

28,076 Females Have Been Killed in Syria since March 2011, Nearly 84% of These by Syrian Regime Forces and Its Allies

Protecting Women in Syria Requires the Intervention of the International Community After Violations Have Reached the Level of Crimes against Humanity

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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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I. Introduction and Methodology

Over the past eight years, women in Syria have suffered unimaginably and have paid heavily for the failure of the ruling authorities to protect them ; the Syrian regime is one of the primary perpetrators of violations against them, with these crimes also enabled by the fact that the United Nations represented by the Security Council, has allowed this regime, which controls the Syrian state, to commit whatever violations it wishes, amounting to crimes against humanity, without imposing any penalty or putting any end to these crimes. Finally, the rest of the world's states did not take even the most basic action to protect Syrian women in light of their being targeted by the ruling regime and of the failure of the UN Security Council. In addition to this, Syrian women lacked the support of women's organizations around the world, which have abandoned Syrian women already enduring catastrophic suffering rather than showing any solidarity and demanding support for their rights or defending them.

For more than eight years, the basic rights of Syrian women have further deteriorated at all levels, including the security, social, economic, health and psychological levels, in conjunction with the Syrian regime's murderously brutal response to the people's demands for freedom and fundamental human rights. Whilst it's true that all segments of Syrian society have been adversely affected by the repercussions of the conflict, women have been worst affected, firstly because of their multiple roles and responsibilities as mothers and caregivers, and secondly due to their social and health status. Females in Syria – both children and adults - have also been subjected to various types of violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and executions, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, forced displacement, siege, and denial of healthcare and basic services, with the rates of these violations, particularly the killing, torture and enforced disappearance, being the worst in the world.



Syrian women and girls have not been accidental victims of the conflict, but have rather been directly and deliberately targeted by all parties to the conflict, primarily by the Syrian regime, which is by far the most prolific and most brutal perpetrator of violations compared to the other parties; females have been targeted either because of their active contribution to social, humanitarian, political, human rights, relief, medical, and media work, or simply because they are females, with the aim of marginalizing and breaking them, and as part of the regime's effort to suppress and intimidate society and deter any further opposition to the authorities, particularly since the status of women in Syrian society is still strongly linked to customs and beliefs. Women have been subjected to other types of violations, including restrictions on work, education and clothing, and access to adequate healthcare in areas controlled by ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, as well as forced conscription in areas controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, along with persecution, threats, intimidation and extortion in areas under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition. They have also suffered in many cases from the loss of the family breadwinner and from enduring unimaginably stressful living conditions in the context of displacement and of early and coerced marriage.

The internal armed conflict has imposed onerous burdens and massive changes on Syrian women; the high death toll and the disappearance of large numbers of men from society has led to women bearing an additional burden, as the percentage of households headed by women increased. This has led to many women being forced to assume new roles in addition to their customary ones, subjecting them to stressful and complex living conditions that are difficult to cope with, often outweighing their physical and emotional capabilities, with the constant stress, lack of security and social care due to the loss of husbands or brothers, and the paralysis of the educational process, amongst other challenges, having a catastrophic effect on their mental and emotional wellbeing; the lack of sufficiently competent organizations specialized in caring for and supporting Syrian women inside Syria or in countries of asylum has further aggravated this already intense suffering. Whilst there are, undoubtedly, many inspiring examples of women overcoming all these challenges, the overall picture remains too dark to be adequately described by this report.

2019 has been another painful year for Syrian women and girls due to the continuation of all the types of violations seen in previous years coupled with a decline in levels of humanitarian relief, support and political and media attention. We have monitored the continuation of the violations committed against women and girls, especially killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, of which we have recorded unprecedentedly high record numbers perpetrated by Syrian Regime forces, factions of the Armed Opposition and Syrian Democratic Forces. These have coincided with acts of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment and



sexual violence, in addition to targeting women and girls for forced conscription. It is true that the vast majority of women who have been subjected to violations are civilians, but a small proportion of women and girls have been directly involved in hostilities and have been subjected to violence and to greater levels of abuse than men when they are captured due to being female. The frequency of targeting females for abducting, often according to their ethnicity, by factions of the Armed Opposition and SDF forces has also increased, with many abducted as hostages to force their communities to acquiesce to the dominant forces in the area. Females, especially activists engaged in civil activities, have also been harassed, threatened and persecuted, and prevented from working mainly by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.

One of the greatest traumas suffered by Syrian women is the failure of the international community to protect them or to make any effort stop the killings, torture and detention, and the targeting of health and service facilities that provide basic services and the foundations of a decent life for them. The blatant violations against women and girls in Syria makes it imperative that both the United Nations and the Security Council implement measures to prevent and protect them from the repercussions of the conflict, and that these bodies finally shoulder their responsibilities towards the women of Syria, to put an end to the culture of perpetration of crimes, end the policy of impunity, and ensure that all parties abide by the rules of international law that explicitly provide women with special protection and care, which have collapsed completely under the violence and brutality of the Syrian regime.

Although most international legal instruments and covenants, such as the Geneva Convention and its two Additional Protocols, international humanitarian law and the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, give special protection to women in their articles, in all circumstances, given women's specific needs, Syrian women still do not enjoy even the lowest levels of protection and security. Such security and protection can only be achieved through the creation of a stable and secure society, which is impossible to achieve in the absence of a democratic political system. Despite the massive and overwhelmingly vast number of problems and violations suffered by Syrian women, a large number of them still haven't abandoned their resistance and the struggle to attain basic and fundamental rights and freedoms for the whole of Syrian society in order to achieve the democratic transformation of the Syrian state; their selflessness and self-sacrifice underlines the need for a guarantee of their active participation at every level.



Every year, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) publishes its annual report to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which takes place annually on November 25, to underline once again, that the violence and trauma being inflicted on Syrian women are unmatched in scale and scope in any other part of the world and to remind the world that these terrible and systematic crimes are still ongoing and are continuously escalating, and that while all parties to the conflict are involved in perpetrating these violations, the most prolific offenders by a very long way are the Syrian regime and its allies.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

“After suffering this terrible loss of their rights, Syrian women deserve all forms of support and advocacy from all women’s organizations and human rights bodies around the world, more especially since the world’s states have failed to fulfill their obligations to protect women in Syria and to ensure that the Syrian regime respect the Geneva Conventions to which it is a party. Syrian society cannot be stable without holding the perpetrators of crimes against Syrian women accountable and ensuring all their rights.”

Methodology

This report draws upon the SNHR’s database, on which we have recorded our daily monitoring of human rights violations in Syria since March 2011, and where we regularly and continuously update the evidence, information and data of cases and incidents we document from various sources, such as survivors, eyewitnesses, victims’ relatives, local activist associates and SNHR members in different areas and governorates of Syria.

This report outlines the record of violations committed by the main parties to the conflict in Syria against females between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, such as extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, conscription, and discrimination, which the SNHR has been able to document. The report also includes an outline of the most notable of these violations, and focuses on violations that occurred between November 25, 2018, and November 25, 2019, in particular, given that the violations that occurred before this period have been covered in previous annual reports.

The report also draws upon survivors’ accounts and outlines 11 accounts of survivors of various types of violations or of victims’ families or eyewitnesses to the incidents. We recorded these incidents in different areas in Syria and in neighboring countries either through face-to-face interviews with victims and eyewitnesses or through communication applications. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who have given us permission to use the information they provided for the purposes of the report. We have used alias in a number of cases at the request of eyewitnesses for their safety and to prevent them from being placed at personal risk.

