

# **At least 147 Cases of Arbitrary Arrests Documented in Syria in May 2020, including 10 Children and 4 Women**

The Syrian Regime Is Responsible for Nearly 44% of Arrests in May, Threatening the Lives of Thousands of Detainees Due to the Coronavirus



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

Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances have been amongst the most widespread violations since the earliest days of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011.

These criminal acts, which are considered to be the most common and pervasive regime violations against Syrian citizens, affecting hundreds of thousands of Syrians, are carried out by the Syrian regime's security services, as well as their affiliated militias, as part of a deliberate and planned strategy, often in a sweeping indiscriminate manner, in order to instill terror and fear into the largest possible number of Syrian people. Approximately eight months after the start of the popular uprising, other parties began to emerge in Syria, also carrying out arrests and kidnappings. The process of documenting the cases of detention and cataloguing whether detainees are released or join the ranks of the forcibly disappeared has been one of the greatest challenges and difficulties faced by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, as is clarified in our methodology<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights, <[http://sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR\\_Methodology\\_en.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf)>



Since 2011, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has created complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the detainees' data, which the team collects and verifies; this enables us to catalogue the detainees according to gender, the location where each was arrested, the governorate from which each detainee originally came, and the party responsible for their arrest. These programs also enable us to cross-index cases and make comparisons between these parties, as well as identifying the governorates from which the largest proportion of residents have been arrested and disappeared.

Given the importance and sensitivity surrounding the violation of arrest of Syrian citizens, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has, since its establishment, never stopped issuing daily news of arrest incidents, and publishing monthly reports documenting the arrests, enforced disappearances and releases that took place in the preceding month, in addition to issuing an annual report, as well as publishing dozens of other reports on different detention centers run by various parties to the conflict, and additional special reports concerning detainees. Also, the SNHR periodically submits special forms to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture.

Most of the arrests in Syria are carried out without any judicial warrant while the victims are passing through regime checkpoints or during raids, with the security forces of the regime's four main intelligence services often responsible for extra-judicial detentions. Every detainee is tortured from the very first moment of his or her arrest and denied any opportunity to contact his or her family or to have access to a lawyer. The authorities also flatly deny the arbitrary arrests they have carried out and most of the detainees are subsequently forcibly disappeared.

The Syrian regime is responsible for no fewer than 89 percent of all the arbitrary arrests that we have documented, and is the first and most prominent of all the parties to the conflict in systematically perpetrating this violation. In most cases, victims' families are unable to accurately identify the body responsible for making the arrest, given the vast array of forces affiliated with the Syrian regime (including Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, and others), in addition to the four main regime security agencies and their many branches, all of which are authorized to arrest and torture detainees, and to commit the crime of enforced disappearance.



The other parties to the conflict and the dominant non-regime forces in Syria, such as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, extremist Islamist groups, and various Armed Opposition factions, take similar measures to those of the Syrian regime, albeit at a lower rate and in a less systematic manner than those practiced by Syrian Regime forces; these constitute violations of International Human Rights Law, and, if they took place on the basis of the armed conflict, they constitute violations of International Humanitarian Law.

The issue of detainees and disappeared persons is one of the most crucial human rights issues in Syria which there has been no progress in resolving despite its inclusion in several resolutions of the UN Security Council, as well as in UN General Assembly resolutions, in Kofi Annan's plan, and finally in the statement of cessation of hostilities issued in February 2016, which states that "all parties undertake to work for an early release of any arbitrary detained persons, particularly women and children", and in Security Council resolution 2254 of December 2015, article 12, which states that all detainees, especially women and children, must be released immediately. Despite all these resolutions and other official statements, no progress has been made on the issue of securing the release of detainees in any of the rounds of negotiations sponsored by international parties regarding the conflict in Syria.

In light of these considerations in regard to this particular issue, we therefore recommend:

- 1- Arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, which are still ongoing, as detailed in this SNHR monthly report, must be ended immediately. The fates of all detainees must be revealed, and their families' right to visit them must also be ensured immediately.
- 2- All detainees imprisoned for merely exercising their political and civil rights must be released unconditionally. The use of women and children as prisoners of war must be stopped and they must all be released.
- 3- The independent international monitors of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which was established by the UN, and the International Committee of the Red Cross must be granted access to all official and unofficial detention centers without establishing any prior arrangements or any restrictions or conditions.
- 4- A UN committee should be formed to monitor and periodically assess the release of the detainees according to a timetable that must be presented by all the detaining parties, primarily the Syrian regime forces that are responsible for 89 percent of all detentions.
- 5- All rulings issued by the regime's field military courts and terrorism courts should be suspended or repealed, since they are non-compliant with domestic and international legislation, as well as failing to provide guarantees of a fair trial.



6- SNHR calls on the other parties of the conflict to reveal the identities of all detainees, abductees, and all others subjected to forced disappearance by these parties, to end the policy of carrying out arrests without legal warrants, and to release all detainees imprisoned by them without judicial charges, and emphasizes that individuals should also be detained only briefly before being presented in a court of law.

