

# 6,517 Individuals Arrested in Syria in 2017

Including 551 Individuals in  
December

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Wednesday, January 3, 2018

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

## Contents

### I. Introduction

### II. Details

#### A. Arbitrary Arrests in 2017

#### B. Arbitrary Arrest in December 2017

- Arbitrary Arrests by Syrian regime Forces (Army, Security, Local Militias, Foreign Shiite Militias)
- Arbitrary Arrests by Self-Management Forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party Forces – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)
- Arbitrary Arrests by Extremist Islamic Groups
- Arbitrary Arrests by Armed Opposition Factions
- Raids and Inspection Points that Resulted in Detention
- Abductions by Other Parties

### III. Most Notable Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in December

### IV. Recommendations

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## I. Introduction

The first Security Council Resolutions to address Syria were 2042 and 2043 in April 2012, and both Resolutions highlighted the political arrest and enforced-disappearance issue, while Resolution 2139, February 2014, called for the immediate cease of enforced-disappearance practices, strongly condemning it, same as paragraph 12 of Resolution 2254 in December 2015. However, all of these Resolutions were merely words, and have all failed to reveal even the fate of one missing or forcibly-disappeared person, or set free any prisons of conscience, political figures, women, or children.

For its remarkable significance and importance to large segments of the Syrian people, the detainees issue was addressed in the path of Geneva talks, especially in the first rounds, and while the progress has been almost non-existent, the issue was present during discussions and on the agenda. However, the last three rounds were almost completely devoid of any discussion or reference to this sensitive issue. Interestingly, we, at SNHR, sensed a deliberate omission of this subject as we attended a number of Geneva rounds, whether



in an advisory capacity or at the civil society room, under the pretext of it being too complicated and might hinder the political process. We have, time and time again, stressed in several reports and statements that the key to achieve progress in the political process and approach an agreement starts with revealing the fate of the missing and disappeared persons. In this context, SNHR released [a special report](#) on October 30, 2017, that noted the failure of all Geneva and Astana talks to reveal the fate of one detainee or missing person, as SNHR, in the report, called on the attendants at the upcoming rounds to not skip the issue of detainees and forcibly-disappeared persons.

The seventh round of Astana talks has come and gone, held on the 30th and 31st of October 2017, with no progress regarding the detainees and missing person issue. As we can see, the same scenario has been repeating since the first meeting in January 2017.

As such, the detainees issue is the one issue that is yet to see any notable progress in Astana and Geneva, as well as the de-escalation agreements, even though it was included in those agreements. In this regard, we recommend the following:

- 1- Arbitrary arrests must be ceased immediately as it is still an ongoing concern according to SNHR's monthly report. All detainees' fates must be revealed and their families' right to visit them must be insured immediately as well.
- 2- All detainees who were detained for merely exercising their political and civil rights must be released unconditionally. The use of women and children as war hostages must be stopped and they all must be released.
- 3- Grant 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 access to all official and non-official detention centers without setting up any prior arrangements or any restrictions or conditions.
- 4- A UN committee should be formed to see to the release of the detainees periodically and per a timetable that must be presented by all the detaining parties and mainly Syrian regime forces that are responsible for 99% of all the detainees.

## **Methodology**

The ongoing and daily process of documenting detainees comes with additional challenges for SNHR that have been documenting detainees since 2011. One of these most notable challenges is the families' reluctance to cooperate and reveal any information on their family members' arrest even secretly and especially if the arrested individual was a female due



to a prevalent notion among the Syrian society that doing so would result in more torture and risks. Instead, the families try to negotiate with security forces that usually blackmail these families and demand a cash payment that can amount to thousands of dollars in some cases. Despite the fact that SNHR possesses lists of more than 117,000 detainees, including children and women, it should be noted that we estimate that the actual number of detainees have exceeded 215,000; 99% of them are being detained mainly by Syrian regime forces.

The international community's and the United Nations', in all of its organs, failure to apply pressure on the Syrian authorities to release even one case (including those whose sentences are over), and even prisoners of conscience, affirmed that convention within the Syrian society which believes that it is useless to cooperate in the documentation process. Most of the releases were part of exchange deals with the armed opposition.

The Syrian government denies that it made any arrests or executed any abductions when asked by the detainees' families. SNHR obtains most of the information from former detainees.

