

21 Individuals Died due to Torture in October 2017

Including 20 at the Hands of
Syrian Regime Forces

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Saturday, November 4, 2017

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. Introduction
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction

Since 2011, the Syrian regime has been denying executing any arrests and, instead, accuses Al-Qaeda and terrorist groups, such as ISIS, of it. Additionally, the Syrian regime doesn't acknowledge any torture or death-due-to-torture cases.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:

“The norm of ‘Responsibility to Protect’ must be implemented in light of the government’s failure to protect its people, and the fruitlessness of the diplomatic and peaceful efforts so far. Crimes against humanity and war crimes are being perpetrated every day in Syria and mainly at the hands of the organs of the state itself.”

The fourth round of negotiations was held in Astana city, Kazakhstan’s capital, on 3 and 4 of May 2017. Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives attended as the sponsoring states of Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. The three states agreed on establishing four de-escalation zones, wherein the agreement is to commence on May 6, 2017. Following an extensive round of talks between Russia, USA, and Jordan that commenced in May 2017 in Amman, Jordan’s capital, the American and Russian presidents announced, on the sidelines of the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, that a ceasefire agreement has been reached in southwestern Syria – Daraa, Quneitra, and Suwayda governorates. The agreement went into force at 12:00 on Sunday July 9, 2017, and provided for the passage of humanitarian aids in addition to a ceasefire between the conflicting parties (Syrian regime forces and their allies on one side, and armed opposition factions on the other side).



In addition, there have been a number of other local agreements in July and August 2017, such as Eastern Ghouta agreement between armed opposition factions, on one side, and officials from the Russian side, while a similar agreement was struck with the opposition in northern suburbs of Homs. However, the texts of these agreements haven't been made public on Russian government's websites, and the same for armed opposition factions who didn't publicize these agreements, except for Failaq al Rahman who published the [text of the agreement](#) on their official website. At the end of the agreement, according to the copy on Failaq al Rahman's website, a signature by a Russian sponsor was shown but without an explicit name, which was a grave mistake, as apparently all of this helps the sponsoring Russian side to easily dissolve from these agreements with no subsequent political or legal obligations and repercussions.

On Saturday, July 22, 2017, Russian Ministry of Defense announced that a de-escalation agreement has been signed in Eastern Ghouta following a round of talks between Russian military officials, on one side, and Jaish al Islam faction, on the other side, in Egypt's capital Cairo. The agreement was to come into effect at 12:00 of the same day. On Wednesday, August 16, 2017, a Failaq al Rahman representative and a Russian representative signed an agreement in Geneva city that established Failaq al Rahman's inclusion in the de-escalation zone in Eastern Ghouta. The agreement was to come into effect at 21:00 of Friday, August 18, 2017.

On Monday, July 31, 2017, another de-escalation agreement was signed in Egypt's capital Cairo for northern Homs suburbs and southern Hama suburbs following a round of talks between armed opposition factions in the area and the Syrian regime represented by the Russian government as a sponsoring party, as the agreement was to commence at 12:00 on Thursday, August 3, 2017.

Most notably, the two most recent agreements provided for a full cessation of hostilities between the conflicting parties in the relevant areas -with the exclusion of the areas in which ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham are present- and for humanitarian aids to enter these areas and for detainees to be released as per the demands of each party as to which detainees are to be released.

With the end of the sixth round of talks in the Kazakhstani capital, Astana, which were held over the course of two days (September 14-15, 2017), a de-escalation zone was [established](#) in Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas, as military forces were to be deployed (Russian, Turkish, and Iranian) to monitor the agreement, with the passage of humanitarian aids.



On October 8, 2017, Jaish al Islam, Aknaf Bait al Maqdis, and Jaish al Ababil (armed opposition factions) signed an agreement with a Russian Ministry of Defense representative in the Egyptian capital Cairo. The agreement stated that southern Damascus city would be added to the de-escalation zones, as [the agreement](#) was to come into force at 12:00 of October 12, 2017. The agreement provided for a ceasefire in the area, and ensured that the area residents would not be displaced, in addition to the passage of humanitarian aids to the area.

The Kazakhstani Minister of Foreign Affairs read the final statement of the guarantor states (Russia, Turkey, Iran) at the conclusion of the final session of Astana talks' round 7 that were held on 30th and 31st of October 2017. The guarantor states called on the parties to the conflict in Syria to take steps towards building trust, including releasing detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons, delivering dead bodies, and ensure the passage of humanitarian aids into besieged areas.

