



الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Fifteenth Annual Report on Human Rights Situation in Syria 2025

Syria's First Year of Transition

Thursday 26 March 2026





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:

First: Introduction.....	1
Second: Report Methodology.....	2
Third: Summary of the Most Prominent Violations Documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in 2025	3
Fourth: Political Developments and Control on the Ground.....	5
Fifth: A General Overview of the Most Prominent Developments and Human Rights Violations in Syria during 2025.....	6
Sixth: The Work of the Syrian Network for Human Rights and its Most Prominent Activities during 2025	9
Seventh: Legal Conclusions and Recommendations	16
Appreciation and Solidarity	20
References.....	21

FIRST: INTRODUCTION

The year 2025 marked the first full year in Syria after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on December 8, 2024. This year was characterized by a profound interplay between hopes for political transition and the risks of security, social, and institutional fragility. While this historic moment opened a rare window for rebuilding the state on the foundations of the rule of law and respect for human rights, the realities on the ground revealed that political transition alone is insufficient to halt violations unless it is accompanied by serious institutional reform, effective accountability, genuine protection of civilians, and clear guarantees to prevent the reemergence of patterns of violence and tyranny in new forms.

Syria witnessed rapid political, constitutional, and field transformations this year, accompanied by serious security and military incidents in several regions. These events resulted in violations of the rights to life, liberty, and personal security, as well as the protection of civilian objects. They also brought to the forefront structural issues, most notably transitional justice, the missing and forcibly disappeared, mass graves, and the restructuring of state institutions in a way that ensures their adherence to the rule of law and respect for rights and freedoms. This report, therefore, serves as an analytical and documentary effort to monitor the human rights situation in Syria during 2025 and to examine the main trends that shaped the course of the transitional phase in its first year.

In this context, the Syrian Network for Human Rights faced a serious challenge in 2025 with the cessation of funding for several of its programs and activities. This directly impacted its ability to expand its field monitoring, verification, follow-up, and response to reports received from various regions. Consequently, the Network was unable to document a significant number of violations that occurred during the year, particularly in areas experiencing escalating security disturbances or reduced access and verification capabilities. Therefore, the findings and data presented in this report should be understood as representing the minimum number of violations that could be documented and verified according to the Network's rigorous methodology, and not the full extent of all violations committed in Syria during the reporting period.

Accordingly, this report presents an analytical overview of the most prominent patterns of violations documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights during 2025. It reviews the most significant political, field, and human rights developments in the country, highlights key events that impacted the reality of rights and freedoms, and provides a legal framework for these events in light of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The report concludes with a set of findings and recommendations addressed to the Syrian transitional authorities, various stakeholders, and the international community, with the aim of contributing to correcting the course of the transitional phase, strengthening the protection of civilians, establishing the foundations for accountability, and preventing the recurrence of violations.

Fadel Abdulghany, Executive Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, said:



This report shows that the first year of the transitional phase in Syria brought important opportunities to reform state institutions and enhance respect for human rights, but at the same time it revealed major challenges that still require serious and systematic attention. Protecting civilians, revealing the fate of the missing, holding those responsible for violations accountable, and preserving public freedoms are the foundational conditions for any legitimate and sustainable stability in Syria.

SECOND: REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report was based on the [methodology](#) adopted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in monitoring, documentation and analysis, relying on the documentation and research work completed during 2025. It was based on a review of the network's database and the information it contains, which was verified according to the adopted standards, in addition to benefiting from direct testimonies, field monitoring, reliable local sources, open sources, visual materials, and reports received by the network through its official channels.

The information used by the Network undergoes a multi-layered verification process before being included in specialized databases, ensuring the highest possible degree of accuracy and reliability. The report's findings and analyses relied on documented data concerning extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and attacks on civilian infrastructure and vital facilities, aiming to identify the most prominent patterns and trends that characterized the human rights situation in Syria during 2025.

The report also took into account the fundamental transformations that Syria underwent during the reporting period, particularly the changes in the power structure and areas of control following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on December 8, 2014, and the resulting shifts in actors, security conditions, forms of violations, and patterns of accountability. Accordingly, these transformations were considered in the legal classification, human rights analysis, and statistical analysis presented in this report.

The report also took into account the review of official declarations, decisions and statements issued during 2025, whenever they had a direct impact on human rights issues or on the description of the facts being monitored, as contextual materials that are subject to analysis from the perspective of human rights and international humanitarian law.

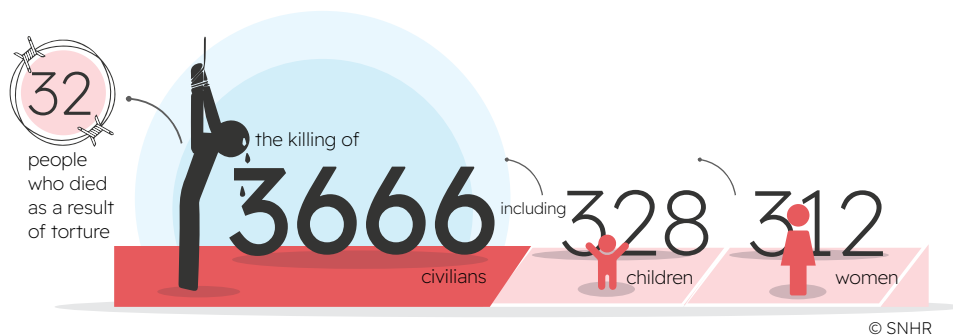
SNHR bases its casualty figures solely on civilians and those considered as such, excluding combatants killed during clashes or while carrying out military operations.