## **Methodology**

This report outlines the record of arbitrary arrests by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict documented in May. In addition, it sheds light on the most notable individual cases and incidents of arbitrary arrest that the SNHR's team documented in March, as well as categorizing cases and incidents of arrest according to the location of the incident.

According to the SNHR's database, we can categorize cases of arrest according to the governorate in which the incident occurred, and according to the governorate from which the detainee originally came. In this report and in most of our reports, we categorize the record of arrests according to the place where the arrest took place, not according to the governorate from which the detainee originally came. It should also be noted that sometimes we categorize the cases of arrest according to the governorate from which the detainee originally came in order to show the magnitude of loss and violence suffered by the people of that governorate compared to other governorates, in which case we refer to this in the report.

The record of the cases and incidents of arrests documented by the SNHR, which are included in this report, do not include those kidnappings and abductions in which we were unable to identify the responsible party.

The report also documents arbitrary arrests that subsequently turned into enforced disappearances. A number of criteria must be met before SNHR will classify a case as an enforced disappearance: the individual must have been detained for at least 20 days without his or her family being able to obtain any information from the relevant authorities about their status or location, with those responsible for the disappearance denying any knowledge of the individual's arrest or whereabouts.

The SNHR team implements strict standards in evaluating and assessing any incident of arbitrary arrest in accordance with the principles of international laws and the aforementioned set of principles on arbitrary arrest.



The SNHR's Detainee and Forcibly-Disappeared Department records cases of arrest which departmental personnel collect from various sources, such as: victims' families, SNHR members in Syrian governorates, cooperating local activists, and former detainees, before diligently working to contact the families of the detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, as well as people close to them and people who survived detention, for the purpose of collecting as much information and data as possible, in light of the extraordinary and extremely complex challenges. We also record eyewitnesses' accounts and track cases of arrest to update these records regularly in order to determine the fate of each detainee, their place of detention, and the circumstances of their arrest. We have created on our website a special form [to document a detainee](#) to facilitate access and contact with victims' families.

The ongoing daily process of documenting detainees also comes with other additional challenges for SNHR, which has been documenting detainees' cases since 2011. One of the most notable challenges amongst these is the reluctance of victims' families to cooperate and reveal or provide details of any information on their family members' arrest, even confidentially, more especially if the arrested individual is female, due to a well-founded fear still prevalent in Syrian society that being discovered doing so would result in more torture and further danger for their loved ones and themselves. Instead, families try to negotiate with security forces which usually blackmail these families and demand cash payments, effectively ransoms, that can amount to thousands of dollars in some cases. Despite the fact that SNHR possesses lists detailing the cases of more than 146,000 detainees, including children and women, we can safely say that our estimate of the actual number of detainees exceeds 215,000.

The failure of the international community and of all the organs of the United Nations to apply pressure on the Syrian regime authorities to release even one individual (including those whose sentences are completed), even prisoners of conscience, has affirmed the conviction of many within Syrian society that it is useless to cooperate in the documentation process. Most of the releases achieved were part of exchange deals with the armed opposition.

The detainee figures included in this report don't include prisoners with a criminal background, but do include cases of arrest that are based on the internal armed conflict, mainly due to opposition activity against the ruling authorities, as well as cases of detention to suppress freedom of opinion and expression.



## II. Many Face Multiple Charges Following False Confessions Extorted Via Torture and Intimidation, Before Being Referred to 'Courts' More Like Security Branches

We in the SNHR wish to emphasize that the vast majority of detainees involved in the popular uprising for democracy in Syria, including political and human rights activists, media workers, and relief activists, and similar prisoners of conscience, have been accused by the security branches of several charges based on testimonies taken from detainees by the regime under coercion, intimidation and torture. The most prominent of these charges are: provoking sectarian strife, threatening the system of governance, weakening national sentiment, collusion with external agents and the enemy, supporting and financing terrorism, and weakening the nation's morale, all of which are broad and wide-ranging charges, which are documented within regime security authorities' reports, with these security reports being referred to the Public Prosecution service, after which the majority of these cases are referred to either the Counter-Terrorism Court or the Military Field Court.

Regarding the Counter-Terrorism Court in short, it was established in accordance with Presidential Decree No. 22 of 2012 to serve as a substitute for the exceptional Supreme State Security Court, and examines detainees' cases according to the Counter-Terrorism Law No. 19 of 2012, an article of legislation similar to the counter-revolutionary goals law issued in 1964. The Counter-Terrorism Court consists of three judges appointed by the President of the Republic, according to the proposal submitted by the Supreme Judicial Council, which is also chaired by the President of the Republic, who try civilians, military personnel and juveniles, and issue sentences in absentia. In addition, these sentences may not be appealed except in the case of those who surrender themselves voluntarily. Although the body's official name is the Counter-Terrorism Court, it tries all types of crimes and can therefore be called an exceptional court; it is, in fact, part of the regime's security apparatus.