All the documented detainees in April were arrested without a warrant, which has become a norm and a methodology in 99.9% of the arrests made by Syrian regime forces in all of its organs and entities (army, security forces, local militias, foreign militias). In all of the many interviews we conducted with thousands of prisoners since 2011, we have never heard of an arrest warrant or a cause. Most of the arrests are either through breaking doors and arresting people from their homes or at checkpoints in the streets. Apparently, Syrian regime forces follow this method in order to wipe off any evidence that might hold them responsible for these arrests and the torture, physical violence, extrajudicial killing, and the other crimes and violations that follow.

Also, Syrian regime forces don't allow 99.9% of the detainees to contact a lawyer, their families, or anyone. The people who perpetrate these crimes, or other crimes, have never been punished by Syrian regime forces and no case involving that have been recorded. Instead, government authorities, itself, encourage and protect the people who perpetrate these crimes.

SNHR has recorded that no less than 117,000 individuals have been arrested since March 2011 (99% have been arrested by Syrian regime forces) these number don't include prisoners of a criminal background and include arrests cases that are based on the internal armed conflict and mainly due to the opposition activity against the ruling authorities.



## **The mounting number of arrests is due to a number of reasons:**

- Many arrested individuals weren't arrested because of a crime they committed, but because of their relatives' involvement with armed opposition factions or because they provided humanitarian aids.
- Most of the arrests are being conducted randomly and involve people who weren't involved in the popular protests, relief, or even military activity.
- Thousands of detainees are still being detained by the Syrian regime even though a judicial order for their release was issued despite the bureaucracy, corruption, slowness, and limpness that the Syrian judiciary suffers from.
- Syrian regime forces control densely populated cities such as the main central cities and it continue to practice its systematic policies of arbitrary arrests against the civilians of these areas.
- There are many Syrian regime forces-affiliated entities that are authorized to make arrests, many of these entities make arrests without checking with Syrian regime forces or the judicial authorities to which these entities are affiliated. Also, these entities have its own list of detention centers that are not subject to any judicial supervision. The detainees inside these detention centers are not being treated in accordance with the stated Syrian laws.
- A great number of cases are driven by blackmails or sectarian grudges especially in unstable areas that are not held by a specific faction or it is undergoing a power struggle. As a result, many armed militias that have emerged can't be monitored as they don't answer to any particular group.

Details about detainees can be found through the [search engine](#) on SNHR website, you may also add the name and details of any detainee and the concerned team will check the data and upload it if proved accurate.

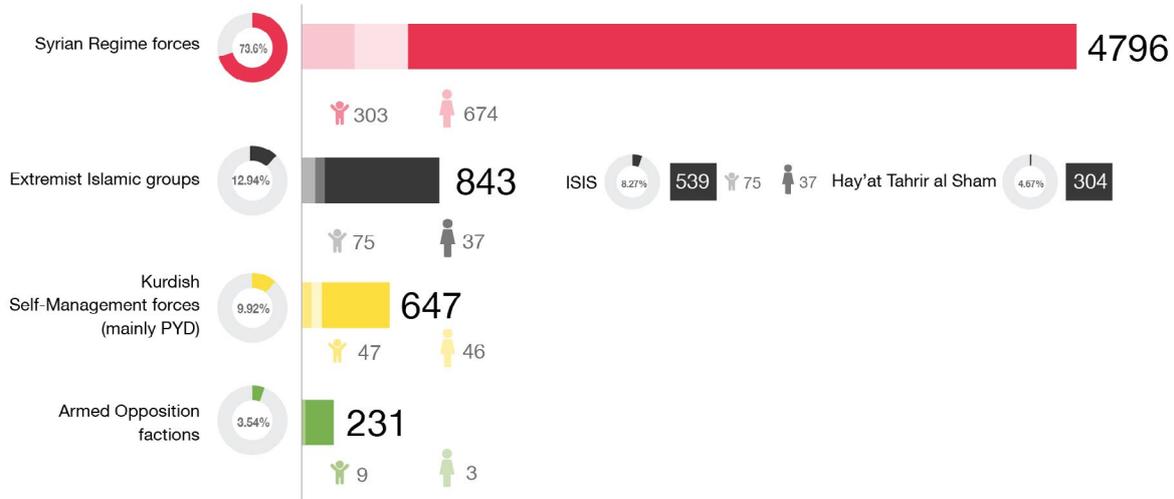
## **II. Details**

### **A. Arbitrary arrests in 2017**

SNHR has documented that 6,517 individuals, including 434 children and 760 women (adult female), were arrested by the parties to the conflict in Syria in 2017

