

Nine Individuals Died due to Torture in November 2017

All of them Died at the Hands of Syrian Regime Forces

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

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.”

On December 30, 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire was announced from the Turkish capital Ankara under a Russian-Turkish sponsorship. The signing parties, the Syrian regime on one side and armed opposition factions on the other side, agreed to cease all armed attacks, including airstrikes, and stop raids and on-the-ground advancements. The military areas controlled by ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State) were excluded from the agreement.

Ankara Ceasefire Agreement was followed by seven rounds of talks that were held in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, between Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives as the states who sponsored Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. These rounds -the most recent of which was on October 30-31, 2017- discussed mostly, in parallel with a number of local agreements, ways to further establish de-escalation zones in Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and Quneitra governorates in south Syria. Additionally, the talks addressed ways to deliver humanitarian aids and enable IDPs to return to those areas.



Since these agreements went into effect, the included areas saw a relatively good and noticeable drop in killing rates in relation to the past months since March 2011.

Breaches didn't stop, however, despite Ankara Ceasefire Agreement - 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 they struck and apply serious pressure on their 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.

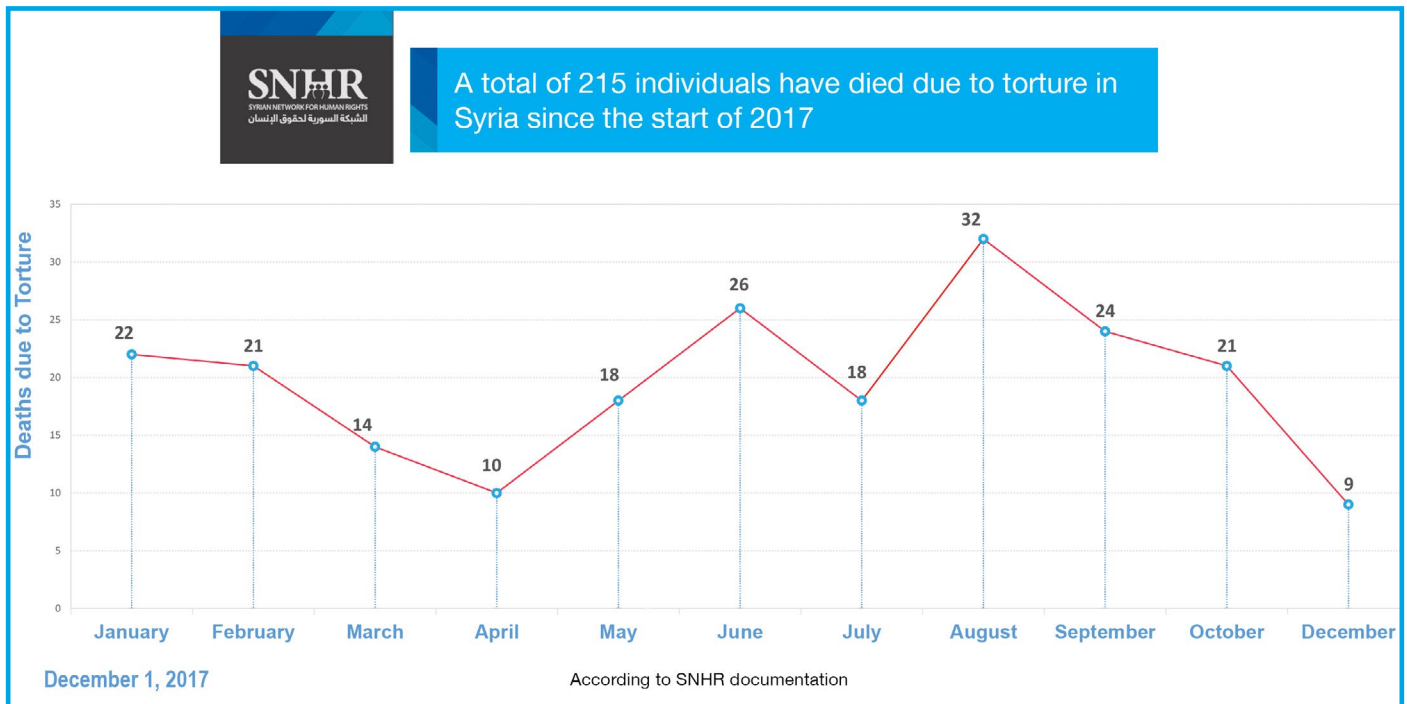
Please see SNHR methodology in [documenting victims](#):



II. Executive Summary

A. Victims of torture in 2017

SNHR has documented that 215 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 December of the same year.



