

No less than 588 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in October 2017

73% of the Arrests were at the
Hands of Syrian Regime forces

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, November 6, 2017

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

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I. Introduction

The first Security Council Resolutions to address Syria were 2041 and 2042 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.

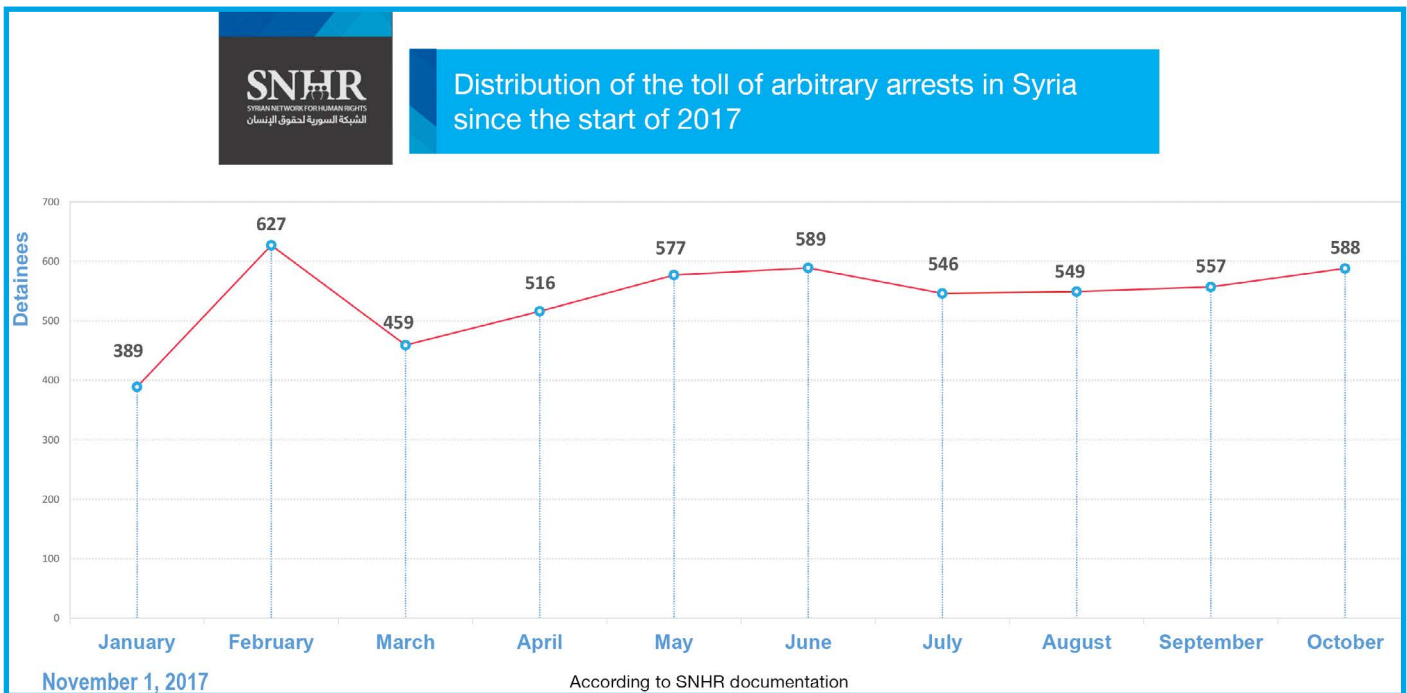
Details about detainees can be found through the [search engine](#) on SNHR website, you may also add the name and details of any detainee and the concerned team will check the data and upload it if proved accurate.