The SNHR emphasizes that the figures presented in this report represent the minimum number of violations it was able to document and verify during 2025, and do not necessarily reflect the full extent of all violations committed, particularly given the significant challenges encountered in monitoring and documentation processes throughout the year.

THIRD: SUMMARY OF THE MOST PROMINENT VIOLATIONS DOCUMENTED BY THE SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN 2025:

1. Extrajudicial Killings:

In 2025, SNHR documented the killing of **3,666 civilians**, including **328 children** and **312 women**, in addition to **32 people** who died as a result of torture, at the hands of the main actors in Syria. The Network also documented, during the year, the tolls of children, women, media and medical personnel, and civil defense workers, as well as massacres and deaths due to torture.

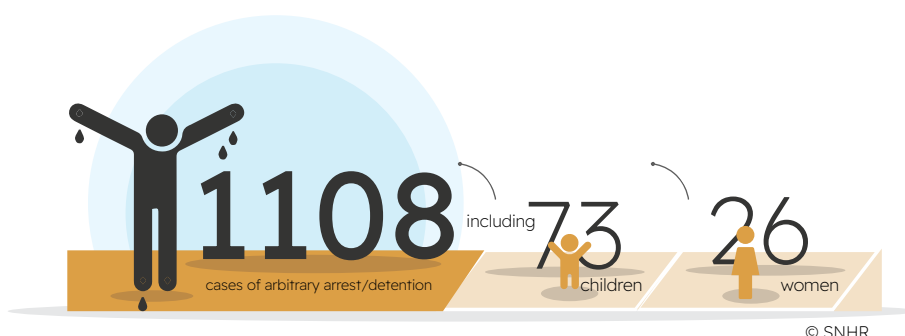


SNHR presented these figures in its annual report on victims, including a detailed breakdown by responsible parties, age groups, gender, massacre tolls, deaths due to torture, and other relevant data.

For more details, please refer to the Syrian Network for Human Rights report on civilian casualties in Syria during 2025.

2. Detention/Arbitrary Arrest:

SNHR documented at least **1,108 cases** of arbitrary arrest/detention in Syria during 2025, including **73 children** and **26 women**. It also documented the releases associated with these cases, according to its databases and periodic reports.



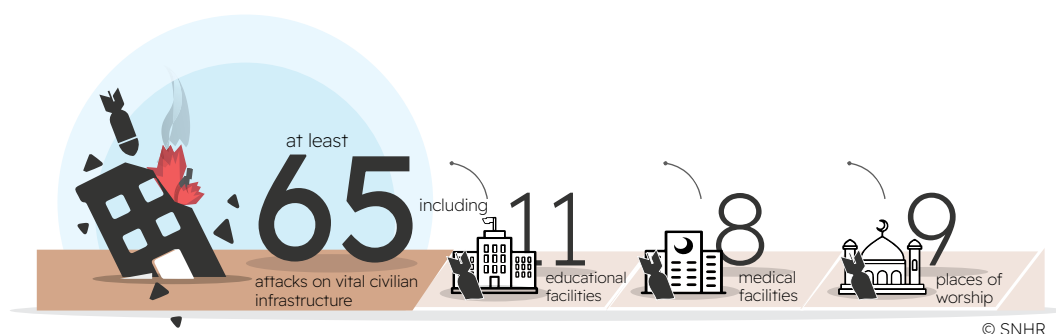
Furthermore, the Network monitored during the year the detention and prosecution of individuals accused of involvement in serious violations during the Bashar al-Assad regime, in addition to releases from Syrian government detention centers after investigations concluded or lack of evidence of involvement.

The Network presented this data in its annual report on arbitrary arrest/detention, including the breakdown by responsible authorities, the number of children and women detained, release rates, and data related to detention and release procedures in the context of prosecuting those involved in previous violations.

For more details, please refer to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' annual report on arbitrary arrest/detention and releases in Syria during 2025.

3. Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:

In 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights documented at least **65 attacks** on vital civilian infrastructure in Syria, including **11 attacks** targeting educational facilities, **8 targeting** medical facilities, and **9 targeting** places of worship.



SNHR's database details these attacks by perpetrator, their chronological and geographical distribution, and the types of civilian objects targeted throughout the year.

For more details, please refer to the periodic and specialized reports issued by the Syrian Network for Human Rights on attacks on vital civilian infrastructure and objects in Syria during 2025.