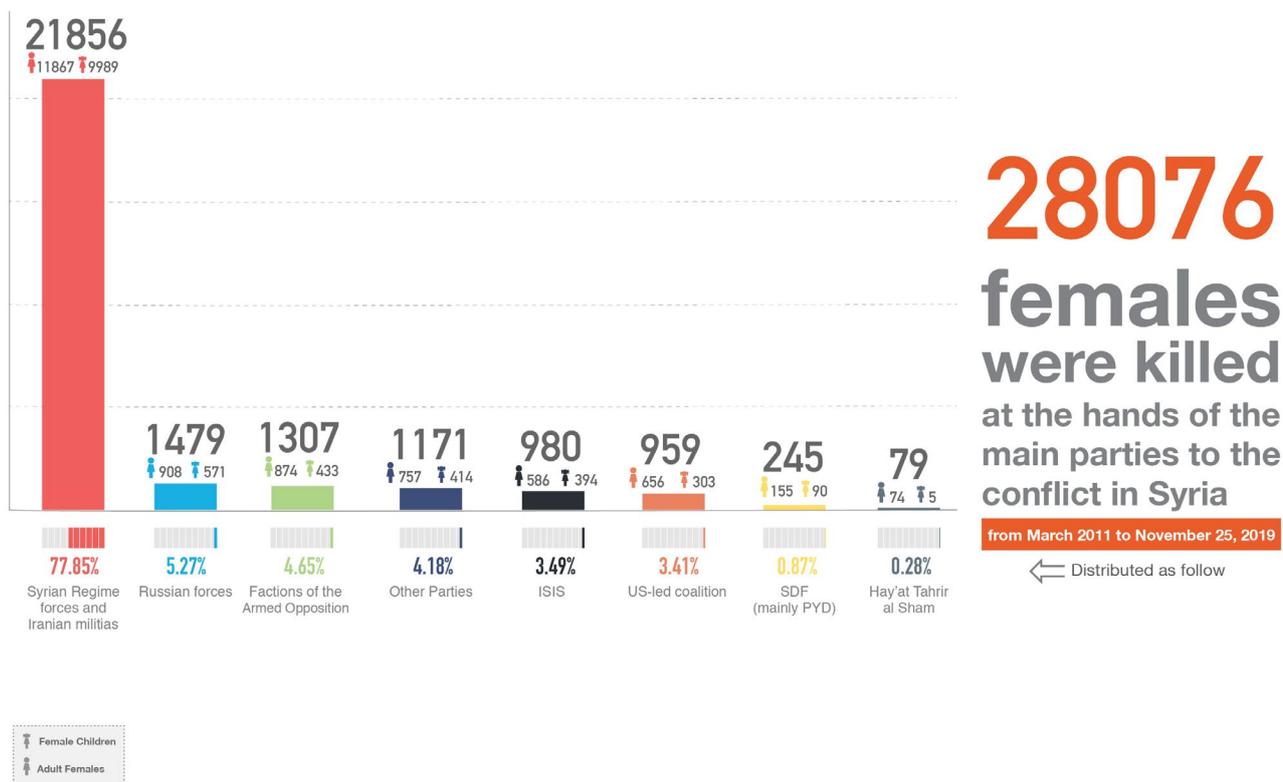


The report cites examples of attacks we documented and verified, in which females were killed, was committed by the parties to the conflict in Syria, and targeted civilian areas; in all of the attacks included in this report, we documented no military presence or weapons arsenals prior to or during the attacks. Also, the aggressing parties failed to warn the civilians in the vicinity prior to the attacks as required by international humanitarian law. We also provide examples of civilian female victims or activists who were not directly or indirectly involved in hostilities, except for females who were forcibly conscripted.

II. Record of the Most Notable Violations against Females according to SNHR's Database

Extrajudicial killing

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, SNHR documented the deaths of 28,076 females at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria, distributed as follows:



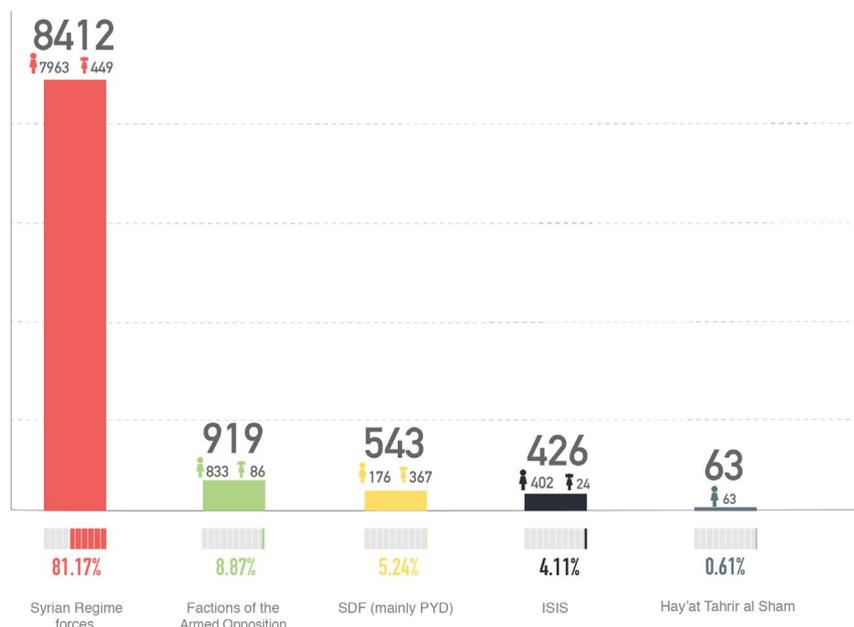
- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):** 21,856 females, including 11,867 adult females and 9,989 female children.
- **Russian forces:** 1,479 females, including 908 adult females and 571 female children



- **Extremist Islamist groups:** killed 1,059 females, including 660 adult females and 399 female children, divided between:
 - **ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State')**: 980 females, including 586 adult females and 394 female children
 - **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition):** 79 females, including 74 adult females and five female children
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 245 females, including 155 adult females and 90 female children
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 1,307 females, including 874 adult females and 433 female children
- **US-led coalition:** 959 females, including 656 adult females and 303 female children.
- **Other parties:** 1,171 females, including 757 adult females and 414 female children

Arbitrary arrest and enforced-disappearance

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, SNHR documented that at least 10,363 females are still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria, distributed as follows:



At least
10363
females are still detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria

from March 2011 to November 25, 2019

← Distributed as follow

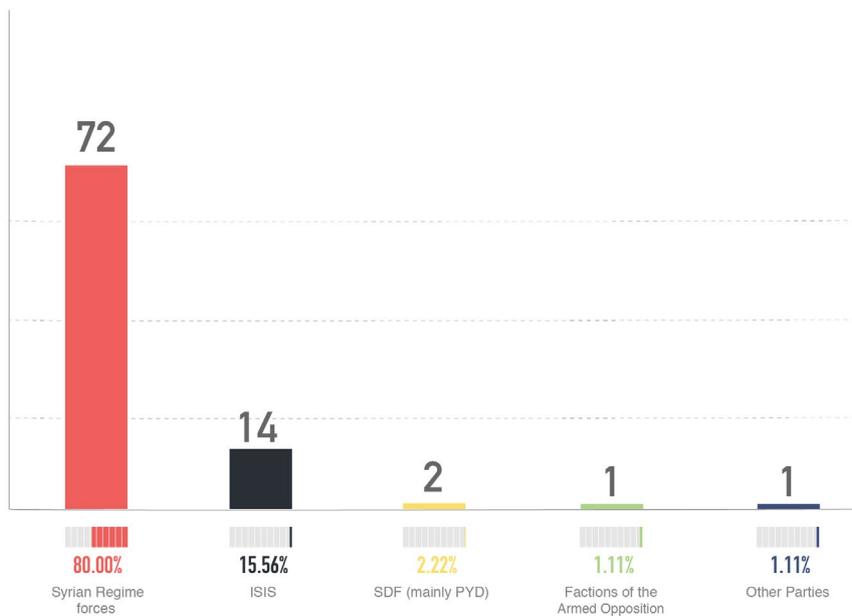
Female Children
Adult Females



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 8,412, including 7,963 adult females and 449 female children.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** arrested 489 females, including 465 adult females and 24 female children, divided between:
 - **ISIS:** 426, including 402 adult females and 24 female children
 - **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 63 adult females.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 543, including 176 adult females and 367 female children.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 919, including 833 adult females and 86 female children.

Female deaths due to torture

A total of 90 women (adult female) died due to torture at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, distributed as follows:



90
women
(adult female) died
due to torture
at the hands of the
main parties to the
conflict in Syria

from March 2011 to November 25, 2019

← Distributed as follow

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 72.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:** 14, all at the hands of ISIS.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Two.
- **Factions of the Armed Opposition:** One.
- **Other parties:** One.



III. Patterns of Violations against Females by the Parties to the Conflict in the Syrian Conflict

A. Violations by the Syrian regime (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)

1. Extrajudicial killing

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, the SNHR team documented the deaths of 21,856 females, including 11,867 adult females and 9,989 female children, by Syrian Regime forces, recorded in the SNHR database.

Syrian Regime forces have carried out raids and attacks with various types of weapons including missiles, artillery, cluster munitions, chemical weapons, and barrel bombs indiscriminately and sometimes deliberately on populated civilian areas, failed to distinguish between men and women, nor between civilians and combatants, with almost all bombings injuring or killing women; on many occasions, women were killed with their children or were pregnant in their homes as a result of the bombing or the collapse of buildings. Since 2012, Syrian Regime forces have imposed a partial or complete siege on a large number of cities and neighborhoods that had broken free of regime control. In most of these areas, the sieges lasted for years during which access to food and medical supplies for these neighborhoods was severely impeded by the regime. In addition, Syrian Regime forces deliberately targeted vital facilities in the besieged areas such as hospitals, food warehouses, and drainage systems, and also barred the evacuation of serious chronic medical cases into regime-controlled areas for treatment; we subsequently recorded many female fatalities, and many women lost their embryos and had early abortions due to repercussions of siege.

The Syrian regime is responsible for about 78 percent of the female death toll, while the percentage of female victims compared to the total civilian death toll is about 10 percent which is a high percentage and shows the Syrian regime's deliberate targeting of females to cause the greatest harm possible to society, given the role that females play in keeping families together.