II. Details

A. Arbitrary arrests in 2017

SNHR has documented that 5,379 individuals have been arrested by the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2017 and November of the same year



B. Arbitrary arrests in October 2017

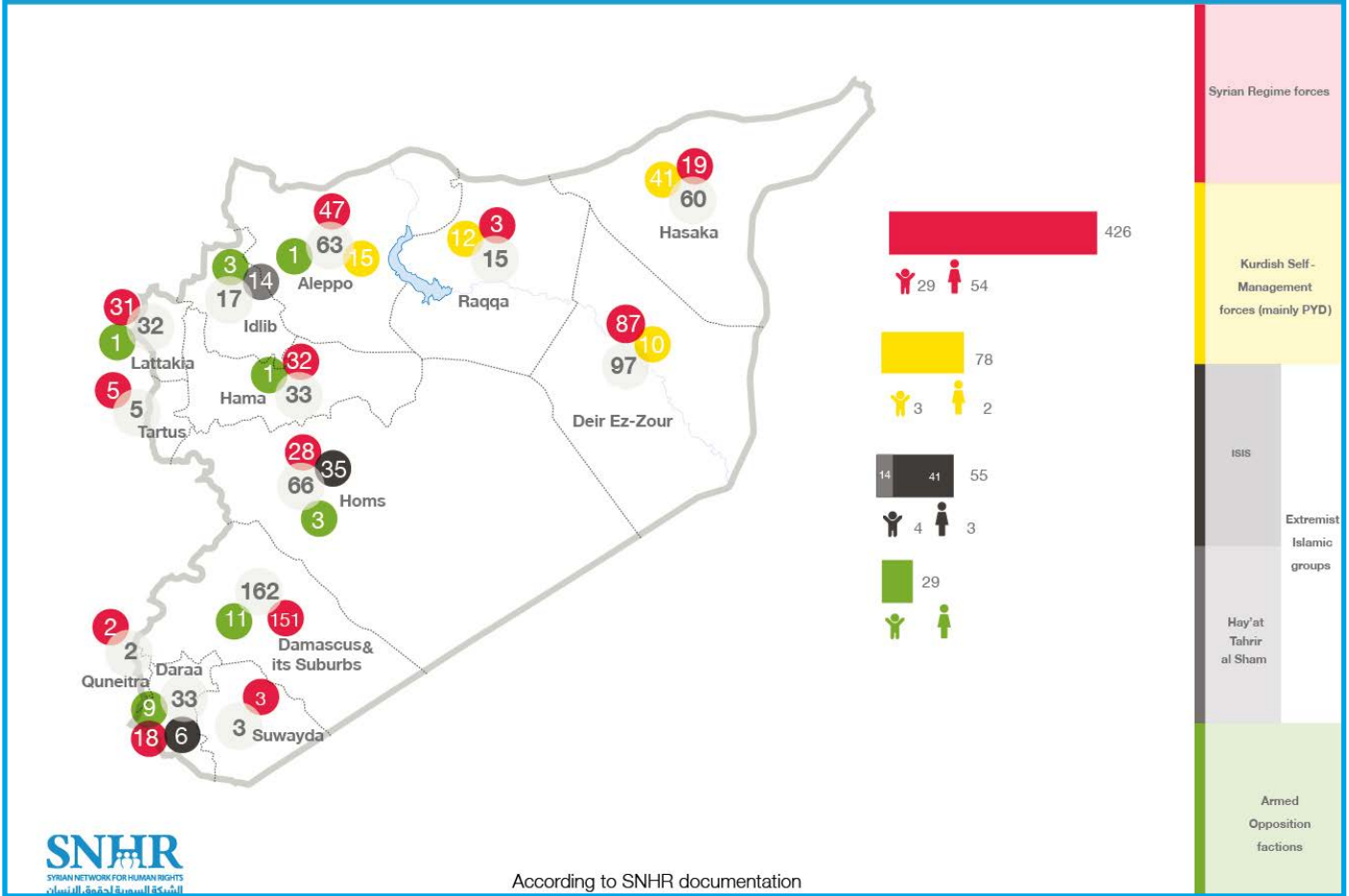
Arbitrary arrests made in October were notable for Syrian regime forces' almost daily raiding and arrest campaigns that involved civilians in the main neighborhoods, city centers and residential areas that are under the regime's control. The arrests made focused on the age group 18-42 years old for the purpose of conscription, while Syrian regime forces targeted also activists' and armed opposition fighters' families who live in their areas of control. Also, Syrian regime forces carried out a number of raids and random arrest campaigns in the areas they managed to take over recently in the suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate.

