanning many years of conflict.

Based on this accumulated documentation, the Syrian Network for Human Rights affirms that the widespread and systematic violations committed by Bashar al-Assad and his regime against the Syrian people amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, according to the provisions of the Rome Statute, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Under international law, individuals accused of crimes against humanity or war crimes are not entitled to refugee protection. Article 1(f) of the 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates that individuals are excluded from refugee protection if there are «serious grounds for believing» they have committed one of the following acts:

- Crimes against peace, war crimes, or crimes against humanity as defined in relevant international instruments.
- Serious crimes of a non-political nature committed outside the country of asylum prior to the application for asylum.
- Acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

This exception aims to ensure that perpetrators of serious crimes do not escape justice, striking a balance between protecting refugees, preserving the integrity of asylum systems, and guaranteeing justice for victims.

Although individuals covered by **Article 1(f)** are excluded from refugee status, the principle of non-refoulement remains in effect. They may not be returned to a country where they face a real risk of torture or other serious human rights violations. In such cases, states may grant them temporary or limited forms of protection that fall short of full refugee status, while maintaining their obligations to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms.

FIFTH: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS..

A. To the Russian Government

- Reconsider the decision to grant asylum to Bashar al-Assad: The Syrian Network for Human Rights calls on the Russian government to reconsider its decision to grant asylum to Bashar al-Assad, as this decision contradicts the obligations of states not to provide safe haven to individuals accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and is inconsistent with the duty to cooperate in combating impunity.
- Cooperate with international efforts to achieve justice: The Syrian Network urges the Russian authorities to fully cooperate with international and national judicial efforts aimed at achieving justice for Syrians, including considering the future surrender of Bashar al-Assad to the competent Syrian judicial authorities or to an international or hybrid court with jurisdiction, in accordance with the provisions of international law.
- Contribute to redressing the harm suffered by the Syrian people as a result of military intervention: The Syrian Network calls on Russia to acknowledge its responsibility for the human and material losses resulting from its direct military intervention alongside the Bashar al-Assad regime, and to contribute to reconstruction and reparations efforts as part of its moral and legal obligation towards the Syrian people.

B. To the United Nations and the International Community

- Exerting pressure to ensure that asylum is not used as a cover for impunity: Urging the United Nations and member states to use various diplomatic and political pressure tools to compel Russia to fulfill its legal and moral obligations and to refrain from using the concept of «humanitarian asylum» as a political cover to protect perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Activating international accountability mechanisms: Calling for the activation and development of existing international mechanisms related to Syria, and supporting any international or hybrid judicial process that contributes to holding those responsible for serious violations accountable, including referral to the International Criminal Court or the establishment of a special mechanism when national justice mechanisms are not feasible.

C. To the current Syrian government:

1. Commitment to the principles of transitional justice

- Guarantee a fair and transparent trial for Bashar al-Assad and all those accused of committing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, thereby achieving justice for victims and restoring confidence in the judicial system.
- Adopt a comprehensive transitional justice process that includes truth-seeking, accountability, reparations, institutional reform, and guarantees of non-recurrence.

2. A comprehensive legislative strategy for justice and non-recurrence

- Expedite accession to core international instruments, foremost among them the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and relevant conventions against torture and for the protection of human rights.
- Criminalize core international crimes (crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide) in the Syrian Penal Code, as crimes that are not subject to any statute of limitations and cannot be covered by any general amnesty or political settlement.
- Repeal or amend laws and decrees that enshrined tyranny, confiscation of property, discrimination, and arbitrary arrest (emergency laws, terrorism courts, legislation regulating confiscations and absence, etc.).

3. Deep Reform of the Judiciary and Abolition of Exceptional Courts

- Establishing an independent body for professional evaluation and judicial integrity, tasked with reviewing the conduct of judges during the conflict and removing those found to have participated in or been complicit in serious violations, while guaranteeing the right to defense and due process.
- Rebuilding the judiciary on the foundations of independence and separation of powers, and providing effective legal safeguards to protect independent judges.

4. Restructuring the Security and Military Sector (Security and Military Reform)

- Subjecting the work of security and military agencies to effective civilian, parliamentary, and judicial oversight.
 - Adopting clear vetting criteria for the appointment and promotion of security and military personnel, ensuring the exclusion of those involved in torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings from any position of authority.
 - Adopting a binding code of conduct for security and military agencies, including an explicit commitment to respecting human rights and international humanitarian law, and linking accountability and promotions to adherence to these standards.
- ### **5. Victim Reparation and Rehabilitation**

- Develop and implement comprehensive national programs to provide material and moral redress to victims and their families, including financial compensation, official recognition, and psychosocial rehabilitation.
- Establish specialized mechanisms and programs to support survivors of torture, enforced disappearance, sexual violence, and other serious human rights violations, giving special priority to the most vulnerable groups (women, children, and persons with disabilities).

5. Reconstruction of Affected Areas Based on Rights

- Adopting well-considered and transparent plans for the reconstruction of affected areas, prioritizing the needs of affected local populations and ensuring their safe, voluntary, and dignified return to their original areas.
- Linking reconstruction efforts to respect housing, land, and property rights, preventing the perpetuation of the consequences of unlawful confiscations or demographic change policies, and linking external funding to clear rights guarantees.

6. A Clear Policy on Amnesty and Accountability

- Rejecting any blanket amnesty for core international crimes and gross human rights violations.
- Limiting the possibility of amnesty to specific and narrow cases of politically motivated crimes that do not amount to international crimes, within a transitional justice process that guarantees the right to truth, recognition of victims, and guarantees of non-recurrence.
- Emphasizing in constitutional and political discourse that combating impunity is a fundamental component of the new political contract in Syria, and not a tool for political bargaining.

7. Preserving Archives and Evidence and Preventing Their Destruction

- Enacting legislation that criminalizes the destruction or concealment of security and judicial archives and records related to serious violations, considering such actions as obstruction of justice.
- Establishing a specialized national unit for the preservation and archiving of evidence according to the highest standards, in coordination with international mechanisms (such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism) and Syrian human rights organizations.

8. Full Cooperation with International Mechanisms and Universal Jurisdiction

- Declaring readiness to cooperate with international mechanisms for Syria (the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, Special Rapporteurs, etc.), including facilitating access to witnesses, sites, and archives.
- Refraining from taking any actions aimed at obstructing investigations or prosecutions underway in foreign jurisdictions based on universal jurisdiction, and committing to exchanging information with these authorities when requested by law.

9. Engaging Victims and Civil Society in Shaping the Justice Process

- Ensuring the effective participation of victims of violations and their families, as well as independent Syrian civil society organizations, in shaping transitional justice policies, reparations laws, and institutional reform programs.
- Providing sustained political and financial support for psychosocial and legal support programs for victims, adopting a gender-sensitive and vulnerable-group approach.

D. To Media Institutions and the Academic Sector

1. Preserving Memory and Preventing Denial of Crimes

Invest in producing documentary media materials (programs, films, digital platforms, and interactive digital archives) that preserve the memory of crimes and violations and counter narratives of denial, justification, or equating the perpetrator with the victim.

2. Strengthening Scientific Research and Specialized Studies

Encourage universities and research centers to conduct in-depth studies on transitional justice in Syria, patterns of violence, and the reform of security and judicial institutions. This will inform decision-making with evidence-based policies and enrich the national and international public debate on justice pathways in Syria.



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