Attacks carried out by Syrian Regime forces have left thousands of females injured, many of whom have been permanently disabled due to amputation, loss of organs or deformities resulting from burns. This has starkly reflected on the psychological state of females and has led to multiple burdens, especially in times of displacement, forced displacement or loss of breadwinner.

Ms. Sa'da Haj Mawwas, a teacher from al Hawaiiya village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, who was born in 1990, died on Tuesday, March 28, 2019, as a result of injuries sustained in bombardment of the village by Syrian Regime artillery forces stationed in al Raseef village in the western suburbs of Hama.



The SNHR contacted Ms. Iftekar al Mawwas¹, the victim's cousin, who told us that Sa'da died of shrapnel wounds to the head: **“Sa'da died at around 4:00 pm after a shell landed five meters from her house. The shrapnel was scattered and a number of the fragments entered Sa'da's room, one of which settled in her head, causing a serious injury; my uncle took his daughter to a hospital in al Hawash village, then to the hospital in Ma'aret al Numan, where she died after doctors were unable to help her as a result of the destruction of her brain.”**

On the evening of Friday May 17, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian Regime forces' warplanes fired a missile at a residential neighborhood in Ma'aret al Nu man city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in the deaths of [five civilians](#) at once, including one child and three women. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, May 29, 2019, fixed-wing Syrian Regime forces' warplanes fired a number of missiles at residential neighborhoods in the center of [Sarja](#) village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [seven civilians](#) at once, including [one child](#) and [five women](#), in addition to [injuring](#) approximately [15 others](#). The village was under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, July 7, 2019, Syrian Regime forces used artillery to fire a number of shells at agricultural land in an area situated between the villages of Qastoun and al Sahen in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the deaths of six civilians, all members of the same family, including [four women](#), who were working on the agricultural land at the time. We note that Qastoun village is located in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, while al Sahen village is located in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

¹ By phone on November 17, 2019



2. Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

Syrian women's active contribution to the demand for democratic change in the ongoing struggle for freedom means that they have been relentlessly targeted, persecuted and detained without any regard to their circumstances or the nature of their actions. Syrian Regime forces have arrested females through raiding homes, while the females are passing through checkpoints, and in security ambushes. It is not only female Syrians involved in the popular uprising who have been and are still being subjected to arbitrary arrest, but also those who have close ties to factions of the Armed Opposition, those from areas whose peoples demanded freedom and human rights, and even those who have not participated in any anti-Syrian regime activities, with all these attacks and threats intended to send an intimidating message to society that the ruling authorities do not care about whether their targets are female or male, elderly or children, and that no communal or international legal conventions or customs will discourage the regime from suppressing any form of dissent. The Syrian regime is sending a very clear message to the Syrian people who participated in the uprising or who have spoken out for freedom, democracy and human rights that they will face persecution and violence if they do not accept subjugation and instead insist on continuing with the struggle for freedom, and that the ruling authority will attempt to terrorise the people into surrender through attacking the most vulnerable members of society, females; it is well known that the detention and imprisonment of women are among the factors influencing the status and dignity of the family in Syrian society.

On many occasions, we have recorded the arrests of women and girls as a means of pressuring wanted individuals into surrendering through the abuse of their families or materially extorting families in exchange for the release of abducted women's and girls, or arresting them randomly as they pass through checkpoints or move between areas under the control of regime forces and other parties, especially opposition factions, with those detained being used as bargaining chips in negotiations and prisoner exchanges, especially in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs and Daraa.

Females are subjected to very poor conditions of detention, often very similar to the conditions of detention of men; detention centers in Syria are generally reserved for male detention, especially those belonging to security branches, and therefore lack facilities that take women's needs into account, such as the provision of independent bathrooms and female personnel to supervise them. While there are some female supervisors in civilian prisons, political prisoners or prisoners of conscience are often detained within the prison sections reserved for hardened or violent female criminals accused of theft, murder, drugs-related crimes, etc., in order to increase their suffering. This suffering is further exacerbated when pregnant women



or mothers are detained with their children, with mothers deliberately deprived of even the most basic requirements for childcare; there are many cases of women giving birth in detention centers, with both the mothers and their newborn babies being denied the necessary healthcare, and with these and other mothers being detained with their children in squalid, airless, overcrowded cells without any concern for their physical, medical or psychological needs. Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, we recorded at least 129 cases of detention of children along with their mothers, and at least 84 births in detention centers, with all these babies suffering from a complete lack of post-natal health care and any provision of the necessary medical facilities, resulting in the deaths of seven of the babies.

While in custody in regime security branches' detention centers, female detainees are denied access to their families and prevented from appointing a lawyer, with their presence in these centers often lasting for months or years; when family members enquire about their whereabouts, regime authorities routinely deny having arrested them, with arbitrary arrests often becoming classified as enforced disappearance.

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, the SNHR team documented at least 8,412 females, including 7,963 adult females and 449 female children, who are still detained or forcibly disappeared in the official and unofficial detention centers of the Syrian regime. Our team has noted a rise in the number of females who have been detained since the beginning of 2019; we have documented at least 119 females who were detained by Syrian Regime forces, including elderly women over the age of 60, most of whom were detained at checkpoints as they were traveling to areas outside the Syrian regime's control, or after they returned to Syria through the land crossings, or after having settlement of their security status.

Detainees are subject to kangaroo trials in courts that lack the most basic standards of fair litigation, such as the Terrorism Court, Military Courts and Military Field Courts ('al Midan' courts), with these trials, occurring only when the detainees are transferred to civilian prisons. However, detainees in security branches and unofficial detention centers are not subject to any trial and do not face any specific charges. Female detainees are subjected to all the forms of torture suffered by men; we previously published [an extensive study](#) of the most notable physical and psychological methods of torture used in Syrian regime detention centers. According to the SNHR database, 72 females (adult women) have died as a result of torture in detention centers of the Syrian regime between March 2011 and November 25, 2019.



On Wednesday, February 6, 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested a man and a 60-year-old woman from the same family in a raid on the family's home in al Rhaiba city in the northeast of Damascus Suburbs governorate. The man was among those who had previously agreed to a settlement with the regime. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Saturday, February 23, 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested 40 women along with their children near Damascus city as they were traveling by bus from Damascus governorate to northern Syria, taking them all to the regime's Air Force Security Branch in Damascus city. A number of them were released the same day after being threatened and warned not to travel to northern Syria, while the fate of the others remains unknown.

In March 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested a woman and her four daughters on charges of communicating with a relative in Idlib city, northern Syria, in a raid on the family's home in al Shamali neighborhood of al Rhaiba city in al Qalamoun al Sharqi, northeast of Damascus Suburbs governorate, taking the woman and her daughters to an undisclosed location.

Ms. Fedaa S., a housewife from Hama city, who was born in 1970, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Tuesday, March 12, 2019, as she was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints near al Zarzour area on the road between Aleppo city and al Bab, while she was travelling from Hama city to al Bab city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. She was released 18 days later on March 30, 2019, after being tortured.

The SNHR contacted Fedaa², who told us: **“I traveled from Hama city to Idlib city to see my sons; to reach Idlib, I need to travel to Aleppo city then to al Bab city. A few kilometers from Aleppo city, we were stopped at the al Zarzour checkpoint. The members at the checkpoint took the passengers' identities then asked me why I was going to al Bab city, which is not my home city; my answer was ‘To see my sons’, and apparently when they searched further, they learned that my sons were wanted, then they arrested me and took me to the State Security Branch in Aleppo city, where they confiscated my medicines - I'm diabetic - and insulted me. I was beaten on my feet and I still suffer from the effects of that until today.”**

Fedaa added: **“I was kept in detention for days where I fainted more than 10 times because of being diabetic and because of lack of food, then they released me.”**

² By phone on October 10, 2019



Ms. Rajwa Abu, from al Shefouniya town in Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1976, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on February 26, 2018, as she was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints while she was on her way from her place of residence in Damascus city to al Shefouniya town to check on her home. She was taken to the Air Security Branch in Damascus city, where she was beaten and tortured. She was released on March 18, 2019, after her family paid a bribe to a mediator.

The SNHR contacted Ms. Rajwa³, who told us that she was detained by the regime checkpoint personnel after presenting a document proving that she had made a security settlement with the regime earlier in 2018. She added: **“I was on my way to al Shefouniya to check on my demolished house there, which I am working on to repair to live in it - my husband died as a result of the attacks on Ghouta, and they did not believe he was a civilian; they asked me to make a settlement at the time. When I arrived at the Air Security checkpoint, they took me to al Mazza Prison in the Air Security Branch after showing the officers my personal ID and the settlement paper,”** Rajwa said she remained in al Mazza Prison for eight days during which she was interrogated, insulted and beaten with an electric cable, as well as being slapped in the face. She added: **“They insisted that my husband was armed - he was not - and they asked me for information about his friends and who he was communicating with.”**

Rajwa added that two women were also held in her cell and that she and they suffered from a lack of food and cleanliness and from constant verbal abuse by security members. We also learned from her that an Air Force lieutenant colonel, called Moayad, tore up her settlement document and informed her that they would not acknowledge its legitimacy.