Furthermore, ISIS continues to enforce its policy of arbitrary arrests against civilians in its areas. The arrests were concentrated on civilians who are trying to flee ISIS-held areas to areas under the control of armed opposition or Syrian regime forces. In addition, ISIS carried out a number of arbitrary arrest campaigns that involved civilians and government employees in al Qaryatin city, eastern suburbs of Homs governorate.

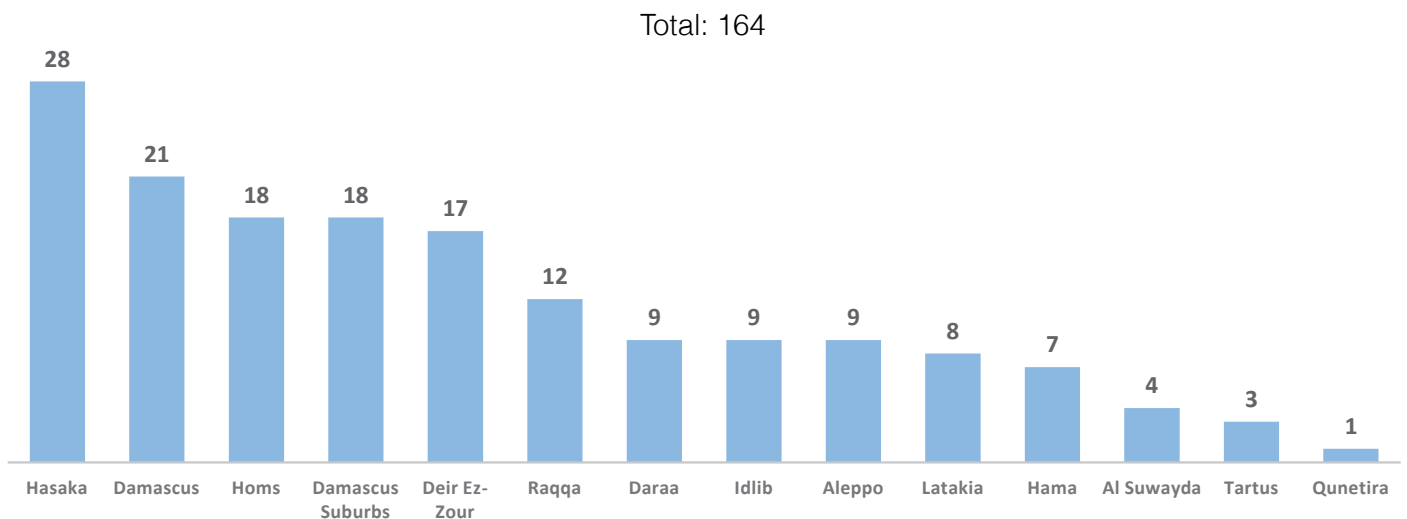
In contrast, Self-Management forces also continue its policy of arbitrary arrests and enforced-disappearance against civilians, and political and media activists who oppose its views in its areas.