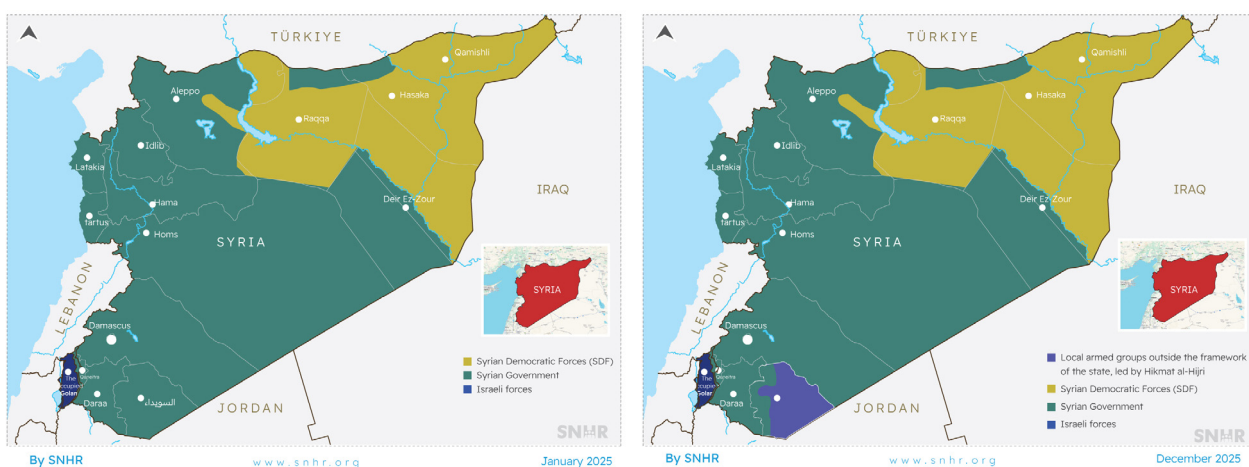
FOURTH: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CONTROL ON THE GROUND:

Syria witnessed significant political and military transformations in 2025 following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime on December 8, 2024. These transformations had a direct impact on the power structure, the processes of restructuring state institutions, and the reality of actual territorial control.

At the beginning of the year, large areas of the country were under the control of the Syrian government, extending from the south, with the exception of areas that witnessed incursions, expansion operations, and bombardments by Israeli forces after the fall of the previous regime. Meanwhile, the Syrian Democratic Forces continued to control parts of northeastern Syria. This situation generally persisted until the end of the year, with the exception of the Suwayda Governorate, which fell under the de facto control of armed groups outside the state's authority, led by Hikmat al-Hijri.

Throughout the year, several Syrian regions witnessed repeated Israeli airstrikes, along with limited ground incursions, resulting in civilian casualties and material damage, and further complicating the security situation during the transitional phase. Limited activity by ISIS cells also emerged in a number of areas, contributing to the continued security instability.

The two maps below provide a visual comparison of the territorial control situation in Syria between the beginning and end of 2025.



FIFTH: A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE MOST PROMINENT DEVELOPMENTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SYRIA DURING 2025

In 2025, Syria witnessed a continued fragile and complex human rights environment, within the context of a political transition that has yet to establish an effective protection system or unify mechanisms for oversight and accountability. Responsibility for documented violations was distributed among several actors, including Syrian government forces, the Syrian Democratic Forces, local armed groups operating outside the state's control, armed elements and networks linked to the former regime, and Israeli military operations and airstrikes within Syrian territory. This multiplicity of actors reflects the continued complexity of the Syrian landscape, where the heavy legacy of conflict is compounded by weak institutions, widespread weapons, and varying levels of effective control on the ground.

Throughout the year, the network documented the continuation of multiple patterns of grave violations against civilians, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and ill-treatment in detention centers, in addition to attacks on civilian objects, communal violence, and violations committed against the most vulnerable groups, particularly children and women. Furthermore, in some areas, especially those controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, the recruitment of child soldiers, detention on unclear security grounds, and the use of force in a manner that fails to meet due legal safeguards continued.

The violations witnessed in the Syrian coastal region in March 2025 revealed one of the most serious manifestations of this fragility. They began with coordinated attacks by armed groups linked to the former regime against Syrian government security and military sites, before rapidly escalating into a widespread wave of violence and abuses characterized by retaliation and sectarianism. These events demonstrated the weakness of central control over some of the armed forces involved and the wide-ranging nature of violations against civilians, including extrajudicial killings, attacks on homes and civilian infrastructure, looting, and intimidation. Subsequent developments, particularly the formation of a national commission of inquiry and the commencement of public trials for some of the accused, signaled the beginning of a national judicial process, although it still requires further development and broader guarantees of transparency and accountability.

In late April and early May, the Jaramana and Ashrafiyah Sahnaya areas, extending into the Suwayda Governorate, witnessed a significant escalation in violence, revealing the dangerous overlap between official and semi-official forces and local armed groups. These events were characterized by the involvement of multiple actors and violations including the targeting of civilians, unlawful detentions, vandalism, and attacks on property, amidst a marked increase in sectarian and inflammatory rhetoric. Israeli airstrikes on sites in and around Damascus further complicated the situation and widened the circle of tension, highlighting the fragility of the security environment in the absence of an institutional response capable of swift and effective containment.