As for the Military Field Court, again briefly, this was established by Decree No. 109 of August 17, 1968, with its jurisdiction originally specified as being only for crimes committed in wartime; its remit was expanded in 1980, however, to allow it to operate in both war and peace times and to try civilians, military personnel and juveniles. This court is also formed by the executive authority through the Minister of Defense, and consists of a president and two members who are not required to be law graduates. The rulings issued by this court are not open to appeal, being endorsed by the Minister of Defense. Regarding the death sentences issued by this court, they are ratified by the President of the Republic, with both the Minister of Defense and the President of the Republic able to manipulate the rulings issued according to their personal whims. The Military Field Court is wholly managed by the executive authority that dominates the judicial authority, and therefore the most fundamental conditions of fair trial are not met in this court, which is also closer to a military-security branch than to a court of law.





According to the SNHR's database, the vast majority of detainees were arrested in connection with their participation in activities opposed to the Syrian regime, no matter how innocuous, such as attending demonstrations, being involved in media or humanitarian relief activism, or even as a result of their kinship ties with an activist; this means that the vast majority of detainees are arrested in connection with their political activism, meaning that they are political detainees.

### **III. The Syrian Regime Is Responsible for Threatening the Lives of Thousands of Detainees Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Detainees and individuals forcibly disappeared by Syrian Regime forces are subjected to exceptionally brutal and sadistic methods of torture, which have assumed a particularly vengeful character since the popular uprising for democracy began in March 2011. In a detailed report published by SNHR previously, we recorded [at least 72 methods of torture](#) practiced in the Syrian regime's detention centers and military hospitals.

As well as inflicting these horrendous methods of torture on detainees, the Syrian regime also deliberately subjects the imprisoned detainees to unimaginably squalid, unsanitary and massively overcrowded conditions in its detention centers which lack even the bare minimum of hygiene or sanitation to protect against illness and disease. These conditions are especially horrific in the headquarters of the four main security branches and military prisons, where large numbers of detainees are packed into cells of various sizes, with an average cell area measuring 4 x 6 square meters containing approximately 50 detainees; this means that each detainee barely has an area of 70 cm<sup>2</sup> for sitting and sleeping, with detainees usually taking turns to attempt to sit or lie down to sleep when their numbers exceed the holding capacity of the cell, as they routinely do. These cells also lack ventilation and the most basic standards of sanitation and cleanliness, with the conditions being even more squalid in the solitary confinement cells located on the detention centers' lower floors which lack even light. Throughout the duration of their detention in the security branches, detainees are also prevented from going outside to get any exercise, or exposure to fresh air or sunlight.

In addition to these congested unsanitary conditions, detainees are able to shower or wash only very rarely throughout the period of their detention, which often lasts for many years, with all these factors contributing to and exacerbating the spread of diseases, epidemics and infectious conditions, especially respiratory and skin diseases, which are further aggravated due to the lack of fresh air and the lack of exposure to sunlight and light. The narrowness of the cells and the cramped, overcrowded conditions also lead to suffocation and shortness of breath amongst many detainees due to inhaling the putrid smells of





bodily waste, sweat, pus, and blood from wounds. The conditions of detention in security branches and military prisons are somewhat similar to the civilian central prisons in terms of overcrowding, human stacking, and lack of cleanness and ventilation.

Syrian Regime forces deliberately withhold sufficient quantities of pillows and blankets from detainees in detention centers, with those which are issued usually being filthy, threadbare, soiled and encrusted with blood, pus or other bodily waste and fluids, and lousy with parasites. In addition, detainees are denied adequate clothing and often left only in their underwear since their clothing is worn, soiled or torn during torture or forcibly removed during inspections; all these practices expose detainees to severe cold in winter, when temperatures fall below freezing.

All these practices make each of the days, months, and years that detainees spend in detention into a never-ending hell, with these brutal conditions being a very deliberately imposed and widespread strategy on the part of the Syrian regime inflicted with the aim of degrading and further torturing detainees. Subjecting detainees to conditions that foster disease and infection and leaving them to suffer without medical help or treatment is another deliberate and conscious part of this strategy, forcing already physically and emotionally traumatized detainees to endure an additional layer of torment and debasement often leading to death. With the recent global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Syrian regime's admission that it has already documented cases of infection, the already grave situation facing prisoners in regime jails is now critical, particularly in light of the detention conditions that are, as explained above, favorable for the spread of infectious diseases such as the COVID-19 coronavirus; this now threatens the lives of approximately 130,000 people who are still documented as being detained or forcibly disappeared by Syrian Regime forces, according to the SNHR database.

Instead of releasing prisoners of conscience and other detainees, including detainees whose sentences' periods have ended, in order to contribute to alleviating the terrible overcrowding suffered by detainees and threatening their lives due to the spread of the coronavirus, we have documented the Syrian regime arresting even more citizens, which means additional overcrowding in detention centers. This behavior completely conflicts with the demands of some countries allied with the Syrian regime and prominent figures and organizations affiliated with them to ease or freeze the sanctions imposed by other countries on this regime, under the pretext of helping it to overcome the coronavirus. The Syrian regime's policy towards the issue of detainees clearly reveals the inconsistency of this request, clarifying precisely how the Syrian regime deals with citizens in light of the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus and how indifferent it is to their wellbeing.