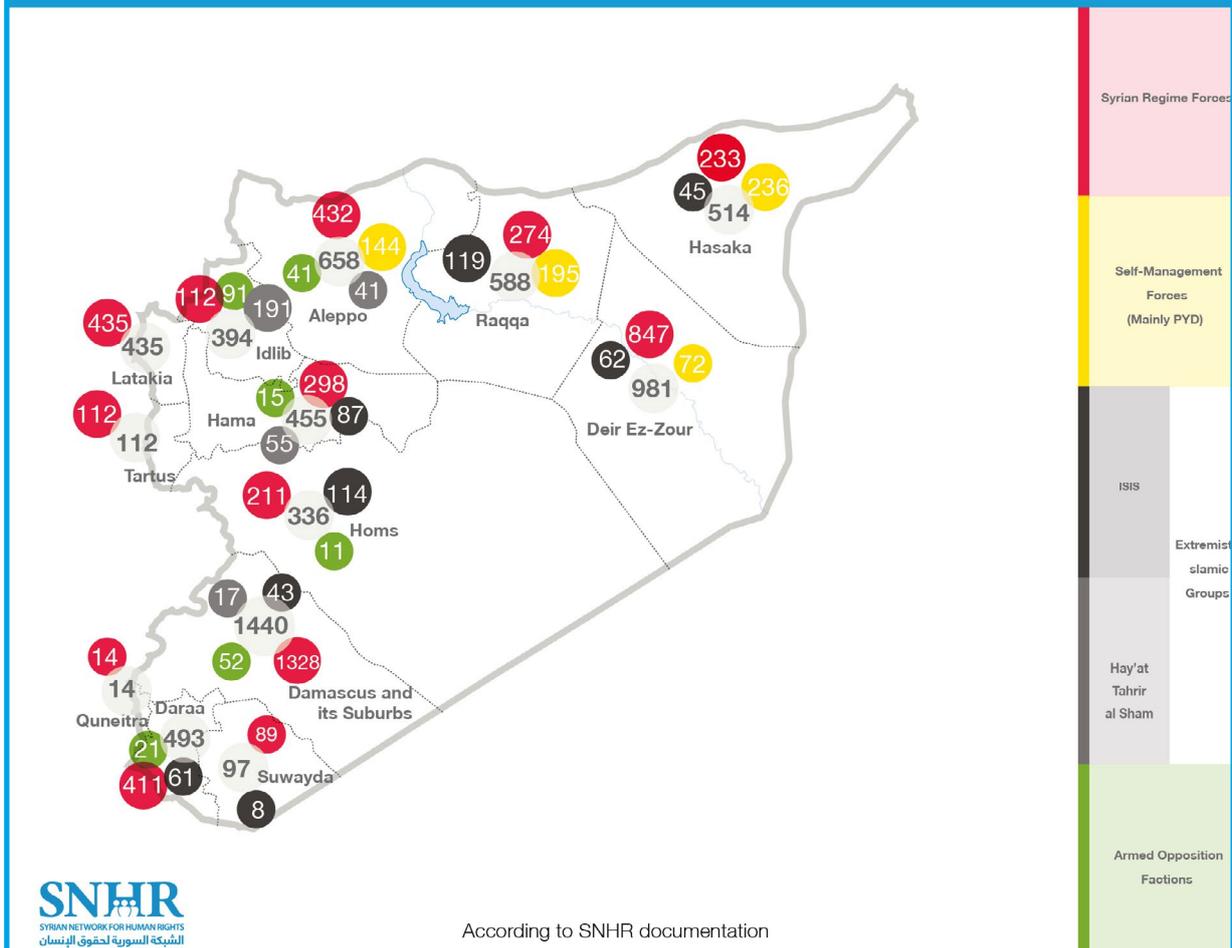


## No less than 6,517 cases of arbitrary arrest at the hands of the main parties to the conflict in Syria in 2017, as follows:



According to SNHR documentation

## At least 6,517 cases of arbitrary arrest in Syria in 2017



According to SNHR documentation

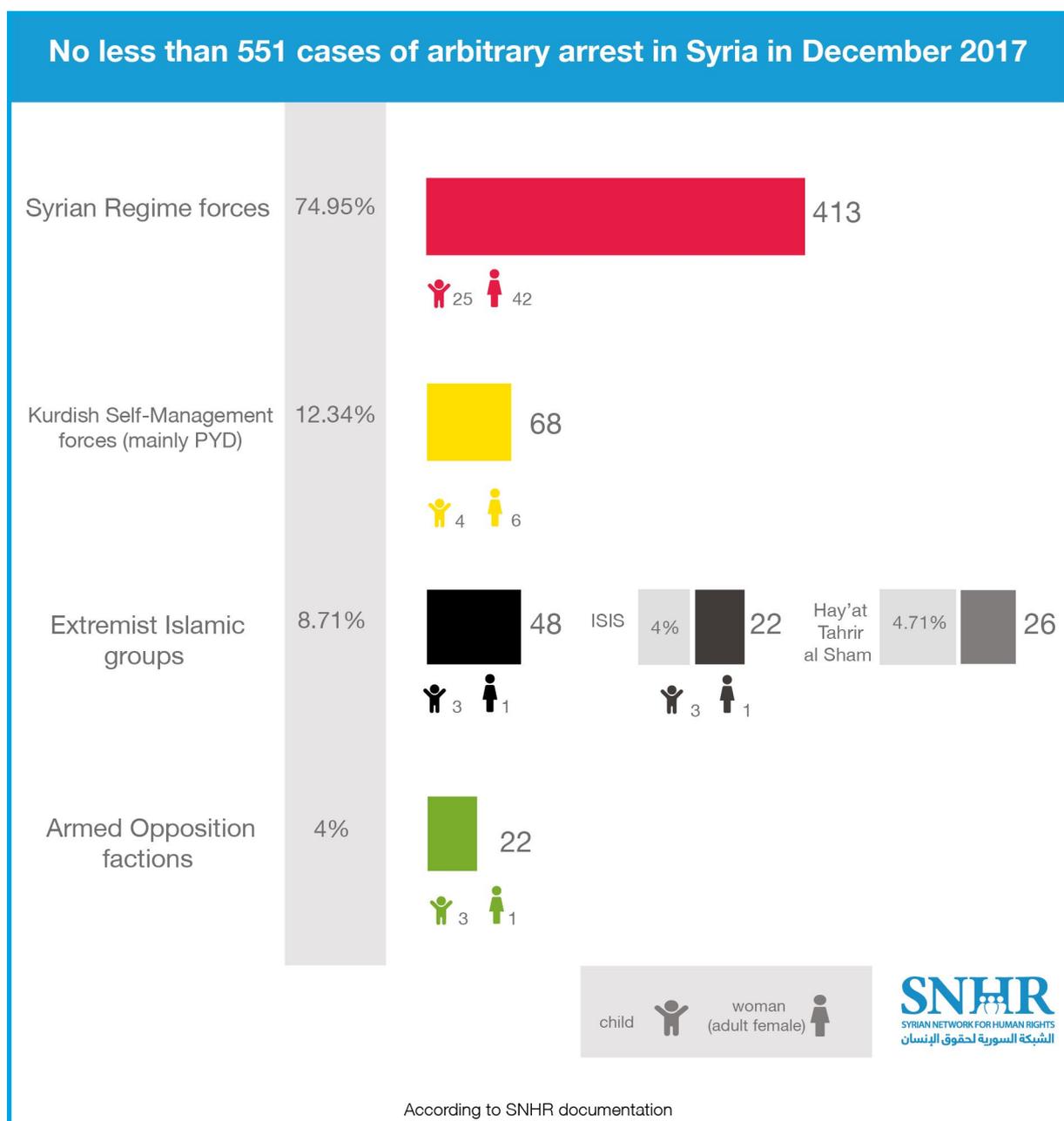


## B. Arbitrary arrests in December 2017

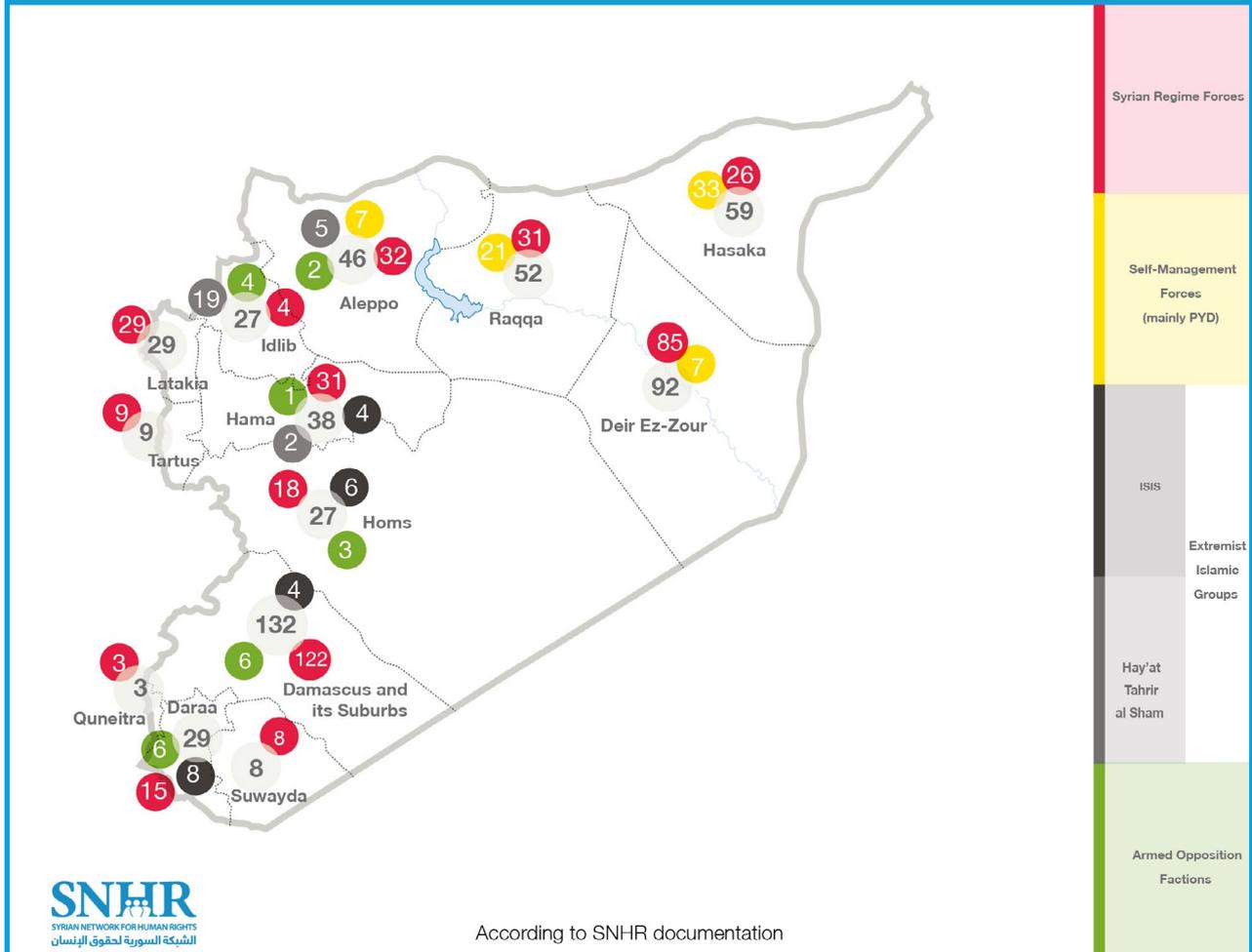
Arbitrary arrests made in December were notable for Syrian regime forces' almost daily raiding and arrest campaigns that involved civilians in the main neighborhoods, city centers and residential areas that are under the regime's control. The arrests made focused on the age group 18-42 years old for the purpose of conscription, while Syrian regime forces targeted also activists' and armed opposition fighters' families who live in their areas of control.

Furthermore, ISIS continues to enforce its policy of arbitrary arrests against civilians in its areas- particularly in ISIS-held neighborhoods in Deir Ez-Zour city and suburbs of Daraa governorate.