Then came the Suwayda violations in July 2025, reaffirming the depth of the crisis stemming from the proliferation of armed groups, weak governance, and the intertwining of security, social, and sectarian considerations. The province witnessed a large-scale military escalation between Syrian government forces and armed Bedouin tribes on one side, and local armed groups operating outside state control, led by Hikmat al-Hijri, on the other. Israeli airstrikes further complicated the situation. This escalation was accompanied by grave violations by all parties, particularly government forces, including extrajudicial killings, kidnappings and enforced disappearances, attacks on personal dignity, looting and arson, and attacks on civilian infrastructure. It also resulted in widespread paralysis of civilian life and a severe deterioration in humanitarian and service conditions. Subsequent developments, including ceasefire agreements and the establishment of investigative committees, demonstrated that institutional solutions remained partial and unstable, and that the province effectively descended into a fragmented reality of power.

Alongside these events, the issue of mass graves emerged as one of the most pressing human rights concerns following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, given its close connection to the widespread issue of enforced disappearances. In 2025, mass graves and human remains were discovered in areas that were previously closed off or inaccessible. Other remains were found in the rubble of destroyed houses, basements, wells, or irregular burial sites. This underscores that this issue is not merely a criminal or humanitarian one, but also a test of the state and society's ability to address the legacy of grave violations in accordance with international forensic standards, preserve evidence, uncover the truth, and enable families to learn the fate of their loved ones.

The remnants of war, primarily landmines and unexploded ordnance, continued to pose a significant daily threat to civilians, particularly in rural and agricultural areas and areas of return. This danger reflects the ongoing impact of the conflict, exacerbated by the lack of comprehensive clearance programs and the failure to provide minefield maps, despite the efforts of civilian and official bodies in demining operations. Furthermore, the year saw sporadic attacks, bombings, and clashes in areas of contact between controlling parties, especially between government forces and the Syrian Democratic Forces, resulting in further civilian casualties, disruption of services, and short-term displacement.

The year 2025 also witnessed the continuation of intercommunal violence, kidnappings, and killings perpetrated by local armed groups or unidentified individuals, some of which were motivated by revenge or discriminatory, sectarian bias. There was also an escalation in sectarian and inflammatory rhetoric across some media outlets and social media platforms, negatively impacting the social and academic environment and highlighting the fragility of civil peace in several areas. This coincided with the continued activity of organized crime, particularly drug trafficking, reflecting the expansion of networks that had formed during the years of conflict under the auspices of the former regime and its allies.

At the service, economic, and living standards levels, the situation remained volatile throughout the year, depending on the level of security and the capacity of local administrative structures to manage resources and provide services. While some areas maintained a minimum level of basic services, others witnessed a marked decline in public services, a rise in the cost of living, limited job opportunities, and a decrease in purchasing power. Furthermore, security tensions and military operations in several areas disrupted healthcare, severed supply routes, increased humanitarian needs, and intensified pressure on host communities due to waves of temporary displacement.

At the same time, the year witnessed the return of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons to their areas of origin or to areas of their choosing within Syria, particularly in the first half of the year. However, the pace of returns subsequently slowed due to the continued security fragility, the fluctuating state of public services and the economy, and especially the high levels of destruction inflicted by the Assad regime. This indicates that the return of the population, while important, remains contingent on the ability of the local environment to provide a minimum level of security, services, and stability.

SIXTH: THE WORK OF THE SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS MOST PROMINENT ACTIVITIES DURING 2025

1. SNHR Adaptation to Changes in Syria and the Opening of its Damascus Office:

The year 2025 marked a pivotal point in the Syrian Network for Human Rights' journey, given the rapid political and security transformations that Syria witnessed following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime. During this year, the Network continued its work in documentation, analysis, and advocacy, expanding its focus to include transitional justice, legislative reform, and public policy monitoring, while strengthening its presence in international human rights and media spheres.

Among the most significant operational and professional developments during the year was the opening of the network's office and official headquarters in Damascus, following its acquisition of the necessary legal license to operate within Syria. This step represents a qualitative leap forward for the network, solidifying its presence as an independent national institution working from within the country to defend human rights, advocate for victims, and contribute to discussions related to the transitional phase and the rebuilding of state institutions on legal and human rights foundations.

2. The Most Prominent Work Paths of SNHR during 2025:

a. Transitional Justice

During 2025, the Network continued its intensive work on the transitional justice file, and in this context presented its vision which aimed to support the paths of truth, accountability, reparation, and institutional reform, in line with the requirements of building a sustainable peace that preserves the rights of victims and prevents the recurrence of violations.

SNHR emphasized the need to approach transitional justice as a comprehensive process that extends beyond criminal accountability to include truth-seeking, reparations, institutional reform, and memory preservation. It stressed the priority of addressing the cases of detainees, the forcibly disappeared, and mass graves in any serious transitional process. Furthermore, it underscored the necessity of establishing an independent national transitional justice body based on clear legal principles that guarantee its financial and administrative independence, protect it from politicization, ensure its representation of Syria's diversity, and guarantee the effective participation of victims and civil society.