Despite Ankara Ceasefire Agreement, however, and the de-escalation agreement that followed, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the guarantors- won't see are still going on as nothing had changed.

The Russian guarantor should respect the agreements it struck and apply serious pressure on its Syrian and Iranian allies in order to cease all forms of killing, shelling, and torture-to-death inside detention centers, and start releasing detainees – an issue that has not seen any notable progress.

Methodology

In light of the Syrian regime's refusal to acknowledge torture and death-due-to-torture cases, SNHR obtains information from either former detainees, or families. Most of the families get information about their detained beloved ones by bribing the officials in charge.

We, in SNHR, refer to the families' accounts. It should be noted that the Syrian authorities usually don't give back the dead bodies of the prisoners to their families. Also, in most cases, families are scared to go and get the dead bodies of their relatives or even their personal items from military hospitals out of fear of being arrested themselves.



Most of the families we contacted have assured that their relatives were in good health at the time of their arrest and illness couldn't have been the cause of death.

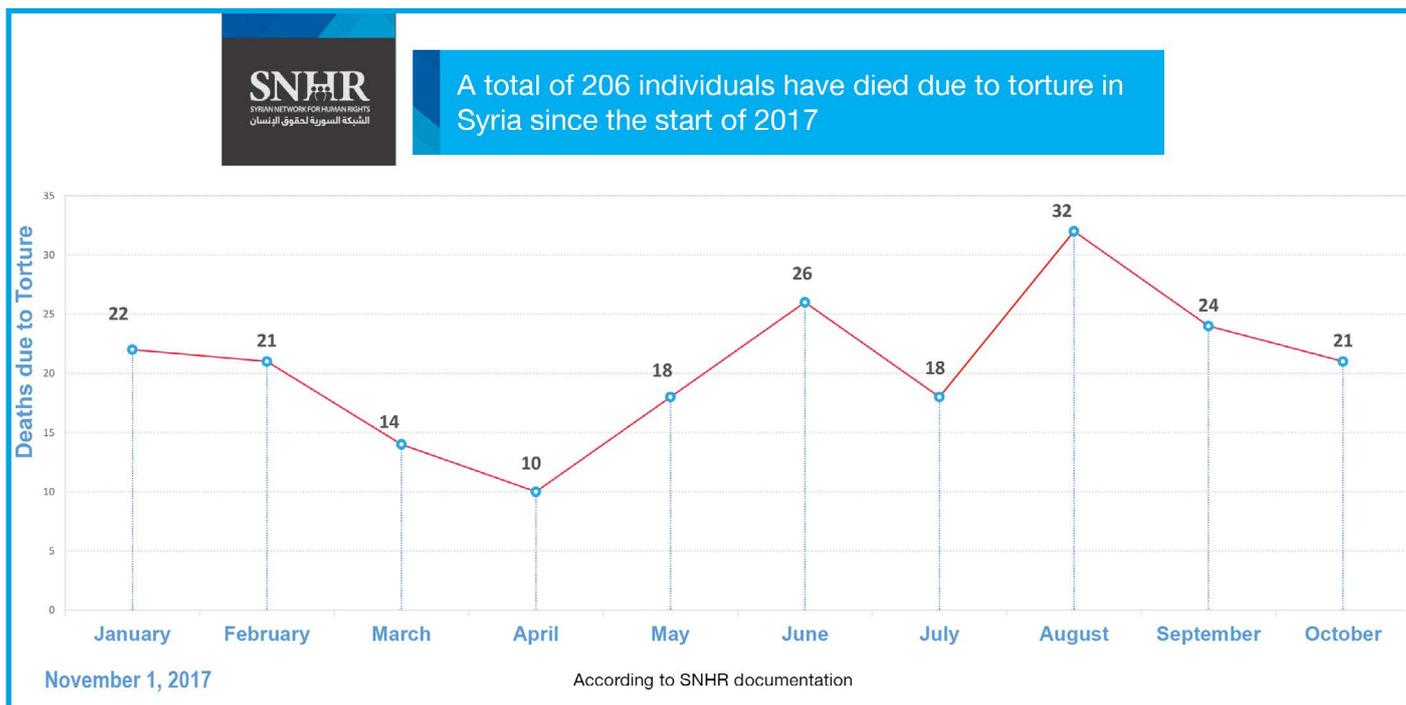
Therefore, SNHR encounters serious difficulties in the documentation process on account of the ban imposed against it and the fact that its members are being pursued by various parties. In light of such circumstances, it might be difficult to fully verify deaths as the process remains subject to ongoing documentation and verification while taking in consideration families' accounts.