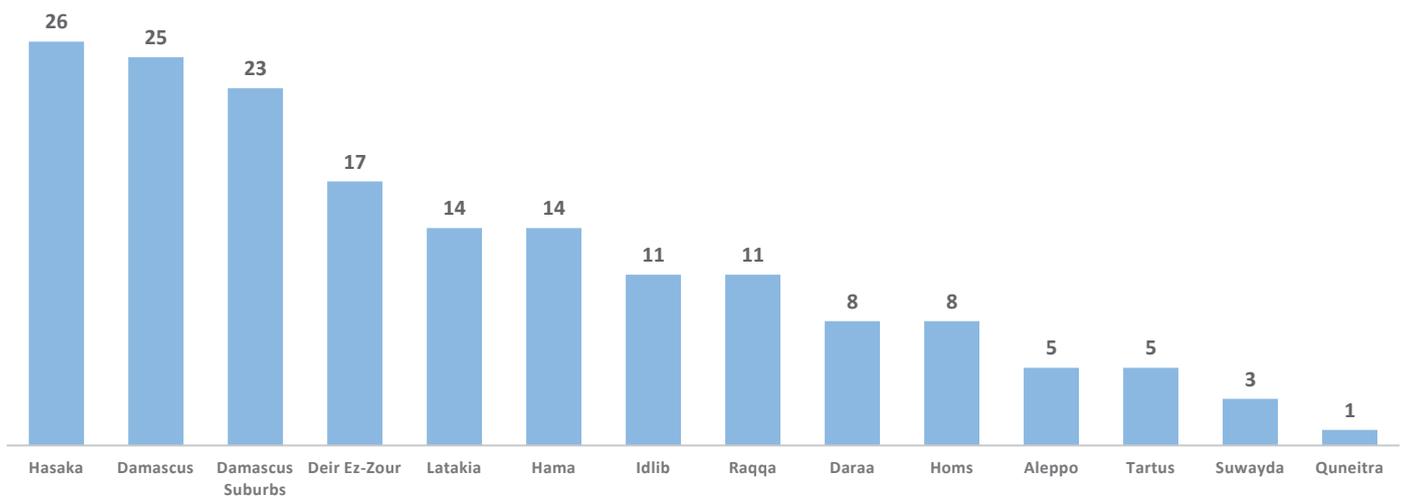
In contrast, Self-Management forces also continue its policy of arbitrary arrests and enforced-disappearance against civilians, and political and media activists who oppose its views in their areas of control



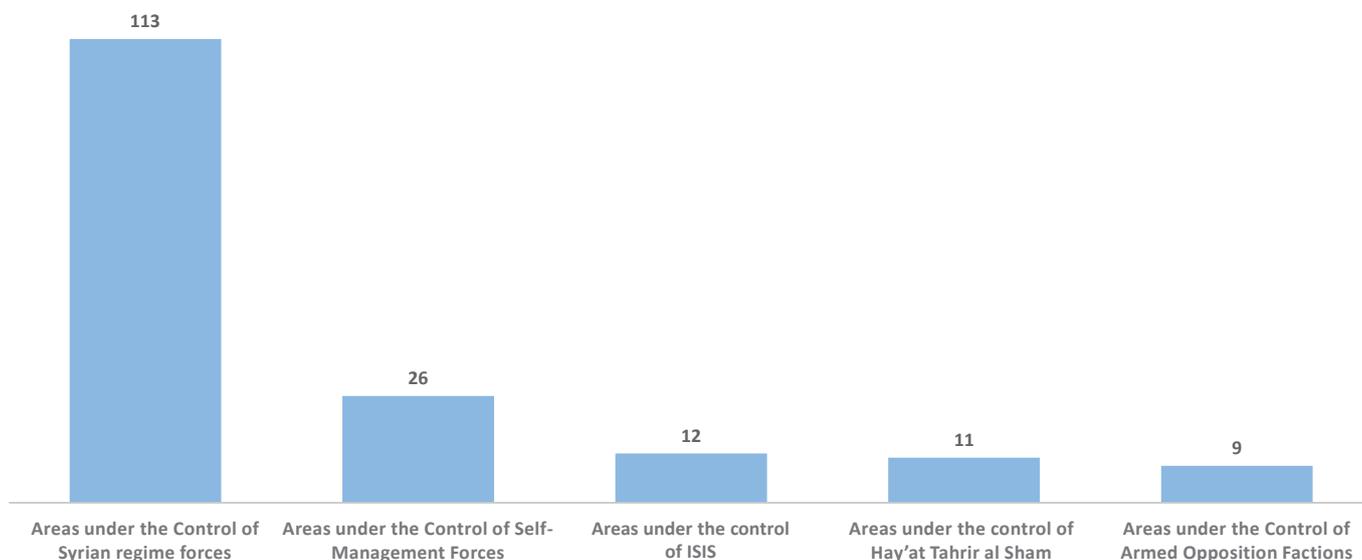
# No less than 551 cases of arbitrary arrest in Syria in December 2017