In the same vein, SNHR addressed the relationship between transitional justice and civil peace, emphasizing that societal stability cannot be built on marginalizing victims or bypassing accountability requirements. It stressed that any conflation of the demands of reconciliation with the jurisdiction of the judiciary or justice institutions threatens to perpetuate impunity. The network also highlighted the role of the media in this process, in terms of uncovering the truth, conveying victims' testimonies, monitoring judicial proceedings, and contributing to building a collective memory resistant to denial and the suppression of evidence. In this context, the network called for responsible media discourse that neither trivializes the suffering of victims nor grants moral or social legitimacy to those who justify crimes and violations.

b. Political Developments and Paths of Institutional Transition

Throughout the year, the network kept pace with the political and institutional transformations that followed the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, and presented a rights-based approach to the political transition process, focusing on the need to move from temporary revolutionary legitimacy to a political pluralism based on participation, separation of powers, and the building of representative institutions subject to accountability.

In this context, the network presented proposals concerning the structure of the transitional government, the interim constitutional framework, the formation of the government, the drafting of the permanent constitution, and elections. It emphasized the necessity of ensuring the political process is inclusive of all groups and regions, guaranteeing the participation of women, internally displaced persons, and refugees, and excluding those involved in serious human rights violations. The network also issued its vision for the formation of the legislative authority during the transitional phase, stressing the importance of its independence from the executive branch, strengthening its oversight and legislative powers, and adopting transparent and participatory criteria for selecting its members. This, it argued, would ensure genuine representation of Syrian society and prevent the reproduction of previous authoritarian structures.

c. Documenting the crimes and repressive policies of the former regime

SNHR devoted an important part of its work during 2025 to documenting the crimes and violations committed by the former Bashar al-Assad regime, and analyzing the policies and tools it used in repression and control, in preparation for supporting legal accountability, and stating the requirements for dealing with this legacy in the context of building the new state.

In this context, SNHR addressed the use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression, demonstrating how exceptional and military laws and courts were employed to eliminate opponents and to cover up mass executions, enforced disappearances, and torture leading to death. It also highlighted policies of destruction and confiscation of private property, particularly in Daraa Governorate, as part of a strategy of forced displacement and obstructing the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

SNHR also published specialized analyses regarding the responsibility of prominent figures in the former regime's repressive apparatus, such as Interior Minister Mohammed al-Shaar. These analyses detailed the roles played by certain institutions and security agencies in perpetrating widespread and systematic violations, including arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, confiscation of property, and the denial of official documents to citizens. The Network also addressed the necessity of excluding those implicated in serious crimes from state institutions during the transitional phase, considering this a crucial element in ensuring non-recurrence and rebuilding trust in public institutions, rather than an act of revenge. In the same vein, the network continued to pursue specialized security-related cases, including the structure of certain intelligence branches and their role in repression, surveillance, and persecution, as well as the cases of children who were forcibly disappeared or placed in care facilities under circumstances that warrant investigation and the uncovering of the truth.

d. Analysis of laws and decisions issued by the Syrian Presidency and Government

As part of its monitoring of the work of the new Syrian authorities, the Network issued legal analyses and human rights commentaries during 2025 on a number of laws, decrees and official decisions, with the aim of assessing their compliance with international human rights standards and the requirements of the transitional phase.

In this area, SNHR emphasized the need for a participatory and transparent approach to reforming the legislative system. This includes involving the Bar Association, academic institutions, and human rights civil society organizations in drafting fundamental legal amendments, particularly those related to litigation procedures and means of proof. The network also addressed some decrees aimed at mitigating some of the effects of the exceptional policies adopted by the previous regime, such as decisions related to abolishing security-based pretrial detention measures. It considered these important initial corrective steps, but insufficient unless complemented by a broader legislative framework that fully addresses the effects of confiscation, dispossession, and related violations within the context of transitional justice.

e. Israeli Incursions into Syrian Territory and Escalation of Airstrikes

The year 2025 witnessed a continuation and escalation of Israeli military operations inside Syrian territory, whether through ground incursions into southern Syria, particularly in the governorates of Rural Damascus, Daraa, and Quneitra, or through airstrikes targeting military sites, and sometimes civilian areas or sites near state institutions. These operations further complicated the security situation during the transitional phase and contributed to undermining local stability and threatening the safety of the civilian population.

- **Ground Incursions:**

SNHR monitored the continuation of ground incursions by Israeli occupation forces into Syrian territory during 2025. These incursions escalated in both number and geographical scope, particularly in the second half of the year. They were primarily concentrated in southern Syria and involved the entry of Israeli military units into populated areas, sometimes supported by heavy military vehicles.

These incursions were accompanied by numerous violations against the civilian population, most notably extrajudicial killings, kidnapping and arbitrary detention, attacks on humanitarian and media workers, the establishment of temporary checkpoints, raids on homes and their search or demolition, as well as the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the bulldozing of agricultural land. There were also instances of shelling following local residents' resistance to or clashes with the invading patrols, as occurred in some towns in Daraa and the Damascus countryside.