No less than 588 arbitrary arrests incidents in Syria in October 2017

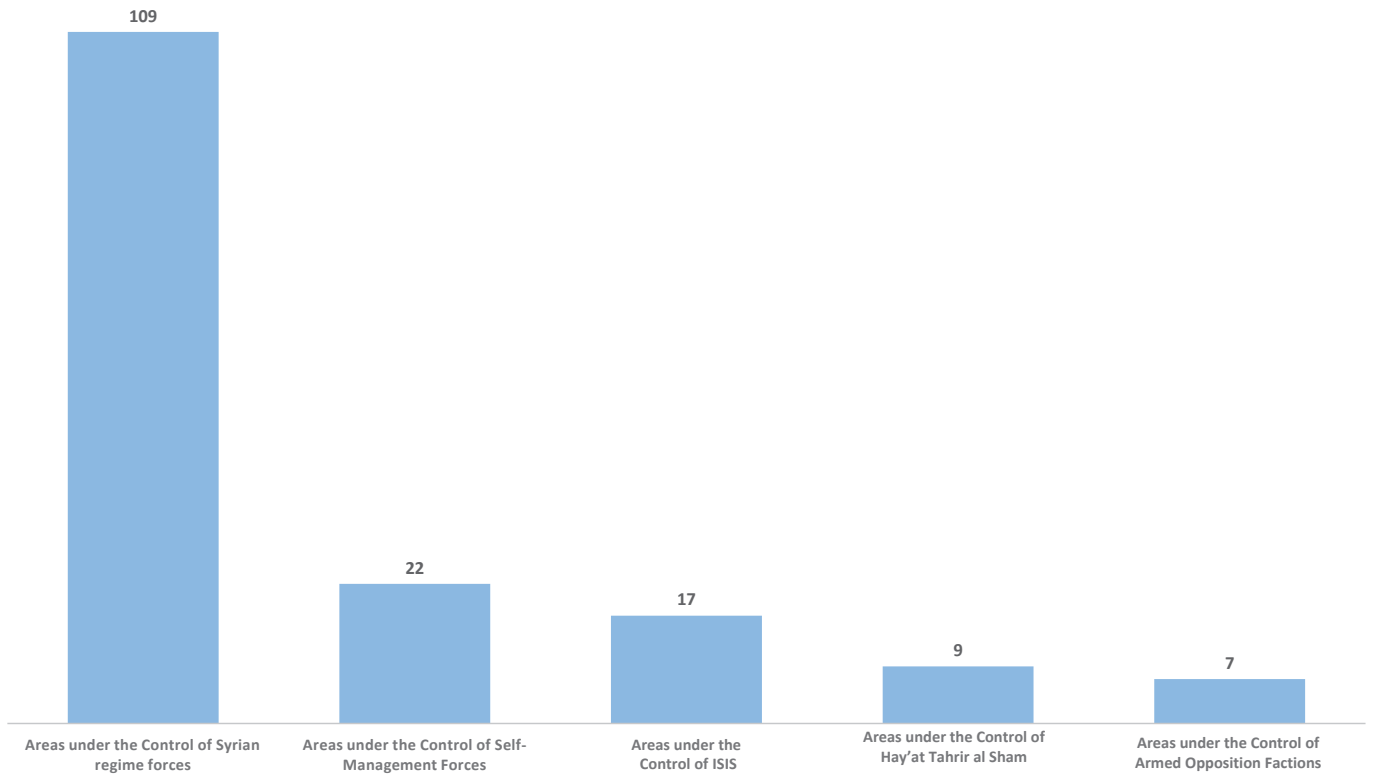


Raids and inspection points that resulted in detention:



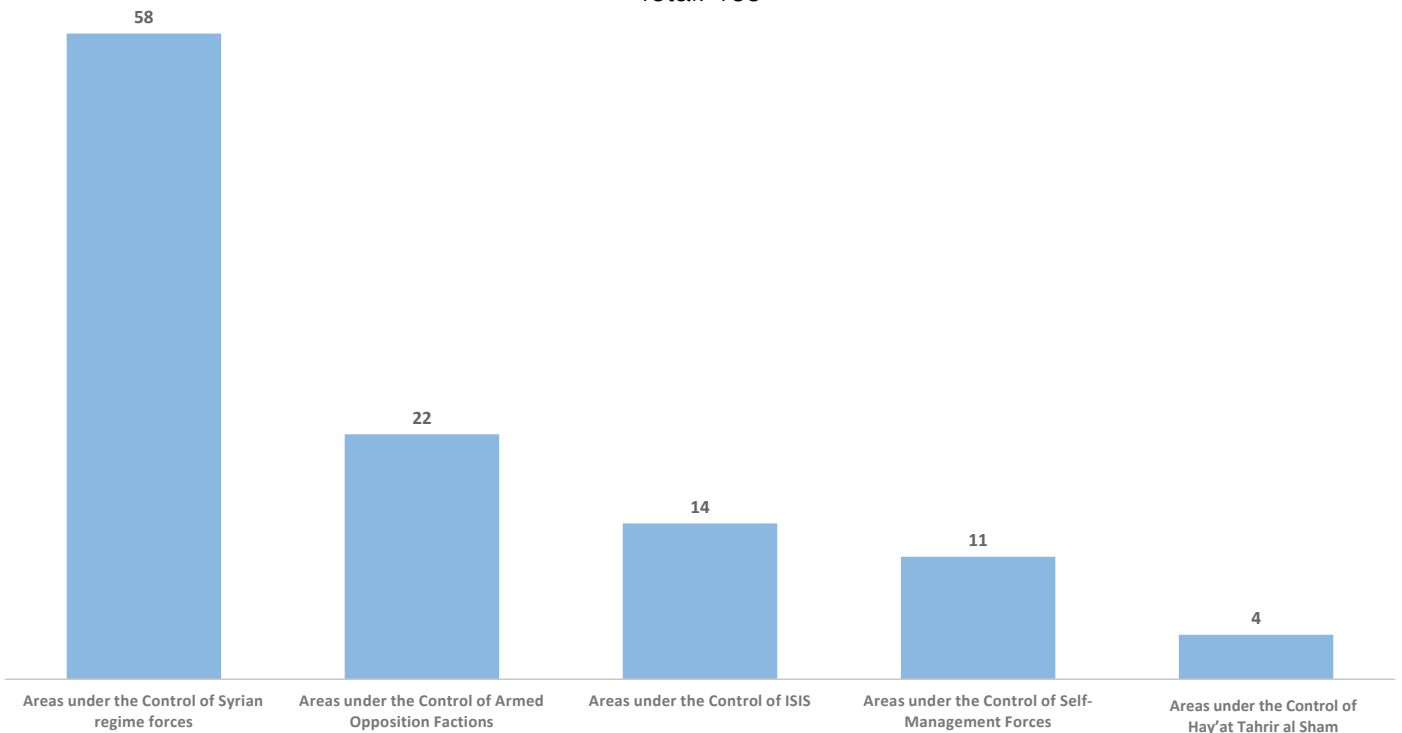
Parties responsible for raids

Total: 164



Abduction cases by other parties:

Total: 109



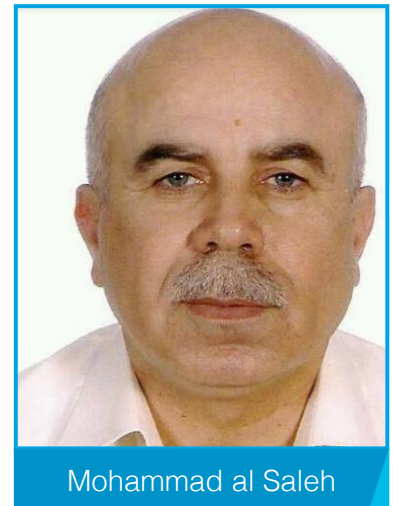
III. Most Notable Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in October

Syrian regime forces

Dr. Mubarak Qseim al Hariri, from Ibtat town, northern suburbs of Daraa governorate. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at a checkpoint in Daraa governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

(Name was concealed for security concerns), from Latakia city, female, 29-year-old, housewife. On Wednesday, October 11, 2017, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces' Military Security forces who raided her place of residence in al Tabayat neighborhood, southern Latakia city. She was taken to an undisclosed location. Her fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as her family.

Mohammad al Saleh, political activist, from al Shammas neighborhood, southern Homs city. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Friday, 20 October, 2017, at a checkpoint in Homs city. He was taken to the Military Security branch in the city. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)

Ahmad Fo'ad Ismail, member of the political office of the Democratic Kurdistan Party, a student at the Sporting Institute in al Hasaka city, from Amouda city, northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, 21-year-old. He was arrested by Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) from his place of residence in Amouda city on Sunday, October 8, 2017. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Faisal Hussein al Sahir, Arabic teacher, from Saif al Dawla neighborhood which is located in the middle of Raqqa city, born in 1978. On Sunday, October 8, 2017, he was arrested by Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) from the IDPs camp in al Karama village, eastern suburbs of Raqqa governorate. His fate is still unknown to SNHR as well as his family.

