

# No less than 4,082 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest in Syria in the First Half of 2018

Including 667 in June

# 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

Arbitrary arrests have been made in Syria on a daily basis since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011, as people have been arrested simply for exercising one of their basic rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as the freedom of opinion and expression, or because they were denied a fair trial for they were detained without a ruling by an independent judicial entity to detain them, or without being charged with anything, tried, or afforded an attorney, or because they were detained after their punishment had ended. In most cases, arbitrarily detained individuals are subjected to solitary confinement for several months or sometimes years if not indefinitely at official and non-official detention centers. In itself, detention is not considered a violation of human rights until it becomes arbitrary as international instruments state, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Article 9: **“No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”** while Article 9 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: **“Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.”**

New incidents of arbitrary arrest are recorded almost every day. The Syrian regime was the first party to practice this violation in a systematic manner against the various segments of the Syrian people, as the Syrian regime used mafia-like methods, where most arrests are made without a legal warrant as the victim passes at a checkpoint or during raids. Torture starts the moment the detainee is arrested, and he is deprived of any mean to contact his family or attorney. Also, authorities deny making arbitrary arrests, and most detainees become forcibly-disappeared persons.



The Syrian regime is responsible for no less than 87% of all arbitrary arrests that we have recorded. In most cases, victims' families can't accurately identify the entity that made the arrest, considering that all of the forces that sided with the Syrian regime (Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, and others), aside from the four main security agencies and their many branches, have the authority to arrest, torture, and commit the crimes of enforced-disappearance.

Despite all the negotiations, agreements, and Cessation of Hostilities statements over the course of the Syrian conflict, it is clear that the detainees issue is almost the only issue that has yet to see any progress. 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 87% of all the detainees.
- 5- Suspend and repeal all rulings issued by the field-military courts and terrorism courts, as they are non-compliant with the local and international legislations as well as guarantees of a fair trial.

## **Methodology**

This report documents the toll of arbitrary arrests by the parties to the conflict in June. Additionally, this report monitors the most notable raid and inspection points that resulted in detentions, in addition to shedding light on the most notable individual cases and incident of arbitrary arrest that took place in June.



SNHR team abides by strict standards in order to determine an incident of arbitrary arrests and avoid recording any incidents of detention, imprisonment, or deprivation of freedom in accordance with the international laws and the aforementioned set of principles on arbitrary arrest. The Detainee and Forcibly-Disappeared Department at SNHR records cases of arrest that they collect from various sources, such as: victims' families, SNHR members in Syrian governorates, cooperating local activists, and former detainees, before diligently working on contacting 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 extraordinarily and extremely complex challenges. We also record eyewitnesses' accounts and track cases of arrest to update it regularly in order to find out the fate of a detainee, their place of detention, and the circumstances of their arrest.

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 and document 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 danger. Instead, 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 140,850 detainees, including children and women, we can safely say that our estimations for the actual number of detainees have exceeded 215,000.

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 detainee figures included in this report 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.

## II. June Outline

Syrian regime forces continued their arbitrary arrest and enforced-disappearance policies against civilians residing in their areas of control in the month of June, as Syrian regime forces and their local militias carried out wide arrests for the purpose of recruitment. Those arrests targeted university students and government employees, as well as the different segments of society in the age group 18-42. Also, SNHR recorded that Syrian regime forces carried out mass arrests in June that targeted entire families, including women and children, where they were taken to non-official detention centers in order to force their relatives who are affiliates with armed opposition factions to surrender themselves.



On the other hand, Kurdish Self-Management forces continued to target civil society activists with opposing views to their policies. We also recorded wide arrests against Arab civilians at checkpoints, particularly in Raqqa and Hasaka governorates.