On Wednesday, July 10, 2019, members of Syrian Regime forces arrested two women from Deir al Ferdous village in the southern suburbs of Hama for unknown reasons. We note that the two women are both wives of former members of factions of the Armed Opposition, and had already settled their security situation with the Syrian regime.

Ms. Zahraa Idlibi, from Homs city, born in 1980, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on September 4, 2019, after returning from Turkey through the Kasab border crossing, and taken to an undisclosed location. Her fate remains unknown to the SNHR, as well as to her family.

³ By phone on June 13, 2019



The SNHR spoke with Mr. Obayda Idlibi⁴, Zahra's brother, who told us that he had lost contact with his sister half an hour after she returned to Syria via the Kasab Crossing. He added: **“My sister made a security settlement to return to Syria and arranged that her husband and children would follow her; however, we learned that she was arrested by security members from the Air Security Branch and transferred to Damascus for investigation. We continue to seek her release up to the current moment.”** Obayda added that he had received promises from the regime officials who organized his sister's settlement status that she would be released, but to no avail.

On Thursday, September 12, 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested five civilians, including two women, while they were visiting the Civil Registry Department in Daraa city, taking them to one of the regime's detention centers in the city.

In September 2019, Syrian Regime forces arrested 20 women from Irbeen city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, along with their children, at al Qameshli Airport in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate, while they were travelling to areas under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition, taking all of them to al Mazza Military Prison in Damascus city. On October 10, 2019, they were released after their passports were confiscated and banned from leaving Syria via the legitimate borders.

3. Sexual violence

Syrian Regime forces have used sexual violence as a strategic weapon of war, and in some cases as an end in itself. Sexual violence has been practiced widely, systematically and deliberately, with regime personnel being given full authority and carte blanche by their superiors to perpetrate these acts with absolute impunity and with the tacit or overt approval of the responsible officers in order to spread fear and terror in Syrian society, as well as to force the population to flee their areas. Sexual violence has been used as a means of discouraging rebellion, and breaking victims' will to force them to abandon their demands for freedom and democracy; in a society that is generally conservative, such as Syria's, this is a particularly cruel form of revenge, with the aim of destroying the social fabric; sexual violence has been routinely practiced by Syrian Regime forces, mainly during house raids in areas under their control, or during incursions into areas and neighborhoods outside its control. It is also widely practiced within detention centers during searches and interroga-

⁴ By phone on October 22, 2019



tions as a means of torture and pressure to obtain information from the female detainees or to shame them in the community. Sexual violence has led to serious and severe physical and psychological trauma for the victims, as well as to their stigmatization and ostracism in their social environment, so most women and girls prefer not to report such attacks, instead remaining silent about the sexual violence they have been subjected to.

Sexual violence against females has included harassment and forced nudity, verbal sexual violence and coerced marriage, up to the worst levels of sexual violence such as rape, with many incidents of sexual violence being committed on sectarian grounds; we have also documented instances of sexual violence being perpetrated following abductions carried out by militias fighting alongside Syrian Regime forces in unofficial detention centers, with these rapes often ending with the killing of the victims.

Syrian Regime forces have forced at least 11 female detainees, including girls under the age of 18, to appear on state television to make clearly coerced confessions of having had sex with members of factions of the Armed Opposition, with all these women and girls forcibly disappeared following their appearance and ‘confessions’. The SNHR estimates that at least 8,013 incidents of sexual violence have been committed by Syrian Regime forces, including approximately 871 incidents in detention centers and at least 443 cases of sexual violence against girls under the age of 18.

Ms. Fatima.A, from al Wa’er neighborhood, Homs city, born in 1986, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on December 13, 2018, in a raid on her place of residence in Homs city, and was detained in the city’s Air Security Branch, before she was released on February 17, 2019, after being subjected to torture and sexual violence.

The SNHR spoke with Ms. Fatima⁵, who told us that security members of the Air Security Branch raided her house and arrested her instead of her husband and brothers who they had come to the house to detain. She said: **“One of the shabiha took over our family home in al Wa’er neighborhood, and we filed a complaint against him. In response, he wrote a security report against my husband and brothers. When the security forces raided my house and did not find them, they took me instead. When I arrived at the branch, they removed my headscarf; one of the officers searched me and harassed me, threatened me with rape, and then they took me into a cell where I stayed until I was released without any investigation.”** Fatima added that her family had renounced their right to their home for the security member who had seized it, in exchange for her release and for a promise not to approach or threaten her or her family.

⁵ By phone on November 3, 2019



B. Violations by Russian forces

Since the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015, Russian forces have launched deliberate and large-scale aerial bombardment of populated areas. The Russian regime views Syria as a live and effective training ground for testing weapons manufactured by Russian companies. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the military operation in Syria [saw the testing of 231 models of modern and modernized weapons](#), including warplanes, helicopters, robot tanks, and rockets, as well as a large variety of types of munitions, including cluster munitions, incendiary munitions, fortified piercing missiles, Caliber missiles, and Toshka-style missiles. According to the SNHR database, these attacks have resulted in the deaths of 1,479 females as of November 25, 2019, including 908 adult females and 571 female children. All of these weapons were tested on populated areas, and failed to distinguish between civilians and combatants or between males and females; indeed, we have documented many incidents of double tap attacks in which the Russian Air Force deliberately targeted paramedics and rescue teams after they gathered to aid the victims of a previous attack. We have issued numerous reports documenting the massacres and violations inflicted by the Russian bombardment, most recently [on the fourth anniversary of Russian intervention in Syria](#).

On Sunday night, May 19, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out consecutive raids using missiles on a residential neighborhood in the west of Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, which resulted in the deaths of [11 civilians](#), mostly from one family, including [seven children](#) (three males, three females and one unborn baby) and two women. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, July 13, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at agricultural land to the west of [Khan Sheikhoun](#) city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles targeted an underground cave used by civilians as a shelter, which resulted in [the deaths of eight civilians](#) from [one family](#) of IDPs from al Latamena town in the northwestern suburbs of Hama governorate, including [four children](#) (two males and two females) and [two women](#). Khan Sheikhoun city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Monday, July 22, 2019, at around 08:35, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, launched a double attack in the center of Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The first attack used a missile to target a group of residential

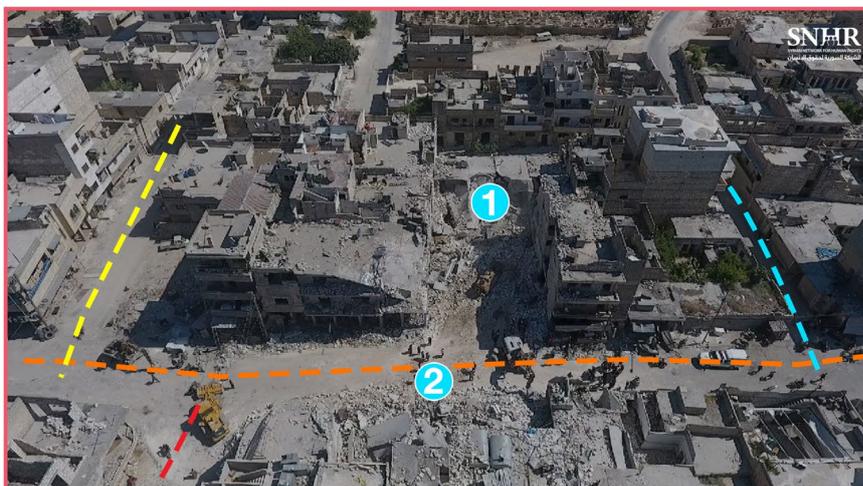
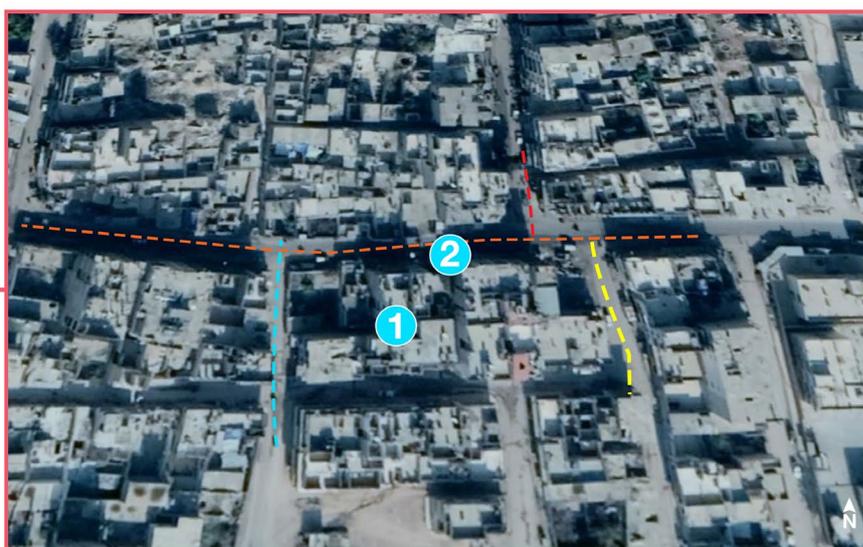
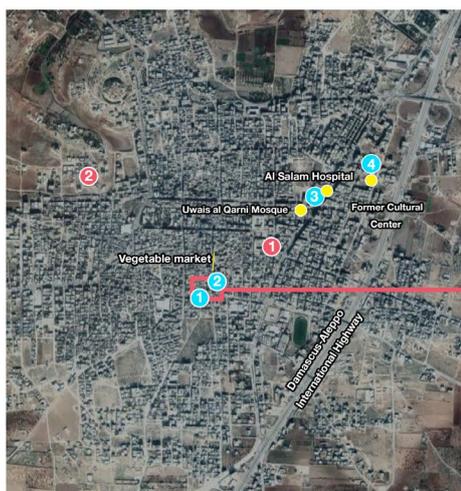