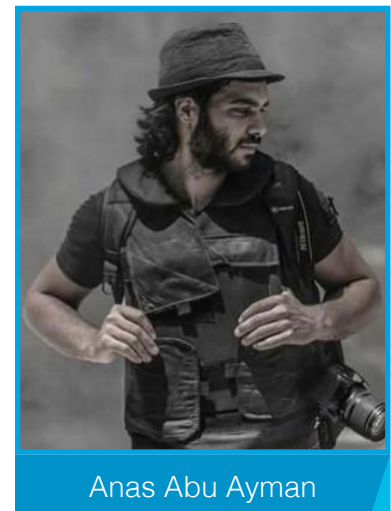
Armed opposition factions

Ali Baker, reporter for al Ghouta Media Center, has a degree in trade and economics, from Hazza town, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1989. On Thursday, October 26, 2017, he was arrested by fighters from Failaq al Rahman, an armed opposition faction, from Kafr Batna town, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. He was taken to one of their detention centers in Ein Tarma town, Damascus suburbs governorate. He was released on the next day.



Ali Baker

Media activist Anas Abu Ayman, a reporter for al Ghouta Media Center, from Kafr Batna town, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1994. On Thursday, October 26, 2017, he was arrested by fighters from Failaq al Rahman, an armed opposition faction, from Kafr Batna town, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate. He was taken to one of their detention centers in Ein Tarma town, Damascus suburbs governorate. He was released on the next day.



Anas Abu Ayman



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.

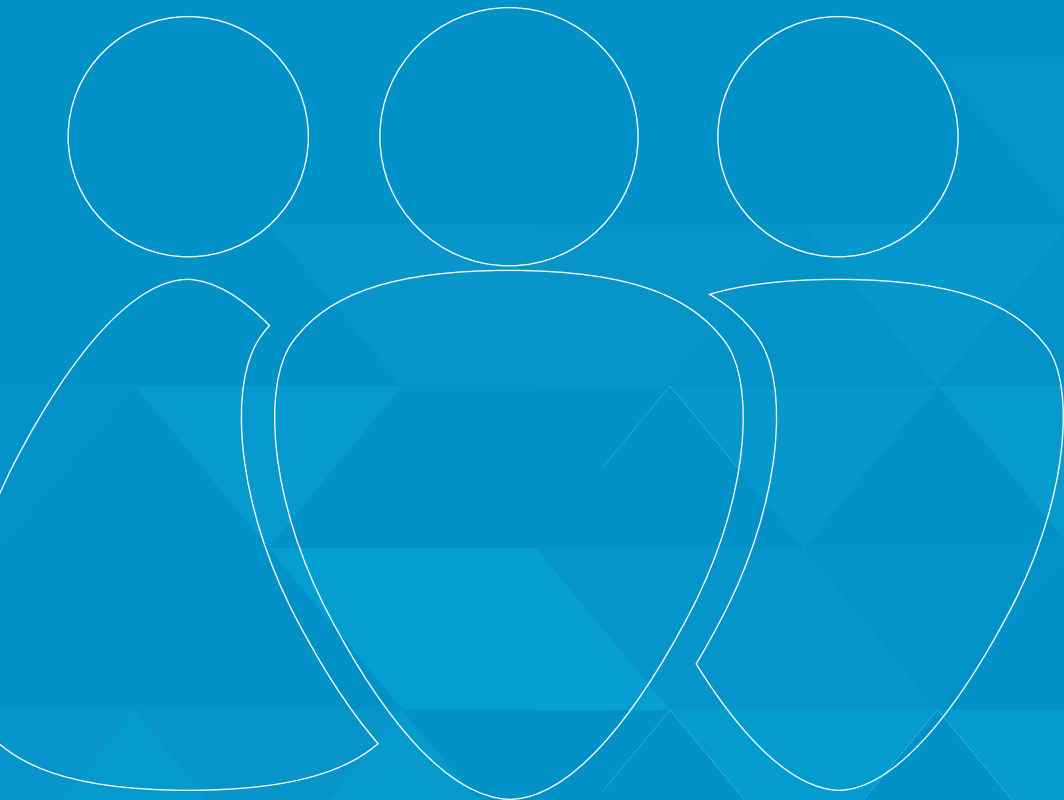
The United Nations and the guarantors in Astana talks

- 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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