#### IV. Summary of the Most Notable Events Related to the Detainees Issue in May

In May, Syrian Regime forces continued to pursue and arrest individuals who had settled their security situation in areas that have signed settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in the governorates of Damascus Suburbs and Daraa. We recorded arrests and raids carried out by the regime forces in Deir Ez-Zour governorate with the aim of forced conscription, with most occurring in mass campaigns of raids and arrests. We also recorded arrests targeting those who illegally returned from Lebanon to their cities, who have been charged with terrorism. For this, we always recommend that refugees or IDPs should not return to the Syrian regime-controlled areas because there are no real guarantees that the regime will not subject them to arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, or forced conscription. We also recorded arrests of civilians, including children, women, and elderly people by Syrian Regime forces as they were passing through regime checkpoints whilst moving between or traveling to areas outside the Syrian regime's control.

In May, we recorded that Syrian Regime forces released 42 detainees from their detention centers in multiple governorates, following the issuance of Amnesty Decree No. 6 of 2020. We issued [a special report](#) on this, noting that some of the articles included in the partial amnesty decree, which were related to reducing the sentence's period, included those released. We also issued [a report](#) detailing how the Syrian regime managed to relieve international pressure on it to release tens of thousands of detainees following the outbreak of COVID-19 through a deceptive amnesty decree.

Photos of some of the detainees released showed clearly that they had been subjected to malnutrition and neglect of health care while in detention.

Meanwhile, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance throughout the month of May, targeting activists and members of civil society groups who oppose their policies. These arrests were concentrated in the governorates of Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa. Also in May, SNHR documented Syrian Democratic Forces carrying out arrests targeting civilians, including children, with the aim of forced conscription, during which the detainees' family members were beaten. Syrian Democratic Forces also targeted several families for arrest, as well as targeting several members of the same families, including elderly people, without providing clear charges, taking these detained to an undisclosed location.



In addition to these incidents, May also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arresting activists working with civil society groups, as well as other civilians and clergymen, with most of these arrests occurring due to the publication of reports on social media accounts criticizing the HTS's management of areas under its control. These arrests were carried out arbitrarily in the form of raids in which HTS members stormed their victims' homes, often breaking down the doors, or by kidnapping their victims while they were travelling or passing through temporary checkpoints.

Factions of the Armed Opposition also continued carrying out arrests and kidnappings in May, most of which occurred on a mass scale, in many cases targeting several members of the same families, including women, in the territories under these forces' control; we also recorded arrests carried out within an ethnic context, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under their control in Aleppo, Raqqa and Hasaka governorates. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, as well as being carried out without presenting any clear charges against those being detained.

## V. Record of Cases of Arbitrary Arrests by the Parties to the Conflict

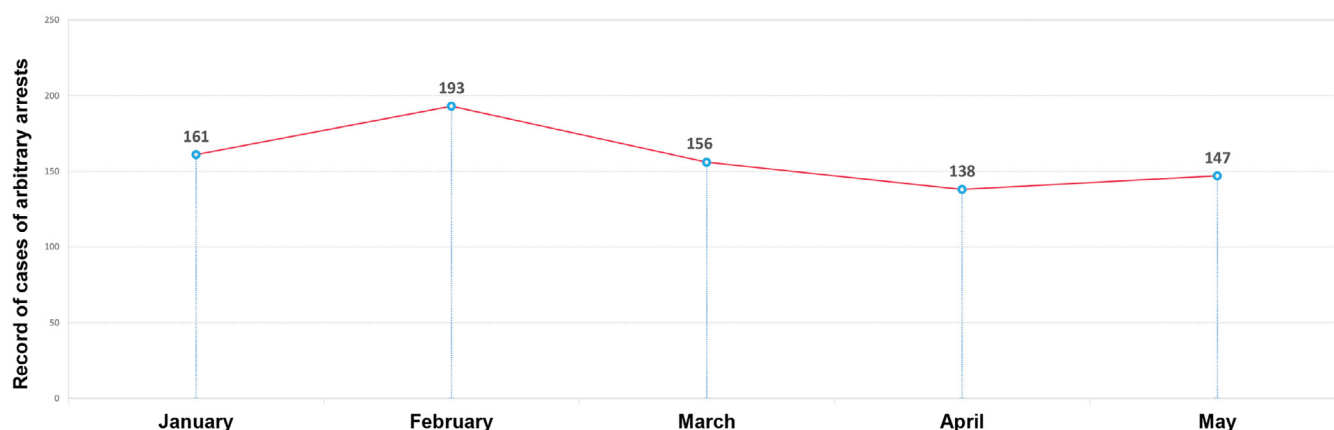
### A. Record of cases of arbitrary arrests since the start of 2020:

**SNHR documented 795 cases of arbitrary arrests at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria since the start of 2020 up to June 2020, distributed as follows:**