buildings located at one end of the vegetable market in the city center, causing several civilian injuries. After about five minutes, when other civilians and Civil Defense personnel had gathered to rescue the injured, one of these warplanes launched a second raid on the same site, with the second missile landing in the middle of the street, about 10 meters from the first one, [resulting in the deaths of 39 civilians, including four children and seven women](#). Among the victims was a Civil Defense personnel member, who was engaged in inspecting the site of the first strike. We issued [a report](#) on this massacre.

Map showing the location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019

SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Location of a Russian air attack that resulted in a massacre in Ma'aret al Numan city in Idlib, and locations of other air attacks by Syrian-Russian alliance forces that targeted the city on July 22, 2019



- 1 Location of the first Russian attack
- 2 Location of the second Russian attack which resulted in a massacre
- 3 Location of the third Russian attack
- 4 Location of the fourth Russian attack
- 1 Location of the first Syrian attack
- 2 Location of the second Syrian attack



The SNHR spoke with Obada Zekra⁶, the Director of the Civil Defense Center in Ma'aret al Numan city, who went to the site of the massacre to recover the victims and injured. He told us: **“The air observatories and the Civil Defense observation service⁷ provided general information that morning that a Russian warplane has arrived in the airspace of Ma'aret al Numan city after taking off from Hmeimim airbase. Less than a minute later, a violent explosion shook the center of the city. One of the Civil Defense teams headed to the site. The attack took place at the end of the street leading to the vegetable market near a motorcycle repair shop.”**

Obada added that another air raid, also carried out by a Russian warplane, occurred minutes after the first attack, with the missile exploding 10 meters away from him, causing the largest number of casualties: **“ The majority of the victims of the second attack were civilians who rushed to the site to take part in recovering those injured in the first attack, and one of the Civil Defense members was martyred. We retrieved the bodies of martyrs and the wounded and took them to the medical centers. We also recovered the remains of a person that we could not identify. “**

Obada added that the Russian warplane then carried out other air raids in the east of the city, after which Syrian regime warplanes bombed the city. He confirmed that the targeted areas were free of any military presence of factions of the Armed Opposition or Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.

On Monday, July 29, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at al Latamena town in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, which resulted in the deaths of five civilians from one family, including one child and three women. Al Latamena town, which was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident, is under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of publication of this report.

C. Violations by Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party)

1. Extrajudicial killing

From the first days following the establishment of the PYD's Self-Management forces in January 2014, the Syrian Democratic Forces have practiced indiscriminate shelling of areas outside their control, have engaged in clashes in populated areas, and have heavily planted mines in homes and agricultural land before withdrawing from areas under their control, in addition to indiscriminate shootings, sniping and executions during raids and incursions; we also documented SDF personnel committing several ethnicity-related massacres.

⁶ Via WhatsApp on July 22, 2019

⁷ A rapid warning system that sends alerts within seconds of aircraft taking off, monitoring the planes' movements and disseminating the information to civilians in coordination with civilian observatories, in coordination with local benefactors, media outlets and through social media, to enable civilians to flee areas likely to be targeted or to seek shelter before the raids occur.



Between January 2014 and November 25, 2019, the SNHR team documented the deaths of 245 females, including 155 adult females and 90 female children, by the SDF.

On Sunday, December 16, 2019, Syrian Democratic artillery Forces fired a number of shells at [al Hawwama neighborhood](#) in Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of eight civilians from one family, including three female children and four women. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

2. Arbitrary arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture

Since its establishment, the SDF has practiced arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances and targeted females either for the purpose of forced conscription or to put pressure on their relatives to surrender to the group. Feminist activists and others objecting to and criticizing the SDF's practices have also been detained, either by raiding their homes or whilst travelling on public thoroughfares roads, as well as in schools, or while passing through SDF checkpoints. We have also documented numerous cases of arrests of females based on ethnicity or gender discrimination. Our team noted a rise in the numbers of females detained in 2019 by the SDF, documenting the detention of 60 women; these arrests were carried out under the pretext of links between the female detainees and ISIS or under the pretext of a close relationship between them and members of ISIS, with no evidence being presented to substantiate these allegations. The SDF also targeted females who attempted to travel to areas outside the group's control towards opposition areas and arrested them and their families collectively.

The SNHR team documented at least 543 females, including 176 adult females and 367 female children, who are still detained or forcibly disappeared in SDF detention centers since the group's establishment up to November 25, 2019.

The SDF has established several detention centers in the areas it controls, some of which are reserved for women, but during investigation, women are held in public detention centers and subjected during their detention to torture, beatings and cruel treatment; the most notable methods of torture women suffer are nail extraction, hair shaving and falqa. They are often treated on an ethnic basis, denied healthcare and food, and held in cells lacking the basic conditions of detention. Women also do not face any specific charges and are not subject to any trial until a long time after their detention, which may last for several months or years. Torture, neglect of healthcare and conditions of detention have resulted in the deaths of two women in SDF detention centers.



Eida al Metleq, nicknamed Om Maizar, from al Sabkha town in the eastern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on Wednesday, January 9, 2019, in a raid on her house in al Bousaraya neighborhood of Raqqa city and taken to an undisclosed location.



Eida al Metleq

On Thursday, January 24, 2019, Syrian Democratic Forces arrested six civilians, including three women and one child from the same family, in a raid on their house in the Rmaila neighborhood of Raqqa city and took them to an undisclosed location.

On Saturday, February 2, 2019, Syrian Democratic Forces arrested one woman in al Tawse'eya neighborhood near al Baydaa garden north of Raqqa city and took her to an undisclosed location.

Bushra al Mahmoud, from Jamous village, which is administratively a part of Slouk town in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, was arrested on Monday, April 1, 2019, by Syrian Democratic Forces on the false pretext that her husband was a member of ISIS, despite her husband having died some years previously, in a raid on her place of residence in Hawijet Abdi, which is administratively a part of Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate. She was taken to an undisclosed location.

Asmaa Mohammad al Sheikh, from al Tabaqa city in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, aged 18, was arrested on Thursday, April 4, 2019, along with her four-month-old baby, by Syrian Democratic Forces while she was passing through one of their checkpoints north of Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate heading from Izaz city in the northern suburb of Aleppo governorate to al Tabaqa city. The mother and baby were taken to undisclosed location; they were released three days later on Sunday, April 7, 2019.

On Monday, June 3, 2019, Syrian Democratic Forces launched a campaign of raids and arrests in al Jamili neighborhood in the center of Raqqa city. Fifteen civilians from the al Jawhar family were documented as being arrested, with all those detained taken to an undisclosed location.



Ms. Mukhlesa al Abdullah, a housewife from Raqqa city, who was born in 1975, was arrested by Syrian Democratic Forces on June 3, 2019, in a raid on her home in al Jamili neighborhood in Raqqa city and taken to an SDF detention center in the city. She was released on June 20, 2019, after tribe mediation.

SNHR contacted Ms. Mukhlesa⁸, who told us that: **“Around four SDF vehicles raided the neighborhood and closed all the exits and searched houses. On that day, many families were arrested, including women, children and the elderly, on the pretext of the presence of IS cells in the neighborhood. They came to my house and asked about my husband and children who managed to escape from the house, so they took me instead to the headquarters of the General Security, where they interrogated and insulted me and then put me in a cell where I stayed until I was released after the intervention by the sheikhs of our tribe.”** Mukhlesa added that the conditions of detention were harsh, as she was denied food for three days and the female SDF members subjected her to racist abuse.

Eman Abdullah al Ghazal, from Hasaka city, was arrested by members of the SDF’s Women’s Protection Units on Saturday, June 15, 2019, while she was asking about her husband who had been forcibly disappeared by the same forces in al Hawl IDP Camp in al Hawl town in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate. She was released eight days later on Sunday, June 23, 2019.

3. Forced conscription

The SDF targeted both female adults and children for forced conscription, taking them by force to their recruitment camps after abducting or detaining them from streets, markets and their homes, in order to increase the group’s manpower, preventing the detained girls and women from communicating with or visiting their families or receiving visits from them and forcing them directly into combat operations. We have recorded numerous incidents of forcibly conscripted female SDF members being captured during their participation in hostilities, as well as being used as checkpoint personnel. The SDF did not obtain the consent of these females or, in the case of the underage girls, the consent of their parents prior to conscription, nor did it take into account their social conditions, such as, in many cases, being their families’ sole breadwinners.