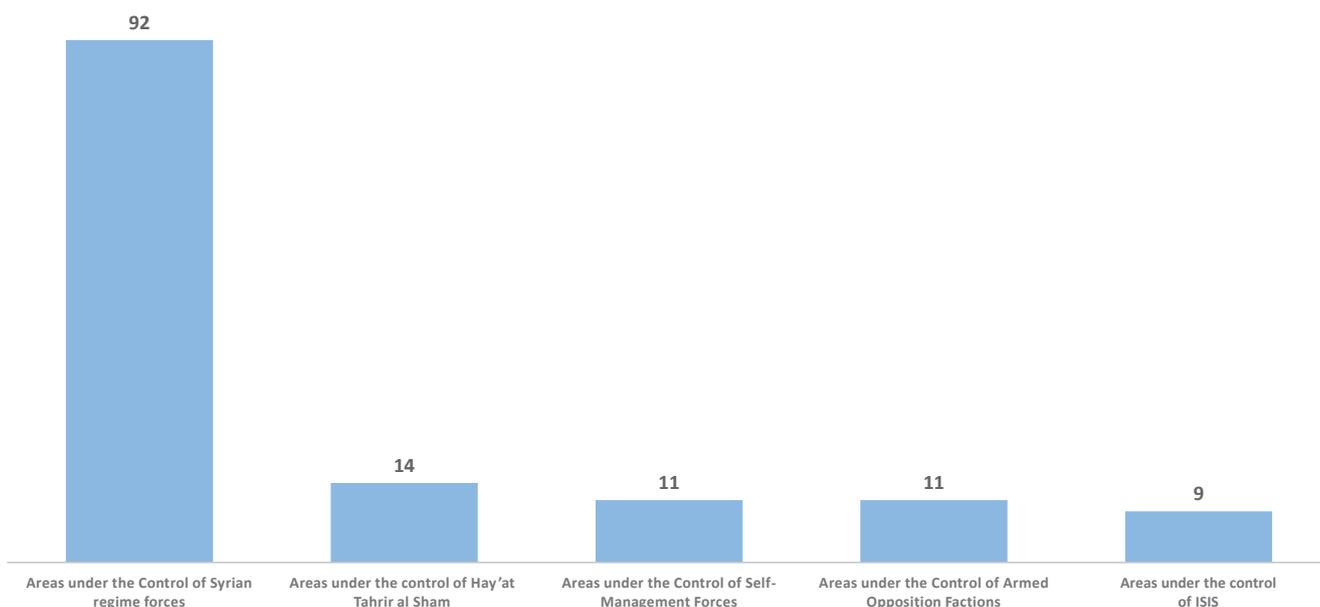
## Raids and inspection points that resulted in detention:



## Parties responsible for raids



## Abduction cases by other parties:



## III. Most Notable Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in December

### Syrian regime forces

Rana Sanada, from Aleppo city, a law student at Aleppo University. On Saturday, December 9, 2017, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces from Aleppo University building in al Furqan neighborhood, western Aleppo city. She was taken to an undisclosed location. Her fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as her family.



(name is concealed for security concerns), from al Bayad neighborhood, western Hama city, born in 1990, legal midwife. On Sunday, December 10, 2017, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces who raided her place of residence in al Bayad neighborhood. She was taken to the Military Security branch in Hama city. Her fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as her family.

### **Self-Management forces (mainly the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)**

Asaad al Gharib, from Ghariba village, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour city. On Sunday, December 17, 2017, he was arrested by Self-Management forces (mainly Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) from al Mabrouka Camp near Ras al Ein city, western suburbs of Hasaka governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

### **Extremist Islamic groups**

#### Hay'at Tahrir al Sham

Ziad Emara, pharmacist, from Saraqeb city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, he was arrested by fighters from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in the city. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Sahban Wati, pharmacist, from Salqin city, western suburbs of Idlib governorate. On Monday, December 18, 2017, he was arrested by fighters from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at his place of work. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

Yousef Abbas, from Kelli town, western suburbs of Idlib governorate, head of the town's local council. On Tuesday, December 19, 2017, he was arrested by fighters from Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at Sarmada City Court in northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was taken to the court's jail. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

### **Armed opposition factions**

Ghosoun al Murshed, woman, from Douma city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, a nurse and head of the incubator wing at a hospital in Douma city. On Wednesday, December 13, 2017, she was arrested by fighters from Jaish al Islam, an armed opposition faction, in Douma city. She was taken to an undisclosed location. She was released on Sunday, December 24, 2017.