At least 795 cases of arbitrary arrests in Syria in 2020

From January to June

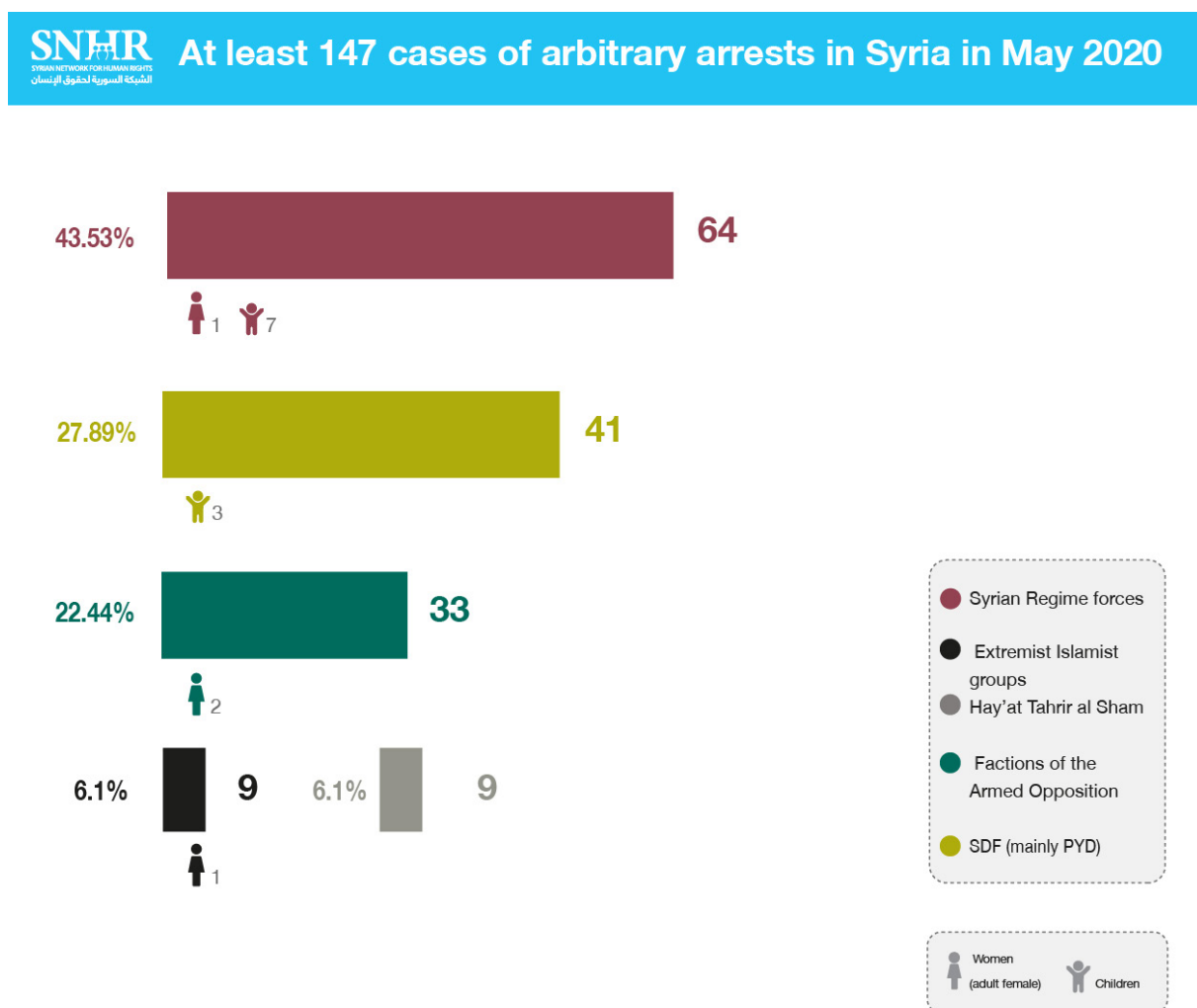


The chart above shows the increasing rates of cases of arbitrary arrests in the month of February 2020. This was due to the wide arrests carried out by Syrian Regime forces, some of which occurred on a mass scale in areas they regained control of.

### **B. Record of cases of arbitrary arrests in May:**

In May 2020, SNHR documented at least 147 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 10 children and four women (adult female), at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria, 95 of which have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

These arrests were distributed according to the main perpetrator parties responsible, as follows:



**A. Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**

64 individuals, including seven children and one woman. 42 of these have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