Please see SNHR methodology in [documenting victims](#):

II.Executive Summary

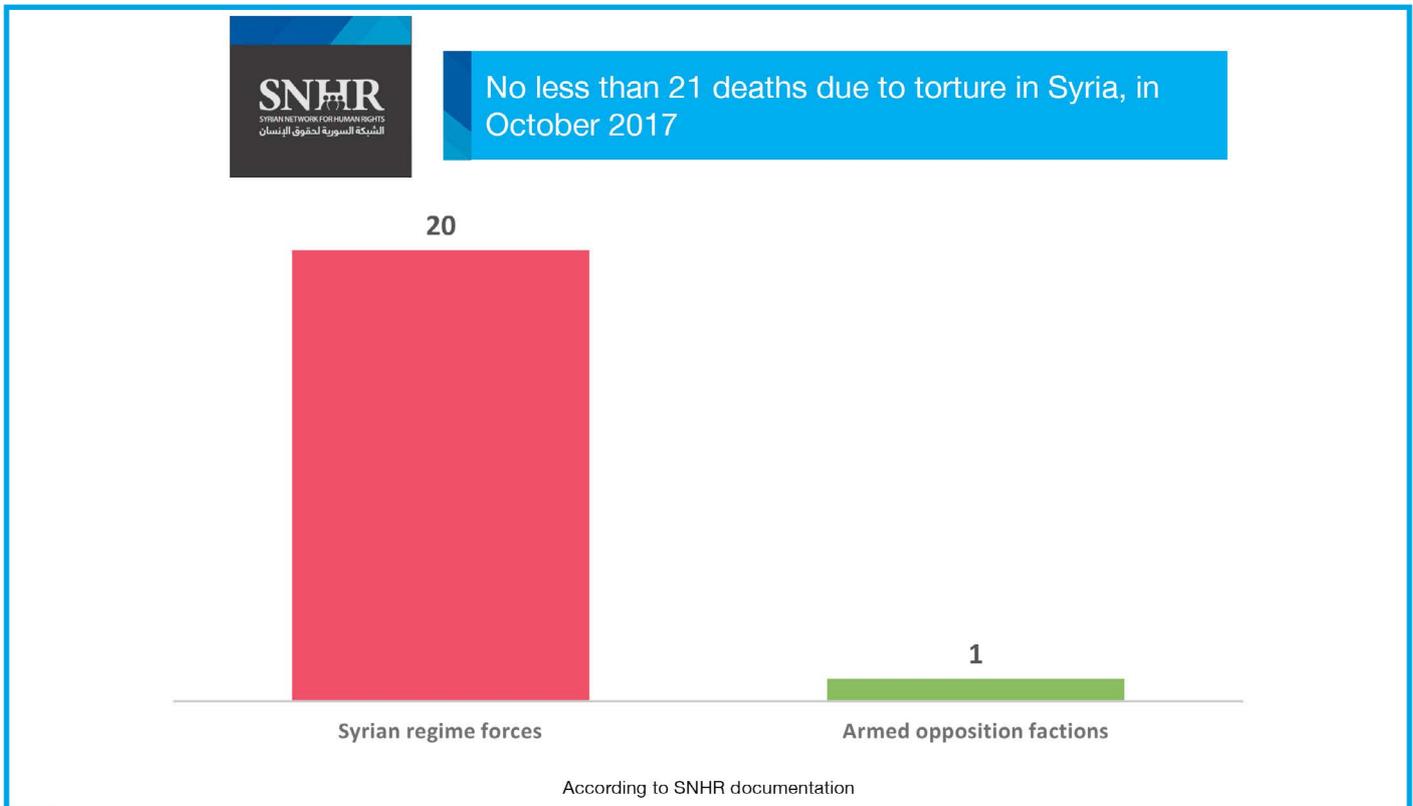
A. Victims of torture in 2017

SNHR has documented that 206 individuals died due to torture inside official and non-official detention centers at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2017 and November of the same year.