These facts show that the Israeli ground incursions were not limited to alleged military targets, but also produced direct effects on the civilian population, and led to the imposition of a coercive security reality in some border areas, which affects the sovereignty of the Syrian state and raises serious problems in light of the rules of international law, especially with regard to the protection of civilians and the prohibition of military intervention inside the territory of another state without a legitimate legal basis.

- **Israeli Airstrikes:**

In parallel with the ground incursions, 2025 witnessed a sharp escalation in Israeli airstrikes inside Syria. These strikes targeted military and security sites, headquarters that had been deserted since the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime, as well as civilian areas or sites near populated areas. These attacks resulted in casualties and injuries, caused widespread material damage, and further complicated the security situation in several governorates.

Israeli airstrikes during the year targeted sites in Damascus and its surrounding countryside, Latakia, Homs, Hama, Daraa, and As-Suwayda. Among the most notable attacks were those on a residential area in the Dummar Project, the vicinity of the White Port in Latakia, Hama Military Airport, the area surrounding the Presidential Palace and the General Staff headquarters in Damascus, as well as sites near Al-Kiswah in the Damascus countryside. Airstrikes also followed Israeli ground incursions into southern Syria, particularly in cases where local residents confronted these incursions or obstructed Israeli patrols.

The impact of these attacks was not limited to military dimensions; it also took on a serious political and security dimension, particularly in light of the sectarian justifications offered by the Israeli authorities in some cases, especially concerning developments in predominantly Druze areas of rural Damascus and As-Suwayda. From the perspective of international law, these operations constitute a violation of Syrian sovereignty, a direct interference in its internal affairs, and raise serious concerns regarding respect for the principles of distinction, proportionality, and military necessity.

SNHR also recorded during the year sporadic Israeli ground attacks carried out using artillery and tanks from their positions inside the occupied Golan towards areas inside Syrian territory, which confirms that the Israeli escalation was not limited to the ground and air patterns, but also included the use of long-range firepower in contexts that directly affected the civilian population and the work of local authorities.

f. The most prominent events, seminars and institutional activities in which SNHR participated during 2025

During 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights continued its active presence in human rights, judicial, media and academic spaces at the regional and international levels, benefiting from its documentation and legal expertise in supporting accountability and transitional justice processes, protecting victims and promoting human rights awareness of the Syrian issue.

In this context, the network has contributed to a number of international legal proceedings related to the prosecution of perpetrators of serious violations in Syria, by providing information, data, evidence and technical expertise supporting legal proceedings in a number of prominent cases before European courts, reflecting its ongoing role in linking national human rights documentation with international justice processes.

SNHR also participated in media, human rights, and academic events and forums addressing the future of Syria, the role of transitional justice, the relationship between media and accountability, and building legal capacity in the Arab region. This included participation in specialized conferences and forums, as well as contributions to academic training activities, including arbitration and providing expertise at legal and educational events related to human rights.

g. Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding

During 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights worked to expand its institutional partnerships by concluding a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding with specialized international and national bodies, with the aim of strengthening cooperation and exchanging experiences and data in the areas of documentation, revealing the fate of the missing, analyzing the effects of attacks on civilians, and building judicial capacities.

In this context, SNHR strengthened its cooperation with international bodies concerned with the issue of missing persons and the search for truth, supporting efforts to determine the fate of the disappeared, identify remains, protect mass graves, and safeguard the rights of families affected by loss. It also expanded its collaboration with organizations specializing in analyzing data related to airstrikes and their impact on civilians, thereby reinforcing the use of documented data in efforts toward transparency, accountability, and the protection of civilians. At the national level, the network established partnerships aimed at developing judicial capacities and enhancing judges' and trainees' understanding of international law, human rights, and transitional justice concepts, thereby supporting the development of a national justice system better equipped to address the legacy of grave violations.

h. SNHR continued to be a primary source in international reports

Throughout 2025, these reports, issued by UN bodies and European and American governmental institutions, assessed the situation in Syria, particularly in the areas of human rights, security, asylum, and the conditions of returnees.

This accreditation underscores the network's established reputation over the years as an independent national body specializing in documenting violations and analyzing the Syrian context. It also affirms the growing confidence in its data and methodology, and its role in providing policymakers and international bodies with reliable information that helps characterize the situation, assess risks, and formulate positions and policies related to Syria.

i. Activities of SNHR office in Damascus

After the opening of the Syrian Network for Human Rights office in Damascus, the office began during 2025 to play a direct role inside Syria, which included hosting meetings and gatherings with national and international bodies concerned with transitional justice, missing persons, accountability, and human rights documentation.

In this context, the office established a platform for coordination and dialogue with national bodies concerned with transitional justice and missing persons. This aimed to facilitate the exchange of expertise, leverage the network's accumulated databases, support national efforts to uncover the truth, provide redress for victims, and develop institutional mechanisms. The office also hosted delegations from UN and international mechanisms concerned with investigation, accountability, and human rights, discussing with them ways to enhance cooperation in documentation, case building, training national personnel, and supporting transitional justice processes.