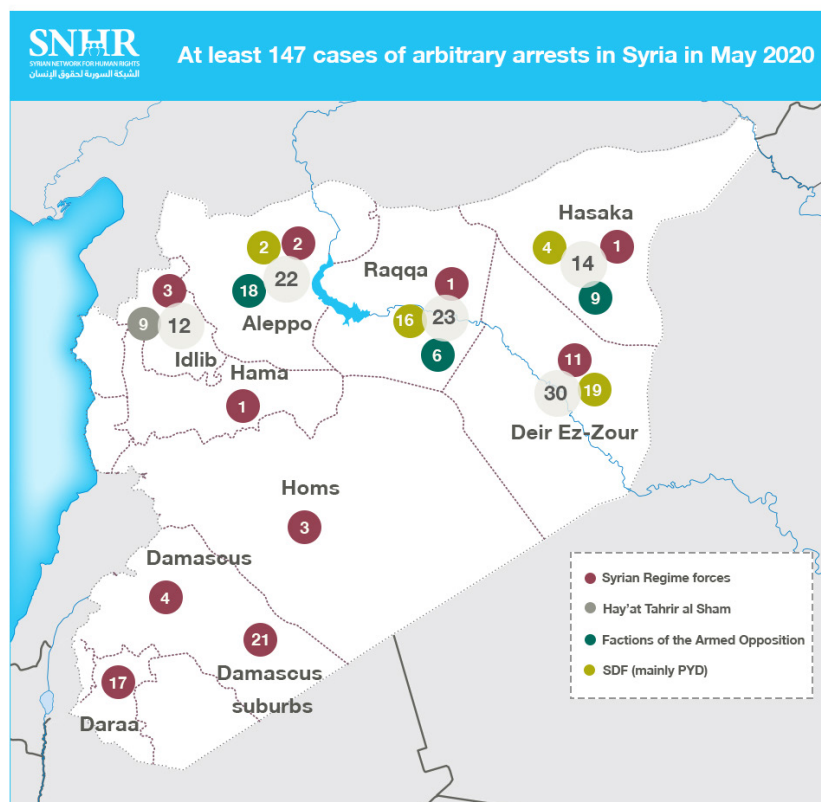
**B. Extremist Islamist groups:**

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): Nine individuals, including one woman. Five of these have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

**C. Factions of the Armed Opposition:** 33 individuals, including two women. 22 of these have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

**D. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** 41 individuals, including three children. 26 of these have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance.

The following table shows the distribution of cases of arbitrary arrests documented in May across all the Syrian governorates by the main perpetrator parties:



The Map above shows that the highest rates of cases of arbitrary arrests during this period were seen in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, followed by the governorates of Raqqqa and Aleppo.



## VI. Most Notable Cases and Incidents of Arbitrary Arrest in May:

### A. Syrian Regime forces:

#### **- Most notable incidents:**

On Monday, May 4, 2020, Syrian Regime forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Hatla village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of 10 civilians, who recently returned to their homes from areas under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, taking them to an undisclosed location.

On Saturday, May 16, 2020, Syrian Regime forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Zamalka town in the Eastern Ghouta, east of Damascus Suburbs governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of six civilians, who are from Zamalka town, including one elderly person, taking them to an undisclosed location.

#### **- Most notable cases:**

Hasan Jarawan al Msalmeh, from Daraa city, was arrested on Wednesday, May 6, 2020, by Syrian Regime forces in al Sahari neighborhood in Daraa city, and was taken to an undisclosed location.

Basel Akasha, from Beit Jin village in the western Damascus Suburbs governorate, was living in Jbata al Khashab town in the northern suburbs of Quneitra governorate when he was arrested on Friday, May 15, 2020, by Syrian Regime forces, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Ofaniya village in the northern suburbs of Quneitra governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location.

Muhammad Jamil Dakkour, his wife, and their 17-year-old son, from Ghabagheb town in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, were arrested on Tuesday, May 19, 2020, by Syrian Regime forces during a raid on their home in the town and were subsequently taken to an undisclosed location. SNHR notes that Muhammad was a conscript who defected from Syrian Regime forces and was among those who previously agreed on a settlement to their security status.

Photos of detainees recently released by Syrian Regime forces show the effects of the gross neglect of medical and health care during their detention, clearly demonstrating the threat to the 130,000 detainees who are still in the regime's detention centers:





Image of detention survivor Muhammad Akram Toutiya, from al Rhaiba city in al Qalamoun al Sharqi in Damascus Suburbs governorate, who was arrested in 2018 by Syrian Regime forces, while he was passing through one of the regime's checkpoints in Qtiafa city in Damascus Suburbs governorate. Muhammad was among those who previously agreed on a settlement to their security status. On Thursday, May 14, 2020, he was released from Adra Central Prison.



Image of the detention survivor Hasan al Zain from Deir Salman town in Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate, who was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2018 from one of sheltering centers in Eastern Ghouta. On Thursday, May 21, 2020, he was released from a regime detention center.





The preceding images show the stark comparison between the health and physical wellbeing of newly released detainees before their detention and after their release, with the Syrian regime's negligence towards detainees' health and medical care being clearly visible; this plainly demonstrates the grave threat posed to the physical and mental health of about 130,000 detainees who are still detained in the Syrian regime's detention centers, according to the SNHR's database.

## **B. Extremist Islamist groups**

- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:

### **- Most notable incidents:**

On Thursday, May 7, 2020, members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arrested three Imams in Harem area in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, after being summoned to an HTS' court in Harem area and took them to an undisclosed location.

On Monday, May 11, 2020, members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham arrested three civilians, including one woman, all originally from Khafsin village in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate and currently resident in Maram IDPs Camp located in west of Sarmada city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, before releasing them the next day.

### **- Most notable cases:**

Anwar Ahmad al Ma'mou, a lawyer from Om al Khalakhil village in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was arrested by members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Tuesday, May 5, 2020, after being summoned to an HTS court in al Dana city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. His fate remains unknown.

Obaidah Kayyali, from Kafr Takhareem city in the north of Idlib governorate, was arrested by members of Hay'at Tahrir al Sham on Friday, July 12, 2019, in a farming district near Kafr Takhareem city. On Tuesday, May 19, 2020, he was released.