⁸ By phone on October 17, 2019



Hanan Mohammad Khalaf, a 16-year-old female child from Ein al Arab city, known as Kobani, in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested for enforced conscription on January 13, 2019, by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on her family's home in al Karaj area in Ein al Arab city, and was taken to an undisclosed location.

4. Sexual violence

The SDF has practiced sexual violence within the group's detention centers and in the camps managed and administered by the group. One of the most prominent types of sexual violence committed has been harassment during searches, or verbal sexual violence such as sexually explicit statements or threats of rape. We recorded at least 11 incidents of sexual violence committed by SDF personnel as of 25 November 2019.

Ms. Salwa M., from Jdeed Ekidat village in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, born in 1997, was arrested by Syria Democratic Forces on January 13, 2019, and held in Deireik Prison in Hasaka governorate, before being released on Saturday, March 3, 2019, following an agreement which took place between the Arab tribes in the eastern region and the SDF in Hasaka governorate.

The SNHR spoke with Salwa⁹, who told us: **“I was arrested as part of campaign of raids launched by Syria Democratic in the village; they took me to Deireik Prison in Hasaka. There, the members harassed us under the pretext of searching us or during interrogation and asked the detained women to have sex with them in order to expedite their release. Yes, there were female police officers, but the men were also supervising us.”**

Salwa added that the SDF accused all the detainees of collaboration with ISIS without any evidence and intended to arrest women and harass them in order to force the dignitaries of the areas under SDF control to acquiesce to the group's orders.

D. Violations by extremist Islamist groups

ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'):

1. Extrajudicial killing

In their attacks on the areas outside their control, ISIS used indiscriminate shelling in their attempt to seize control of these areas. The group also adopted other tactics, such as clashes, car bombs, and motorbike bombs in populated areas, in addition to using firing squads, and planted landmines before retreating from the areas previously under their control, resulting in the deaths of civilians, including women and children passing nearby or during displacement.

⁹ By phone on October 18, 2019



Since the announcement of the establishment of ISIS in April 2013 until November 25, 2019, we have documented the deaths of at least 980 females, including 586 adult females and 394 female children, who were killed following indiscriminate shelling, clashes, executions, or mine explosions, with SNHR documenting these cases by name, photo, and place and time of death. We note that the death toll at the hands of ISIS has declined as its control over the areas under its control has receded.

2. Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

ISIS pursued a policy of arrests and abductions against women who violated the fundamentalist laws and teachings imposed by ISIS in areas under its control such as non-compliance with certain clothing proscriptions, traveling alone or working in places where men were present, and established detention centers for women detainees and abductees supervised by the group's infamous women's 'police' division, known as al Hesba al Nesa'iya ('Female Hesba', with Hesba being a type of police apparatus). ISIS also practiced female abductions during attacks on areas outside its control, particularly those from ethnic and religious minorities, and targeted female activists working in the media field or with local and foreign humanitarian organizations; the vast majority of the females abducted by the terror group - over 99 percent – are now classified as forcibly disappeared, and we do not know the fate of most, especially after the group's control decreased and the SDF took control over the areas formerly under its control, failing to cooperate with Syrian human rights organizations as required, or to help in conducting the necessary investigations to disclose the fate of these female disappeared.

The group's treatment of female detainees varied according to the charges against them; violators of its teachings were usually punished with flogging or confinement in cages and forced to attend a sharia course, and to pay a fine; these women and girls were usually released after their male guardians signed a pledge guaranteeing that their female charges would never repeat the violation they were accused of. This punishment was often applied to an entire group of women and girls, but if the charge involved any violation of the group's security or of other prohibitions imposed by it such as working in the media or with foreign organizations or committing a perceived major offense such as adultery or belonging to another sect or ethnicity, the group imposed severe penalties up to death by firing squad or other brutal methods, with most of the females abducted or detained on the grounds of these charges whose fate remains unknown now being categorised as forcibly disappeared.



From the establishment of ISIS up until November 25, 2019, the SNHR team documented at least 426 females, including 402 adult females and 24 female children taken captive by the terror group, who are still categorized as detained or forcibly disappeared; with the group's control declining and decreasing in Syria, SNHR has documented no arrests or abductions by the group in 2019.

ISIS used brutal methods of torture against female detainees and abductees, imposed by the aforementioned female Hesba 'police' service it established, although some of these violations were perpetrated by its male members and leaders. The methods it used against the female abductees varied according to their affiliation and the charges against them. ISIS used methods such as flogging, severe beatings, biting, electrocution, burning, and deprivation of sleep and healthcare, and imposed penalties using torture such as stoning and being dragged to death behind a vehicle.

SNHR documented the deaths of at least 14 women who died due to torture in ISIS detention centers from the group's establishment up until November 25, 2019, most of whom died of being stoned to death after they were sentenced by the group.

3. Restricting women

ISIS enforced strict and systematic extremist policies on females in areas under its control, imposing fundamentalist teachings that adversely affected all aspects of their lives, including work, education, leaving the house, travel, and marriage and imposing conditions and requirements on females to allow them to practice any work they wished to engage in, imposing particular dress codes in case they wished to leave their homes, and preventing them from travelling except when accompanied by a male guardian. In addition, females were only allowed to work in certain fields, with men and women forbidden to work together or in the same place. ISIS also enforced a rule prohibiting females from sitting in public places, such as markets or gardens, and forcing women to marry ISIS fighters, particularly foreign fighters. Additionally, females were forbidden from consulting male doctors for treatment, with the group also establishing a large female police service (al Hesba) to monitor and punish females who violated any of the group's regulations.

In light of such restrictive norms, females found themselves forced to live in complete isolation from society in areas under ISIS control and in a cycle of despair, oppression and denial of their fundamental rights to education, health care, and employment. We have recorded numerous incidents of arrests against females for attempting to escape from ISIS areas.



4. Female enslavement and sexual violence

ISIS deliberately launched attacks against religious and ethnic minority areas, and abducted civilians collectively, especially women and girls, for use as slaves and in sexual slavery, displaying and selling them in 'slave markets' (commonly known as Aswaq al Sabaya) established by ISIS for its members and leaders, and forcing them to marry frequently; these practices were used as a weapon of fear and terror which forced the population to flee the areas under ISIS control.

As well as using female enslavement and sexual violence, ISIS also adopted a strategy to attract fighters to join and promote the group through spreading the sex trade. ISIS also forced women and girls living in areas under its control into coerced marriages, especially with its foreign members, in return for large sums paid to their families. We have also documented a number of incidents of rape and harassment committed by ISIS members during raids or incursions or against foreign abductees. Most of the females who had been abducted and sexually enslaved were forcibly disappeared after ISIS withdrew from the areas it controlled.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition):

1. Extrajudicial killing

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has launched indiscriminate shelling during its attacks on areas outside its control, fought clashes within populated areas against its opponents in opposition factions, and engaged in indiscriminate gunfire during raids and house searches during which women and children were killed, in addition to detonating car bombs among civilians. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 79 females, including 74 adult females and five female children, killed by HTS between the emergence of al Nusra Front (currently known as Hay'at Tahrir al Sham) in January 2012 and November 25, 2019.

The female child, Fatima Hussam Na'na, from al Dana city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was killed on Monday, February 11, 2019, at the hands of members of HTS, who shot her during raids on houses in al Dana city under the pretext of pursuing IS cells.



The female child Fatima
Hussam Na'na



2. Arbitrary arrest, enforced-disappearance, and torture

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has targeted females for abductions and detentions in areas under its control and during its attacks on areas under the control of the Syrian regime, in order to use them as hostages in the exchange of prisoners, and also pursued female activists, especially media workers and those who participate in protests against the group or who criticize it on social networking sites. We documented at least 63 adult females who are still detained or forcibly disappeared in HTS detention centers.

HTS usually resorts mainly to psychological torture against female detainees it detains, such as threats of execution and other death threats, as well as other methods of torture such as severe beatings and denial of healthcare and food, with female detainees also suffering from poor conditions of detention in filthy, unventilated, dank and damp underground basements.

Ahlam Mahmoud Bitar, from Salqin city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with HTS on Wednesday, April 10, 2019, in Salqin city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate and taken to an undisclosed location.

Asmaa Younes Makhzoum, from Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with HTS on Sunday, June 9, 2019, in Khan Sheikhoun city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate and taken to an undisclosed location.

Asmaa Salim Dedo, from Harem city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with HTS on Monday, June 10, 2019, Harem area in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, and taken to an undisclosed location.

Ms. Sbaiha Sheikh Omar, a 60-year-old lady from Hawija village in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, was arrested by HTS in early October 2019 from the Kafr Houm camp to which she had been displaced in Kafr Houm village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, on charges of sacrilege.