This presence from within Damascus demonstrates a shift in the nature of SNHR's work during the transitional phase, by combining documentation and monitoring on the one hand, and direct involvement in national and international coordination processes on the other, thus strengthening its position as an active partner in discussions related to the future of justice and human rights in Syria.

j. Annual Periodic Publications of SNHR during 2025

During 2025, the Syrian Network for Human Rights continued to issue its periodic annual reports and statements, which represent a fundamental pillar of its ongoing work in documenting violations and analyzing the human rights situation in Syria, and often coincide with international events or pivotal annual milestones related to issues of victims, justice and memory.

During the year, the network issued periodic reports addressing the situations of women, refugees and displaced persons, victims of torture, chemical attacks, enforced disappearances, the effects of Russian military intervention, and the situation of children, in addition to comprehensive updates on the toll of violations by Bashar al-Assad's regime on the first anniversary of its fall.

These publications not only presented updated figures but also sought to connect the annual documentation to the new political and human rights context in Syria following the fall of the previous regime. They emphasized that addressing the legacy of violations requires a comprehensive approach based on justice, accountability, reparations, and institutional reform. Furthermore, these publications underscored the centrality of the rights of the most affected groups, particularly women, children, the forcibly disappeared, refugees, and survivors of torture, and the necessity of keeping these issues at the forefront of national and international attention.

SEVENTH: LEGAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Legal Conclusions:

a. The Legal Framework Governing the Transitional Phase

The year 2025 demonstrated the continued overlap between non-international armed conflict and internal security disturbances, meaning that international humanitarian law applies in contexts where the criteria for armed conflict are met, while international human rights law remains applicable throughout Syria at all times. This implies that all parties, both official and unofficial, are obligated to respect the rules protecting civilians, prohibit indiscriminate attacks, ensure humane treatment, and prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

b. The Right to Life and the Prohibition of Extrajudicial Killings

The patterns of violations documented during 2025 indicate the continued occurrence of arbitrary deprivation of life at the hands of multiple actors, whether in the context of military operations, during detention, or amidst lawlessness and societal violence. This constitutes a grave violation of the right to life under international human rights law. This entails a clear legal obligation to conduct independent, impartial, and effective investigations and to hold those responsible to account individually and without selectivity.

c. Personal Freedom and the Prohibition of Arbitrary Arrest and Enforced Disappearance

Documented evidence confirms the continued use of unlawful deprivation of liberty by various actors, in the form of arbitrary arrest, detention outside legal safeguards, or enforced disappearance. This constitutes a direct violation of the right to liberty and security of person and undermines the foundations of the rule of law during the transitional period. It also underscores the need to distinguish between legitimate measures aimed at prosecuting perpetrators of serious crimes and arbitrary detention carried out outside judicial oversight or without respect for fair trial guarantees.

d. Prohibition of Torture and Ill-Treatment

The data in the report reveals the continued use of torture and ill-treatment in some places of detention or during security operations, including deaths in or after detention. This confirms that the prohibition against torture has not been properly respected, despite its absolute and non-derogable nature under all circumstances. This reality also necessitates subjecting all places of detention to independent oversight, explicitly criminalizing torture, and demonstrating zero tolerance for any practices that amount to or lead to it.

e. Protection of Civilian Objects and Essential Services

Attacks on medical and educational facilities, places of worship, and other civilian objects demonstrate the continued fragility of the protective environment for civilians and essential services. All parties have an obligation to refrain from targeting these objects or using them in a manner that renders them unprotected, and to take the necessary measures to ensure the continuity of essential services, particularly health, education, water, and energy, as part of the obligations incumbent upon the State and the relevant authorities.

g. Remnants of War, Mines, and Unexploded Ordnance

The continued threat posed by mines and unexploded ordnance underscores that the effects of conflict extend beyond direct hostilities, posing a long-term threat to the right to life and physical safety, particularly in areas of return, agricultural activity, and residential development. This necessitates a proactive approach to developing effective mine clearance programs, raising awareness of the dangers, providing assistance to victims, and ensuring that this issue is treated as a national priority, not a marginal technical matter.

i. Transitional Justice and Guarantees of Non-Repetition

The institutional steps taken in 2025 present a significant opportunity to build a national transitional justice process. However, the success of this process remains contingent on its independence, clear mandate, inclusiveness, and its ability to integrate accountability, truth-seeking, reparations, institutional reform, and the preservation of memory. Any disruption to this integration, or any tendency toward politicization, selectivity, or the marginalization of victims, would undermine public trust and weaken the prospects for non-repetition.

f. Protecting the Most Vulnerable Groups

Documented evidence shows that children, women, and other vulnerable groups remained subject to serious violations throughout 2025, including violence, detention, recruitment, and denial of protection and services. This underscores that general measures are insufficient unless accompanied by specific protection policies that address the unique needs of these groups, ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, and prevent their re-exposure to abuse.