## IV. Recommendations

### Security Council

Monitor the implementation of Resolution 2042, adopted on April 14, 2012, Resolution 2043, adopted on April 21, 2012, and Resolution 2139, adopted on 22 February, 2014 which states that the crime of enforced-disappearance must be ceased.

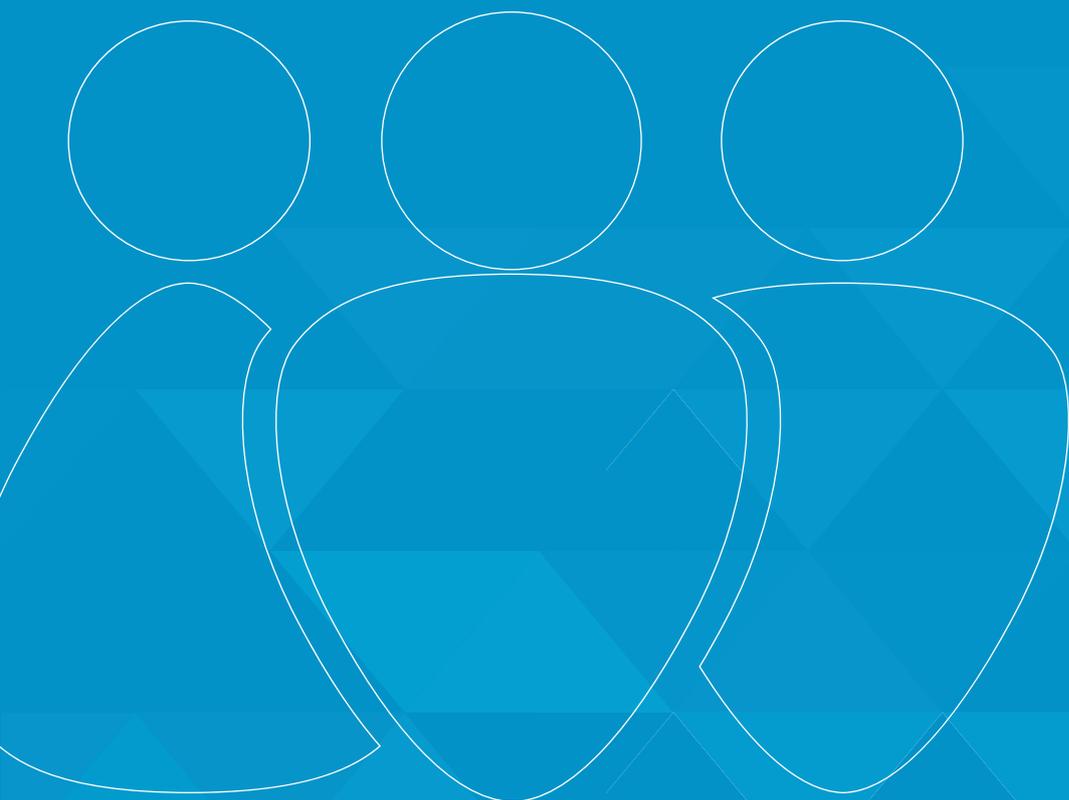
### The United Nations and the guarantors in Astana talks

- An impartial special committee should be formed to monitor enforced-disappearance cases, and make progress in revealing the fate of nearly 86,000 missing persons in Syria, including 90% at the hands of Syrian regime forces.
- Immediately start applying pressure on all parties in order to immediately reveal their detention records per 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.
- Release children and women, and stop holding families and friends as war hostages.
- We call on the official who was newly appointed in charge of the detainee file at the UN special envoy to include the detainees issue in the upcoming round 8 of Geneva talks, as this issue is of a greater importance to the Syrian people than other far issues that can be jointly addressed later by the parties after a political settlement is reached, such as the constitution.

### 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.





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