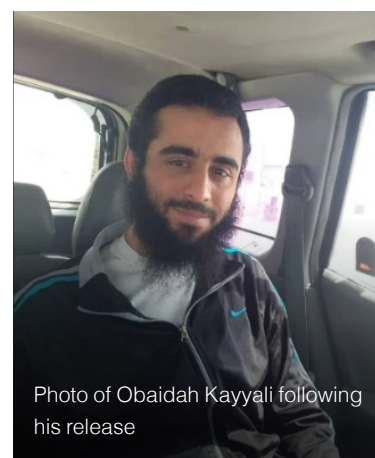


Photo of Obaidah Kayyali following his release



## C. Factions of the Armed Opposition

### - Most notable incidents:

On Tuesday, May 12, 2020, personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army arrested four civilians in Deir Ballout village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, and took them to an undisclosed location.

On Friday, May 15, 2020, personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Ma'malou village, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of six civilians, who were taken to an undisclosed location.

[A video published](#) on the internet on May 29, 2020, shows members of the military police and opposition factions raiding the headquarters of another opposition faction, al Hamzah Brigade, which is affiliated with the Syrian National Army, present in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. In the video, detained women appear to be held inside the headquarters building. According to the video, SNHR estimates that eight women are being detained there; we have managed to identify four of them who were kidnapped at the beginning of 2020 by gunmen whose identities were unknown at that time, with the kidnappers subjecting the women's families to blackmail attempts to secure their release.

SNHR calls on those detaining the women to reveal the identities of all eight and of all others subjected to forced disappearance, to secure their release and the release of all detainees imprisoned by Armed Opposition factions without judicial charges, and to end the policy of carrying out arrests without legal warrants. Individuals should also be detained only briefly before being presented in a court of law. Efforts to deny the detention of detainees and to conceal their fate deprives them of their fundamental rights to contact family members or appoint defense attorneys, and results in their being classified as being forcibly disappeared. These practices, which are a reproduction of those practiced by the Syrian regime, constitute violations of International Human Rights Law, and, if they took place on the basis of the armed conflict, they constitute violations of International Humanitarian Law. SNHR's database indicates that at least 15 women are currently classified as having been forcibly disappeared in the Afrin region since the beginning of 2020 until now.

For video, [see following link](#):



### **- Most notable cases:**

Mahmoud al Demashqi, from al Sbeina town in south of Damascus Suburbs governorate, is a media activist and the director of Daawa Foundation for Social Affairs, was arrested by the Syrian National Army forces on Monday, May 18, 2020, in a raid on his place of residence in Jendeires town, which is administratively a part of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, after criticizing, via his account on Facebook, a photo of the National Army members wearing a Turkish flag patch on their uniforms. He was then released on Thursday, May 21, 2020.



## **D. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic forces (mainly PYD)**

### **- Most notable incidents:**

On Friday, May 1, 2020, members of Syrian Democratic Forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of three civilians, who were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Tuesday, May 5, 2020, members of Syrian Democratic Forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in al Baghouz town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of three civilians, who were taken to an undisclosed location.

On Saturday, May 9, 2020, members of Syrian Democratic Forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. SNHR documented the arrest of 10 civilians, who were taken to an SDF detention center in al Omar oil field in the badiya of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

On Thursday, May 21, 2020, members of Syrian Democratic Forces carried out a campaign of raids and arrests in al Rhayyat village in the northern suburbs of Raqqa. SNHR documented the arrest of five civilians, who were taken to an undisclosed location.

### **- Most notable cases:**

Sari Khlaif al Ghabra and Hussein Ahmad al Ghabra, from Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, were arrested on Saturday, May 9, 2020, by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on Hajin city, and were taken to an SDF detention center in al Omar oil field in the badiya of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.



Abboud Ali al Medad and 17-year-old child Majed Muhammad al Medad, from al Sh-heil city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, were arrested on Monday, May 18, 2020, by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on al Medad neighborhood in al Sh-heil city, and were taken to an undisclosed location.

Khalil al Khabour, from al Rhayyat village in the northern suburbs of Raqqa, was arrested on Thursday, May 21, 2020, by Syrian Democratic Forces in a raid on al Rhayyat village, and were taken to an undisclosed location.

## VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The SNHR believes that the Syrian regime has not fulfilled any of its obligations under any of the international treaties and conventions which it has ratified. We refer specifically to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The regime has also violated several articles of the Syrian Constitution itself, with thousands of detainees detained without any arrest warrant, held for many years, without charges, and prevented from appointing a lawyer and from receiving family visits. 65.08 percent of all detentions documented have subsequently been categorized as cases of enforced disappearance, with detainees' families being denied any information on their loved ones' whereabouts, while anyone making enquiries about the detainees faces the risk of being arrested themselves for doing so. The Syrian regime has also violated the right to liberty enshrined in article 9 of the ICCPR through the widespread practice of arbitrary and unlawful detentions.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham imposes absolute authority over the large areas it controls and the residents there. The group which has a political entity, and has developed a highly hierarchical structure, is therefore obliged to implement the provisions of international human rights law. Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has committed widespread violations through arrests and enforced disappearances.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition have carried out arrests and torture against a number of residents in areas under their control.
- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have violated many basic rights and practiced numerous violations such as torture and enforced disappearance. They also have a political entity with a largely hierarchical structure and are, therefore, also obliged to apply the provisions of international human rights law.