B. Deaths due to torture in October 2017

SNHR has documented no less than 21 deaths due to torture inside official and non-official detention centers in October 2017.



Deaths due to torture are distributed as follows:

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): 20

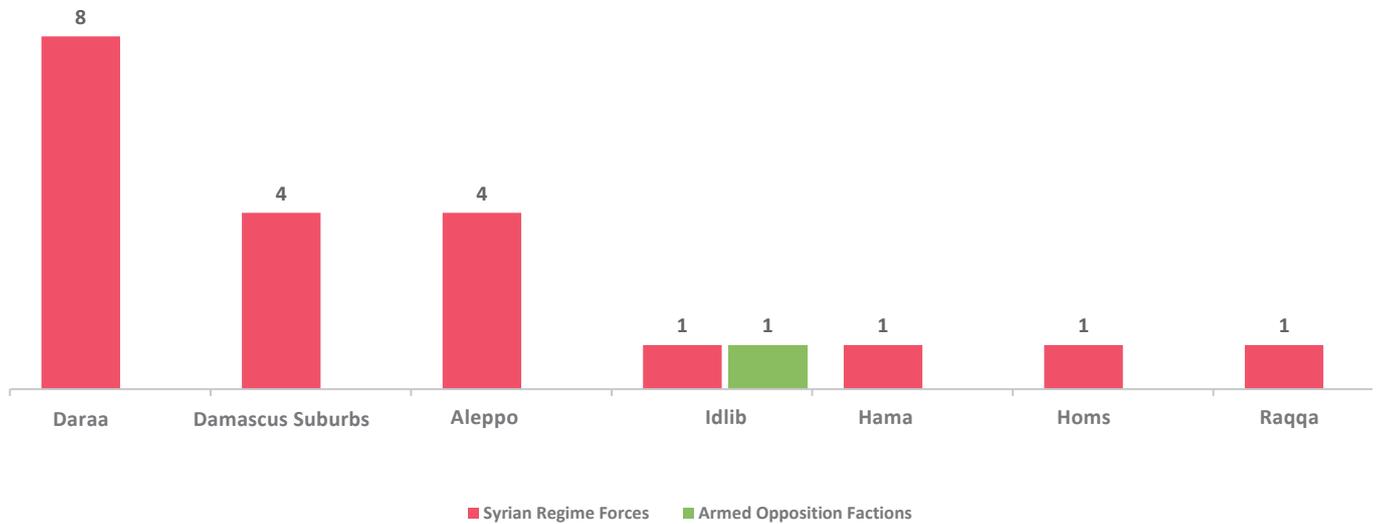
B. Armed opposition factions: 1

Deaths due to torture have been an ongoing phenomenon since 2011, this is an explicit indicator on the systematic violence and excessive forces used against detainees.

Daraa governorate saw the highest toll of victims dying due to torture with eight individuals. The remaining toll is distributed across governorates as follows: 4 in Damascus suburbs, 4 in Aleppo, 2 in Idlib, 1 in Hama, 1 in Homs, 1 in Raqqa.



Distribution of Victims Who Died due to Torture in October 2017



Most notable cases of deaths due to torture in October are:
Two university students, one student, one engineer

III. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture

Students

Ahmad Hasaan Bahaa al Din, student at a industrial institute, from Tadmur city, eastern suburbs of Homs governorate, born in 1995. In 2014, he was arrested in Homs city. On Sunday, October 15, 2017, we received information confirming his death due to torture inside a detention center.



Student Ahmad Bahaa al Din



University students

Sami Nayef Jawish, a student at the faculty of trade and economics in Tishreen University in Latakia city, from Raqqa city, born in 1996. On Tuesday, August 2, 2016, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in Latakia city. On Saturday, October 7, 2017, we received information that he died due to torture on Wednesday, May 17, 2017, inside Palestine Branch – a detention center.



Salah al Din al Ahmad, a student at the faculty of science in Aleppo University. From Bostan al Qaser neighborhood, eastern Aleppo city, born in 1991. In 2013, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces from Aleppo University. On Tuesday, October 17, 2017, we received information that he died due to torture inside a detention center in Damascus city on July 13, 2017.

Engineers

Alaa Mohammad al Shawwaf, engineer, has a degree in communication engineering, works as a paramedic with “al Sakhour neighborhood” dispensary in eastern Aleppo city, from al Bab city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. In December 2016, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in Jibreem neighborhood, eastern Aleppo city. On Thursday, October 19, 2017, we received information that he died due to torture in December 2016 inside a detention center.