h. Mass Graves, the Missing, and the Right to Truth

The emergence of the mass graves file and the continued expansion of the file on the missing and forcibly disappeared reveal that the right to truth remains one of the most pressing rights in the Syrian transitional phase. This file is linked to legal obligations related to revealing the fate of the disappeared, preserving evidence, identifying remains, ensuring family participation, and creating appropriate conditions for accountability and reparations. It also requires adherence to international forensic standards and the principles of independent and professional investigation.

j. General Protection Requirements in the Transitional Phase

The report reveals that human rights protection during the first year of the transitional phase continues to face profound structural challenges, including weak institutions, the proliferation of armed groups, uneven levels of control, and persistent patterns of impunity. Conversely, this phase presents a foundational opportunity to rebuild a national protection system based on the rule of law, judicial independence, individual accountability, victim participation, and the protection of civic and media spaces, thereby ensuring a shift from managing violations to preventing them.

2. Recommendations of the Syrian Network for Human Rights:

a. To the Syrian Government

The Syrian government should make the protection of human rights a central pillar in managing the transitional phase by strengthening the rule of law, ensuring that all security and military apparatuses are subject to effective and independent judicial oversight, and preventing any detention or use of force outside the legal framework. It must also expedite the activation of transitional justice and missing persons institutions based on independence, transparency, and efficiency, and enable them to access relevant records, archives, and sites.

Practical steps should also be taken to control unregulated weapons, prevent armed groups operating outside the framework of the state from continuing to perform security or military functions, protect civilian objects and essential facilities, ensure they are not used or targeted, develop comprehensive national programs for mine clearance and the removal of explosive remnants of war, and guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and essential services.

b. To the Syrian Democratic Forces

The Syrian Democratic Forces must cease all forms of arbitrary arrest or detention and ensure that any restriction of liberty is subject to independent judicial oversight and fundamental legal safeguards. They must also immediately and unconditionally end all child recruitment practices, release all child soldiers, and establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that such recruitment does not recur.

Violations attributed to their members, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and attacks on civilians and journalists, must also be investigated independently and transparently. Freedom of the press must be respected, and civilian facilities must not be used for military purposes.

c. To local and non-state armed groups:

All local armed groups in As-Suwayda and elsewhere must immediately comply with the provisions of international humanitarian law and the rules for the protection of civilians, and refrain from extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, unlawful detentions, and any acts of reprisal, discrimination, or sectarian or regional bias. They must also cease attacks on civilian objects and respect medical, humanitarian, and media personnel.

d. To Israel

Israel must cease its military incursions and attacks into Syrian territory, respect the rules of international law, particularly those relating to the protection of civilians and civilian objects, and refrain from any use of force that is not based on legitimate legal grounds and consistent with the principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction. Furthermore, violations resulting from these operations must be investigated, and the victims' right to redress and compensation must be guaranteed. Israel must also withdraw from all occupied territories and compensate their inhabitants.

e. To the United Nations and its International Mechanisms

The United Nations and its mechanisms concerned with Syria should continue to provide technical and institutional support to national efforts aimed at truth and accountability, focusing on the files of missing persons, mass graves, institutional reform, and the building of judicial and investigative capacities. They should also strengthen monitoring of the human rights situation and provide the necessary expertise to ensure compliance with international standards in investigations, evidence management, and the handling of remains.

f. To the International Community and Supporting States

The international community should provide sustained support to emerging national institutions concerned with transitional justice, accountability, and judicial and security reform, and support mine clearance programs, the restoration of basic services, and the protection of the most vulnerable groups. It must also support an environment conducive to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons, exert pressure to stop violations, regardless of the perpetrators, and ensure respect for international law and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

g. General recommendations for the transitional phase

SNHR recommends adopting a comprehensive national policy for the prevention of violations, based on reforming the security sector, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, institutionalizing oversight of the actions of the forces and agencies, publishing the results of investigations periodically and transparently, and ensuring effective remedies for victims.

It also recommends that the participation of victims, their families, and local communities be an integral element in the design of transitional justice, protection, and reform policies, and that the issues of missing persons, mass graves, landmines, and arbitrary detention be addressed as interconnected national priorities, not separate issues. Finally, establishing non-recurrence requires the adoption of professional and non-selective accountability based on individual responsibility, accompanied by genuine institutional reform that rebuilds trust between society and state institutions.

Appreciation and Solidarity

The Syrian Network for Human Rights extends its gratitude to all victims, their families, witnesses, survivors, field researchers, collaborators, and everyone who contributed during 2025 to disseminating information, documenting events, and supporting efforts to protect human rights in Syria. The Network also expresses its appreciation to the human rights, humanitarian, and media organizations and entities that continued working to protect civilians, uncover the truth, and support victims during this extremely complex period.

SNHR affirms its solidarity with the victims and their families, and with all those affected by the violations and acts of violence witnessed this year, and renews its commitment to continuing independent human rights work to uncover the truth, support accountability, and contribute to building an environment that preserves human dignity and respects the rights of all Syrians without discrimination.

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