The SNHR spoke with Mr. Omar. Sh¹⁰, a relative of Sbaiha, who told us: **“A patrol belonging to Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham came and arrested Sbaiha from her tent and took her to an undisclosed location. Then we learned that the HTS had sentenced her to three months in prison and held her in Harem prison.”**

¹⁰ By phone on November 17, 2019



3. Restricting women

HTS has restricted women in areas under its control by establishing Hasba centers and Sharia bodies directly affiliated with it or affiliated with administrative institutions that it establishes. These Hesba and Sharia bodies prosecute women who violate the teachings imposed by the group such as preventing gender mixing (males and females being at the same place) in universities, enforcing a sharia dress code, banning songs and music in public places, or practicing activities without obtaining a license issued by the group, with the work of these bodies often influencing by the prevailing general situation, stopping their work when popular tension and protests rejecting the HTS policies increase, and returning to work after the decline of this situation and HTS imposing itself by force on society.

Female activist M.H¹¹, a 25-year-old activist from Idlib city, is a reporter and photographer for a media agency. She was harassed and threatened on June 7, 2019 by members of HTS while she was filming one of the destroyed sites in the city. She told us: **“I was doing my job as usual and filming destroyed buildings for a report for the agency I work for. A car belonging to HTS passed by and I did not turn around to look at it. Then this car came back and some members got out, and one of them asked me what I was doing. I introduced myself and my work, then he took my camera and saw what I was filming and asked me to leave. When I insisted on staying, he threatened to arrest me if I didn’t leave, and asked me to go to the checkpoint to receive the camera. There they also threatened me and warned me not to go back to film or else they would punish me.”**

E. Violations by factions of the Armed Opposition

1. Extrajudicial killing

Factions of the Armed Opposition have practiced indiscriminate shelling of areas outside their control during attacks on these areas or in response to Syrian Regime forces’ shelling of areas under their control, and have engaged in clashes in populated areas and engaged in indiscriminate gunfire, particularly during hostilities amongst each other. These practices resulted in the deaths of 1,307 females, including 874 adult females and 433 female children, killed by various factions of the Armed Opposition in different Syrian governorates since the beginning of the formation of armed factions in early 2012 until the date of publication of the report.

¹¹ In a direct interview in Idlib governorate on November 1, 2019



Ms. Hala Mkashkash, from al Sqailbiya city in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, died on May 12, 2015, in bombardment of the village using several missile-propelled shells that were fired from al Sqailbiya area in the western suburbs of Hama, which is under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition.

2. Arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture

Factions of the Armed Opposition have pursued women activists who have criticized their practices in areas under their control or who do not have a work permit, especially for media work, a number of whom have been forcibly disappeared. Members of these factions have also abducted women with their children during attacks on areas under Syrian regime control to take them hostage and use them in prisoner exchanges with the Syrian regime. In 2019, we noted an increase in the number of women being targeted for arrests and abductions by factions of the Armed Opposition in order to obtain ransom money in exchange for their release or being targeted for their ethnicity. These arrests have been concentrated in Afrin city in the norther suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

As of November 25, 2019, the SNHR team documented at least 919 females, including 833 adult females and 86 female children, who are still detained or forcibly disappeared in detention centers of factions of the Armed Opposition.

During their detention in detention centers belonging to factions of the Armed Opposition, female detainees are subjected to various methods of torture such as severe beatings, electrocution, death threats, and solitary confinement; detained females are also deprived of healthcare, food and other essential requirements, in addition to being deprived of their children if they are arrested with them. Torture and neglect of healthcare has resulted in the death of one woman in a detention center of one of factions of the Armed Opposition.

Maisa al Tawwal, from Harasta city in Damascus Suburbs governorate, an employee of a local humanitarian organization, who was forcibly displaced to Afrin city in 2018, was arrested by members of the military police of factions of the Armed Opposition in Afrin city on September 17, 2019, along with her five-year-old daughter, with both being taken to the Political Security branch in the city. She was released on October 4, 2019, after her health deteriorated due to the poor conditions in detention.



The SNHR contacted Ms. Maisa¹², who told us that she was arrested by police members in front of a shop in Afrin city while she was accompanied by her five-year-old daughter. She added: **“The members took me to the Political Security branch and put me in a very narrow, dark solitary cell, with no windows, and kept us there without food or investigation until the next day when the investigating officer came and searched my mobile phone and asked me about my work and my activities. During the interrogation he shouted at me several times and threatened to take me to a prison that no one could know, then they denied me and my child food and kept us in darkness for two consecutive days. My child did not stop crying during that time. Then they took me back for interrogation again and charged me once with being an agent for regime forces and sometimes for SDF, and subjected me to intense psychological pressure to confess, and because I had nothing to do with these charges, I denied them. Then they put me back in the cell, and offered us one meal, and allowed us to go to the bathroom twice a day until they transferred me to the judiciary from where I was released.”** Maisa added that the Political Security branch referred her to the judiciary after her health deteriorated due to her asthma attacks and that her daughter suffered inflammation of the intestine as a result of the detention conditions.

Layla Ismail Qabalan, born in 1982, is an employee of the water authority in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Layla, from the village of Holilo which is administratively a part of Afrin city, was arrested at her workplace in the water authority headquarters in Afrin city on Monday, February 18, 2019, by members of a faction of the Armed Opposition, and taken to an undisclosed location.



Layla Ismail Qabalan

Fahima Wahid Abdo, from Koumana village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by members of factions of the Armed Opposition on Tuesday, March 12, 2019, in a raid on her house in Koumana village on charges of dealing with the SDF and taken to an undisclosed location.

¹² By phone on November 5, 2019



Siddiqa Khalil, a teacher at Saleh al Ali School in al Ashrafiya neighborhood of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, from Afrin city, was arrested by members of factions of the Armed Opposition on Thursday, March 28, 2019, in a raid on her workplace at the school because of celebrating the Nowruz festival, and was released on Monday, April 1, 2019.

Roushin Othman, a teacher, from Karzila village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with the Sultan Muhammad al Fateh Brigade, a faction of the Armed Opposition, on Monday, July 22, 2019, in Shadirha village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and taken to an undisclosed location.

E. Violations by US-led coalition

Since the start of the US-led coalition's intervention in Syria on September 23, 2014, until November 25, 2019, we have documented the deaths of 959 females, including 656 adult females and 303 female children, who were killed as a result of US-led coalition attacks, as well as documenting numerous massacres as a result of these attacks.

On Sunday, November 11, 2018, wing-fixed US-led coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at the [Hawwama](#) neighborhood in Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, which resulted in the death of 12 civilians, including four female children and two women. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, November 29, 2018, fixed-wing US-led coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at al Yarmouk Women's Hospital in the ['Twenty-Four' neighborhood](#) in al Sh'afa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of [10 civilians](#), including three children and five women. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, January 29, 2019, fixed-wing US-led coalition warplanes fired missiles at [al Baghouz Tahtani](#) village, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, resulting in the deaths of 15 civilians, most of whom were members of the same family, including four children and four women. The area was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.



G. Violations by other parties

We, at the SNHR, document human rights violations in incidents where we have not been able to identify the party responsible, such as the victims of explosions, mine explosions, victims of fires of unknown sources, killings by unknown sources, abductions and enforced disappearances committed by unknown parties or entities operating in the form of gangs belonging to no party, victims of drowning while attempting to flee by boat, in addition to victims who were shot dead or were killed in incidents of indiscriminate shelling by Turkish and pro-Turkish forces, and victims who were shot dead by Jordanian or Lebanese forces.

1. Extrajudicial killing

Under this category, SNHR documented the deaths of at least 1,171 females, divided into 757 adult females and 414 female children, killed at the hands of other parties between March 2011 and November 25, 2019.

On Sunday, February 24, 2019, a landmine exploded while a car was passing by carrying civilians returning from harvesting truffles in Wadi al Atheeb area, northeast of Salamiya city in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate; the blast resulted in the deaths of [20 civilians](#), including one child and 15 women. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The area was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, February 28, 2019, a landmine exploded on the outskirts of al Bwaider village in the southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, while a number of women were searching for truffles, resulting in the deaths of five women at once. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The village was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, March 16, 2019, several landmines exploded in the Badiya [surrounding desert area] of al Shoula village in the southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate whilst a large cargo vehicle was passing by carrying civilians on their way to collect truffles in the Badiya of the southern suburbs of the governorate; this resulted in the deaths of 16 civilians, all from al Shamitiya village in the western suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, including three female children and [13 women](#), while 30 others were injured. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The Badiya of al Shoula village was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, March 27, 2019, a landmine exploded under a car carrying civilians - agricultural workers - as it was passing through agricultural land near [Tal Jebbin](#) village in al Shahba area in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the deaths of nine women and injuring two others, along with the driver of the vehicle. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, April 14, 2019, a missile shell landed in the center of the main street in [al Khalidiya](#) neighborhood in northern Aleppo city, resulting in the deaths of six civilians, mostly members of the same family, including two female children and three women. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details. The neighborhood was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, July 22, 2019, a number of missile shells landed near a car carrying civilians near [Na'our Jourin](#) village, which is administratively a part of Shatha town in the western suburbs of Hama governorate; we believe that the source of the shell was artillery forces stationed in an area controlled by either HTS or factions of the Armed Opposition; as a result, six civilians, mostly from the one family, including two female children, were killed. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident for more details. Na'our Jourin village was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

Sodermini Sardi, a 34-year-old Indonesian national, is the wife of an ISIS fighter. She was seven months pregnant, as well as already having three children. On Sunday, July 28, 2019, the administration of al Hawl Camp discovered her dead body near the camp in al Hawl town in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, with the bruises and marks on her body indicating she'd been attacked with a sharp object. We are still trying to reach eyewitnesses and survivors of that incident to obtain more details.