B. Deaths due to torture in November 2017

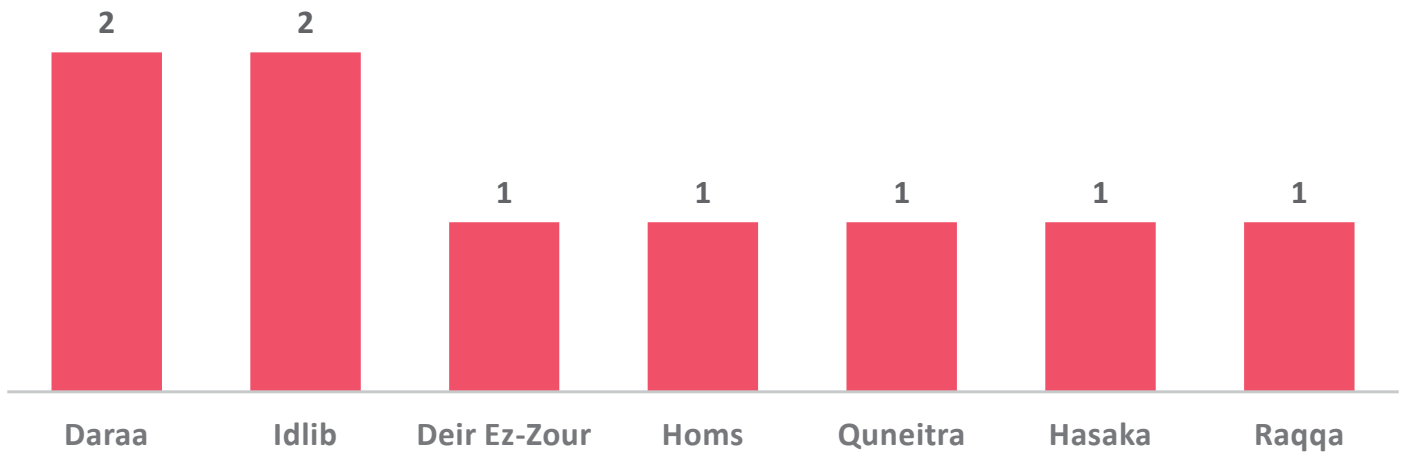
SNHR has documented no less than nine deaths due to torture inside Syrian regime forces official and non-official detention centers in November 2017.

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 and Idlib governorates saw the highest toll of victims dying due to torture with two individuals each.



Distribution of Victims of Torture in November 2017



Most notable cases of deaths due to torture in November are:
Two cases of kin

III. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture

Cases of kin

Hussein Ali al Hamad al Khatib and his brother Hasan, from al Jiza town, eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate. They were arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2011. On November 5, 2017, we received information confirming that they have died due to torture inside a Syrian regime detention center.

Ihsan Haj Mousa and his brother Khaled, from Jesr al Shoghour city, western suburbs of Idlib governorate. In 2012, they were arrested by Syrian regime forces. On November 7, 2017, we received information confirming that they have died due to torture inside a Syrian regime 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.

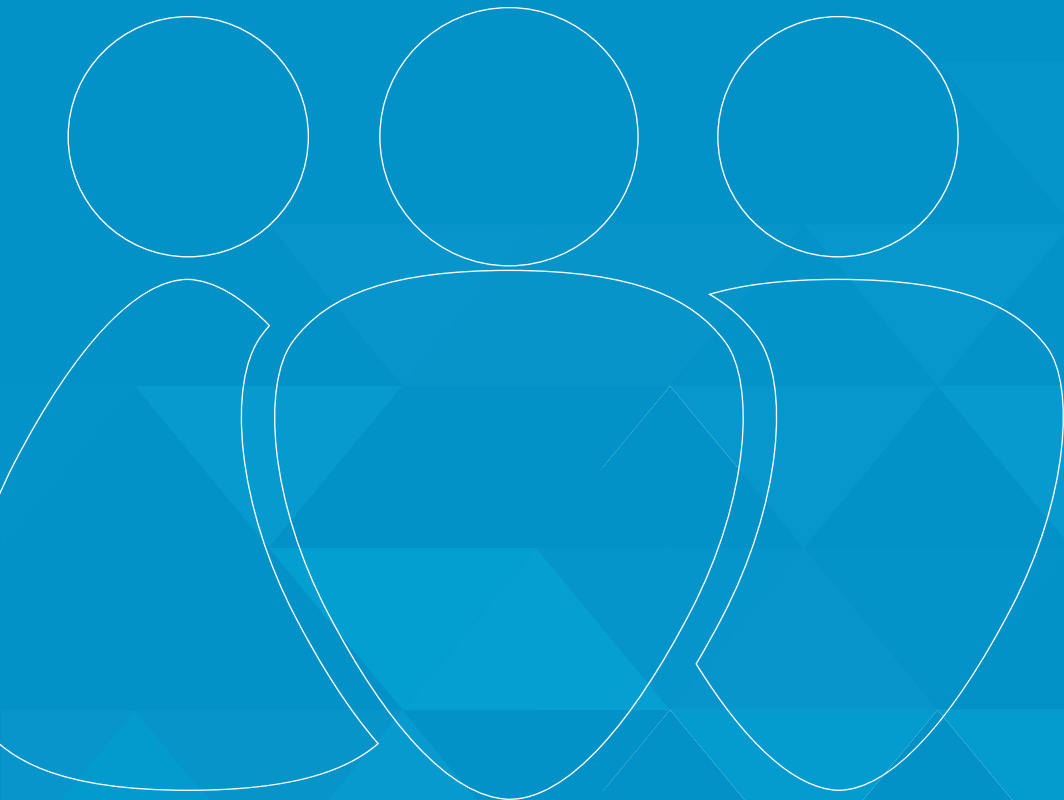
The Russian guarantor

- 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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