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

SNHR can confirm that this considerably huge number of victims who are dying due to torture every month, with taking into consideration that the actual number of deaths is most likely higher, unequivocally indicates a systematized policy that is being adopted by the head of the ruling authorities. All of the state's organs, branches, and figures are fully aware of these policies. Furthermore, these policies were enforced in a widespread manner which constitutes crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Some armed opposition factions have practiced acts of torture which constitute war crimes.

Recommendations

Security Council

1. The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court.
2. Punishments must be enforced on all the leaders, of any party, who were involved in acts of torture which violates the international humanitarian law and the Resolutions of the Security Council on Syria; particularly Resolutions 2042 and 2139.
3. Bind the Syrian government, and the other parties, to fully cooperate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which was established by the Human Rights Council, in order to investigate torture practices inside detention centers.
4. Allow independent human rights organization to access any place in Syria.

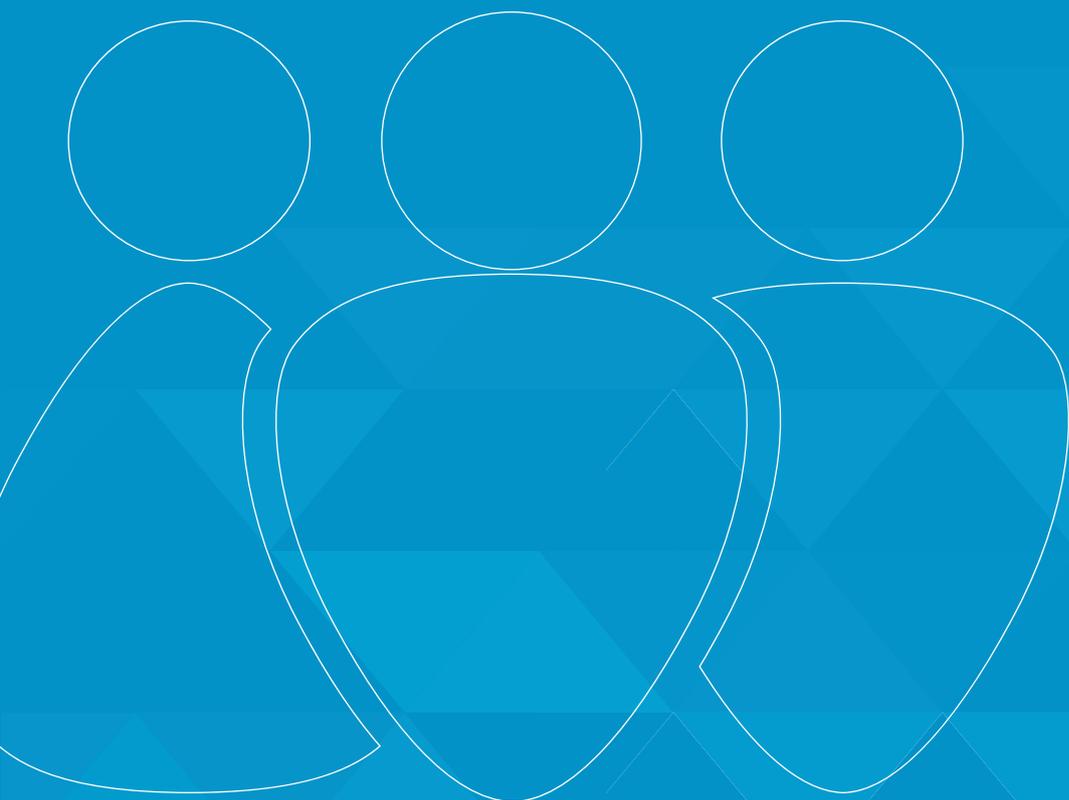
The Russian guarantor

- The Syrian regime has to be stopped from dooming the de-escalation agreements. Otherwise, it will only be seen as an exchange of roles between the Russian regime, on one side, and the Syrian/Russian alliance on the other side.
- Start making progress in the detainees issue by revealing the fates of 76,000 forcibly-disappeared persons at the hands of the Syrian regime.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our most sincere thanks to all families, eyewitness, and activists who contributed majorly to this report, and our most heartfelt condolences for the victims' families and relatives.





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