## **Recommendations**

### **Security Council**

- The Security Council should monitor the implementation of Resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012, Resolution 2043, adopted on April 21, 2012, and Resolution 2139, adopted on February 22, 2014, all of which demand the immediate cessation of the crime of enforced disappearance.
- In light of the spread of the coronavirus, it is vital to put pressure on the Syrian regime to release tens of thousands of arbitrarily detained persons, primarily medical personnel whose professional skills and services the Syrian people are in dire need of.

### **Human Rights Council**

- Follow up on the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria and highlight this issue in all annual meetings.
- Cooperate and coordinate with all active local human rights groups in Syria.

### **Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)**

Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidence and data.

### **International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)**

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidence and data.

### **United Nations and the guarantors of the Astana talks**

- An impartial special committee should be formed to monitor cases of enforced disappearance, and to make progress in revealing the fate of the nearly 98,000 documented missing persons in Syria, approximately 85 percent of whom are detained by the Syrian regime.
- Immediately begin applying pressure on all parties to ensure that they immediately reveal their detention records according to a timetable. In the meantime, detention places should be revealed immediately, and humanitarian organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross should be allowed to visit them directly.
- Ensure the release of children and women, and the end to the practice of holding families and friends as war hostages.



- We call on the official recently appointed to take charge of the detainee file at the UN special envoy's office to include the issue of the detainees during the upcoming round of Geneva talks, as this issue is of far greater importance to the Syrian people than other longer-term issues which can be jointly addressed later by the parties after a political settlement is reached, such as the constitution.

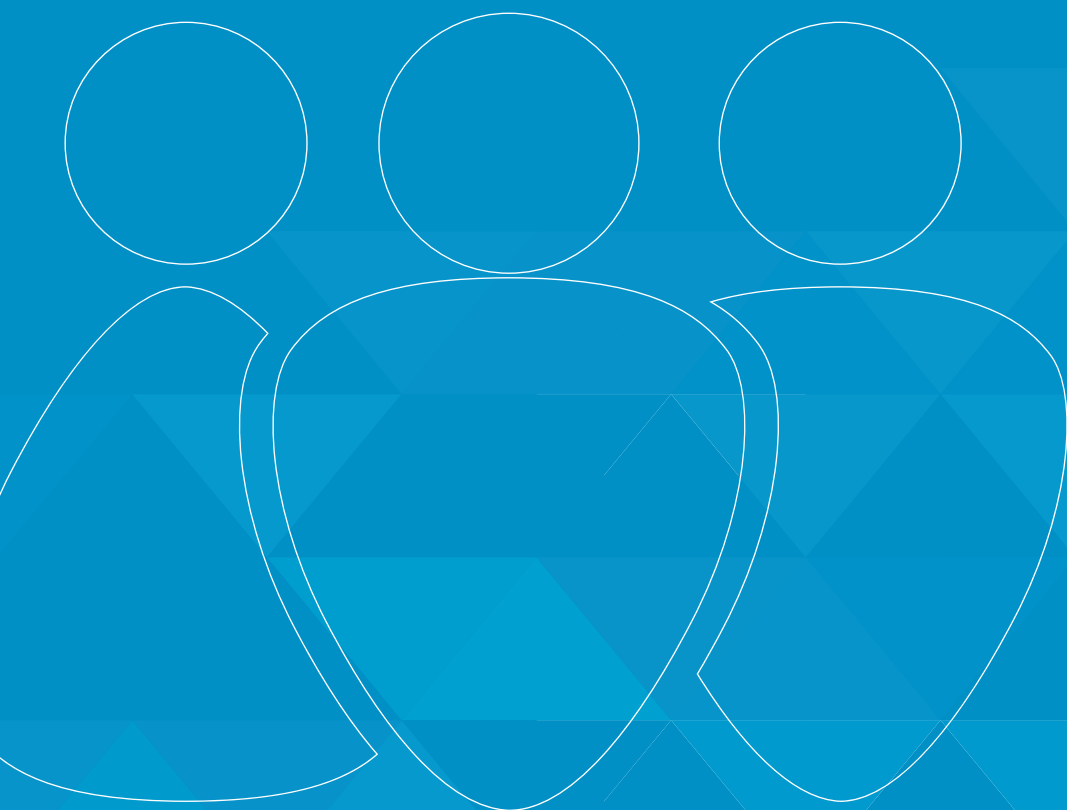
### **The Russian regime:**

- Must demand that its ally, the Syrian regime, disclose the fate of nearly 98,000 forcibly disappeared persons and immediately release tens of thousands of arbitrarily detained persons and detainees whose sentences ended, before demanding that those states which imposed sanctions on the Syrian regime lift them.
- Must provide the Syrian regime with the necessary medical supplies and equipment to examine tens of thousands of detainees and ensure that they are not infected with the COVID-19 coronavirus

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