2. Abduction and enforced disappearance

Between March 2011 and November 25, 2019, SNHR documented at least 3,081 females who are still abducted or forcibly disappeared at the hands of other parties.

Fatima Sufyan al Abdoush, from Raqqa city, was abducted by unknown gunmen on Monday, May 13, 2019, in Raqqa city and taken to an undisclosed location. The area was under the control of SDF at the time of the incident.

Nadia Abdul Aziz Staif, from al Boukamal city, east of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was abducted by unknown gunmen on Monday, August 5, 2019, in al Boukamal city and taken to an undisclosed location.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Legal conclusions

Syrian Regime forces

- Women and girls benefit from the general protection and special protection provided for them under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the two Additional Protocols as civilian individuals not taking part in hostilities, and enjoy all the rights provided for, including the right to life and the right to physical and psychological integrity, with the systematic killings, torture and enforced disappearances widely practiced by Syrian Regime forces in all Syrian governorates constituting crimes against humanity, as indiscriminate bombardment is indiscriminate and is daily recurring war crimes.
- The Syrian regime's regular forces have practiced sexual violence effectively as a deterrent weapon against society. This has become a phenomenon with dire consequences for the victims, particularly women and girls, as well as their families and communities. Many such incidents, however, have yet to be formally documented with the victims understandably not feeling confident enough to reveal the details of their ordeals, in most cases out of fear of retaliation, shame, or social stigmatization.
- At the 2005 Summit, states unanimously agreed that each country had a responsibility to protect its population from crimes against humanity and war crimes. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, the prevention of incitement to commit them by all possible means, and when the state clearly fails to protect its population from egregious crimes, or itself is committing such crimes as in the case of the Syrian regime, asserts that it is the responsibility of the international community to intervene to take protective measures in a collective, decisive and timely manner.



Syrian Democratic Forces (PYD):

- Through indiscriminate bombardment and killings, the SDF has committed acts which constitute war crimes, all in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, and has also carried out arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and forced conscription.

Extremist Islamist groups:

- ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham have both carried out the crime of killing, as well as indiscriminate shelling operations, which constitute war crimes and violations of international humanitarian law. ISIS has also tortured and enslaved women in a widespread manner which constitutes a crime against humanity.
- The practices carried out by ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in the respective areas under their control constitute violations of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and constitute war crimes.
- Forcing women to wear certain clothing and controlling their freedom of movement and expression constitute violations of a wide range of fundamental rights according to international human rights law.

Factions of the Armed Opposition:

- Factions of the Armed Opposition have committed numerous violations against Syrian women, some of which were committed against the backdrop of the armed conflict, which constitute a violation of the rules of international humanitarian law, and some of which took place in areas under their control, which constitute a violation of international human rights law.

Recommendations

Syrian regime and its allies

- The Syrian regime must lift its reservation on the CEDAW treaty and immediately cease the acts of willful killing, torture, and arrest which it carries out against Syrian women.
- The Syrian-Russian alliance and Iranian militias must cease deliberately bombing of residential civilian neighborhoods and populated areas since these attacks result in civilian casualties, most of whom are women and children.
- Ensure the effective protection of civilians during attacks in a comprehensive manner and accede to an obligation to stop indiscriminate shelling.
- The Syrian regime should disclose the fate of the disappeared females in its detention centers, investigate the torture and deaths of female detainees, end unfair and arbitrary trials and repeal their sentences.



US-led Coalition

- The US-led coalition should investigate the incidents that resulted in the death of female victims in particular. Also, the US-led coalition must apply pressure on its allies, the SDF, to cease the conscription of female children, as well as abductions and arrests.

The other parties to the conflict

- All parties to the conflict must immediately release female detainees, particularly against the backdrop of the armed conflict, and abide by international laws on the detention of girls.
- Prosecute and hold perpetrators of violations accountable, conduct investigations, and compensate and reparation of victims.
- Provide protection and security for the work of women, provide support for them, and end all forms of restriction and suppression of freedoms.
- Support the efforts of women in combating violence against them, and alleviate the economic and social repercussions of conflict on their lives.

European States and European Union

- Economic sanctions on the two main supporters of the Syrian regime, namely Iran and Russia, must be escalated, which is something that can be effectively achieved by the European Union. While civilian protection and safe zones are still the primary demands, economic sanctions also remain an effective course of action.
- Provide every possible assistance to the active civil society groups working to rehabilitate and reintegrate female victims into their communities.
- Support the operations of support and rehabilitation of female survivors in areas of displacement and asylum.

Security Council

- Since 2011, protection of Syrian woman has been a responsibility beyond the capabilities of the Syrian regime since it is the party perpetrating the most serious and major violations of every kind against Syrian women. The Security Council must, therefore, uphold its responsibility, and must take every possible step to protect Syrian woman and Syrian society.
- At a minimum, pressure must be applied on the Syrian regime to ensure that international observers, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, are given unconditional and unrestricted access to women and girls in detention centers.



OHCHR

- Release a special report on the violations that Syrian women, in particular, have experienced.

International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Investigate the incidents included in this report and utilize them during the preparation of the next report.

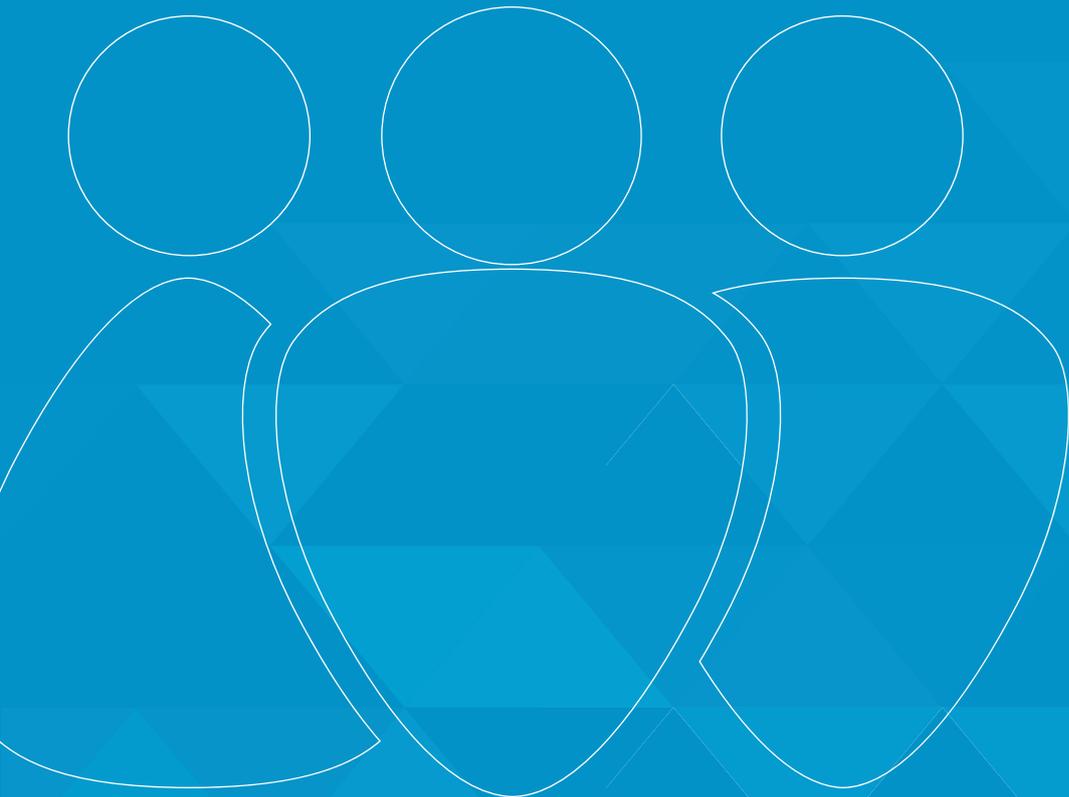
Humanitarian organizations and donor parties:

- Support services provided for female adult and child victims of violence, in particular victims of sexual violence, including providing funding for shelter, treatment and rehabilitation, counseling and ensuring that these services are tailored to the specific needs of women and girls.
- Establish special care and protection homes for abused women who have been ostracized by their families and communities.

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