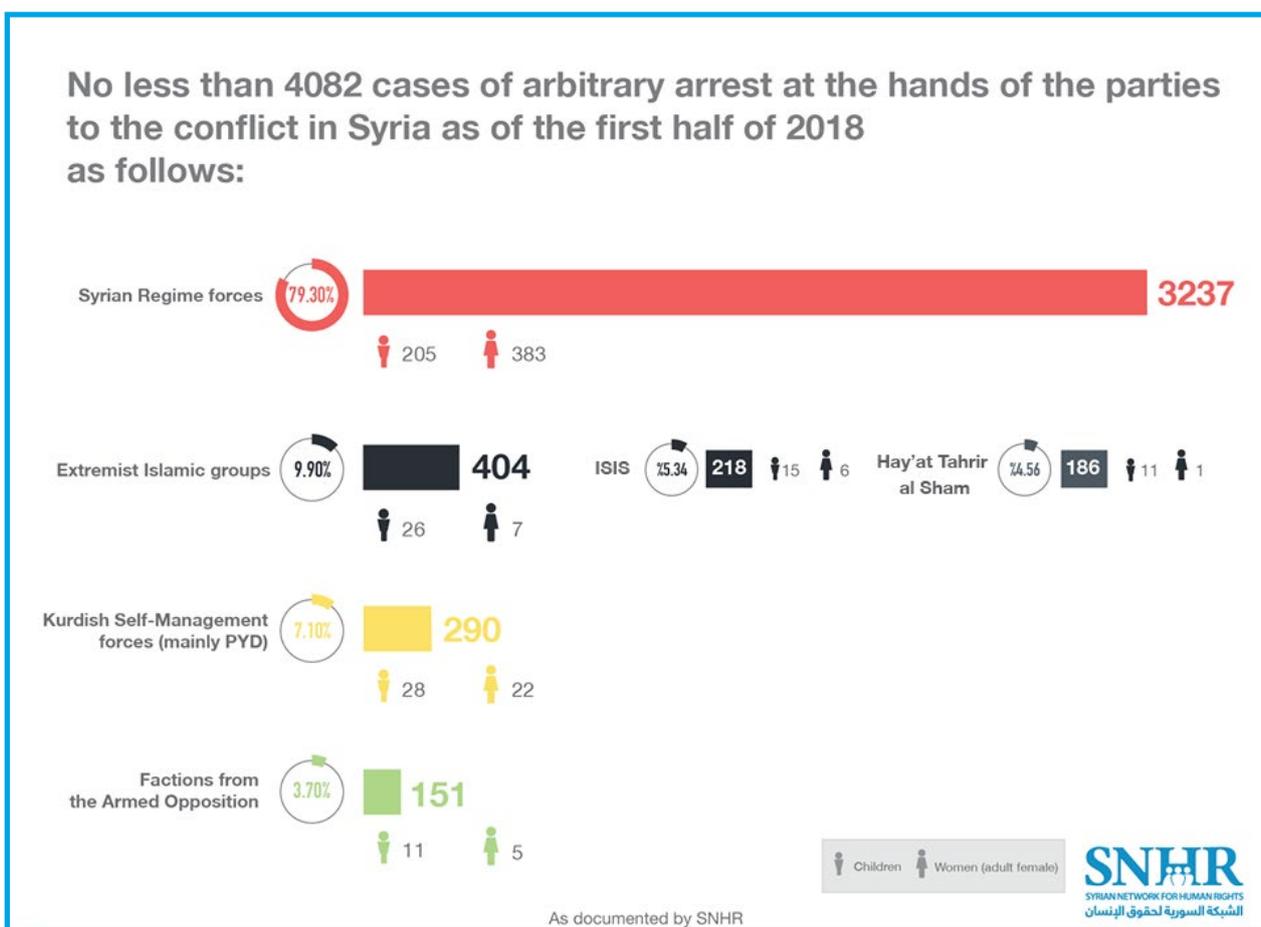
Moreover, ISIS arrested civilians who violated their regulations in their areas of control in June. We've also recorded that the group targeted affiliates of armed opposition factions, particularly in suburbs of Daraa governorate.

Factions from the armed opposition carried out wide arrests in June, in northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate – particularly in Afrin, Izaz, and al Bab cities.

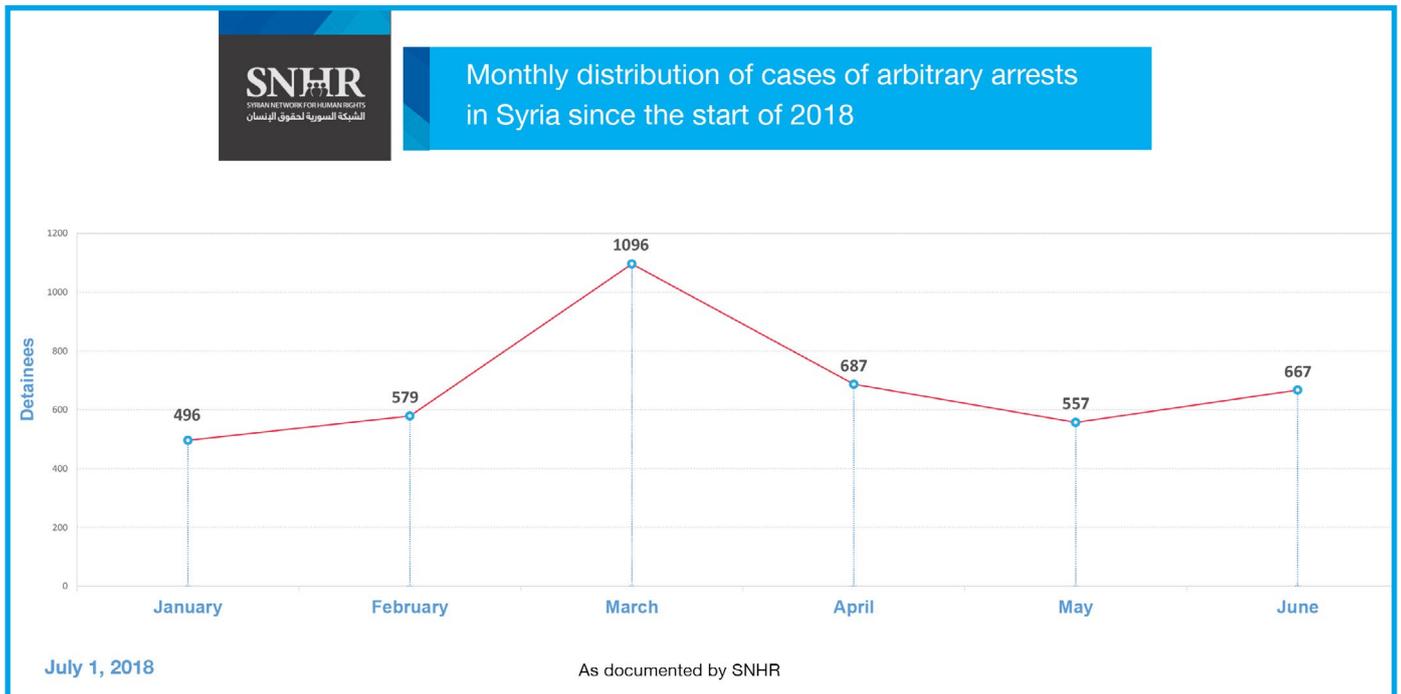
### III. Toll of Arbitrary Arrests Made by the Parties to the Conflict

#### A. Arbitrary arrests since the start of 2018

SNHR has documented no less than 4,082 cases of arbitrary arrest in the first half of 2018. Cases were distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

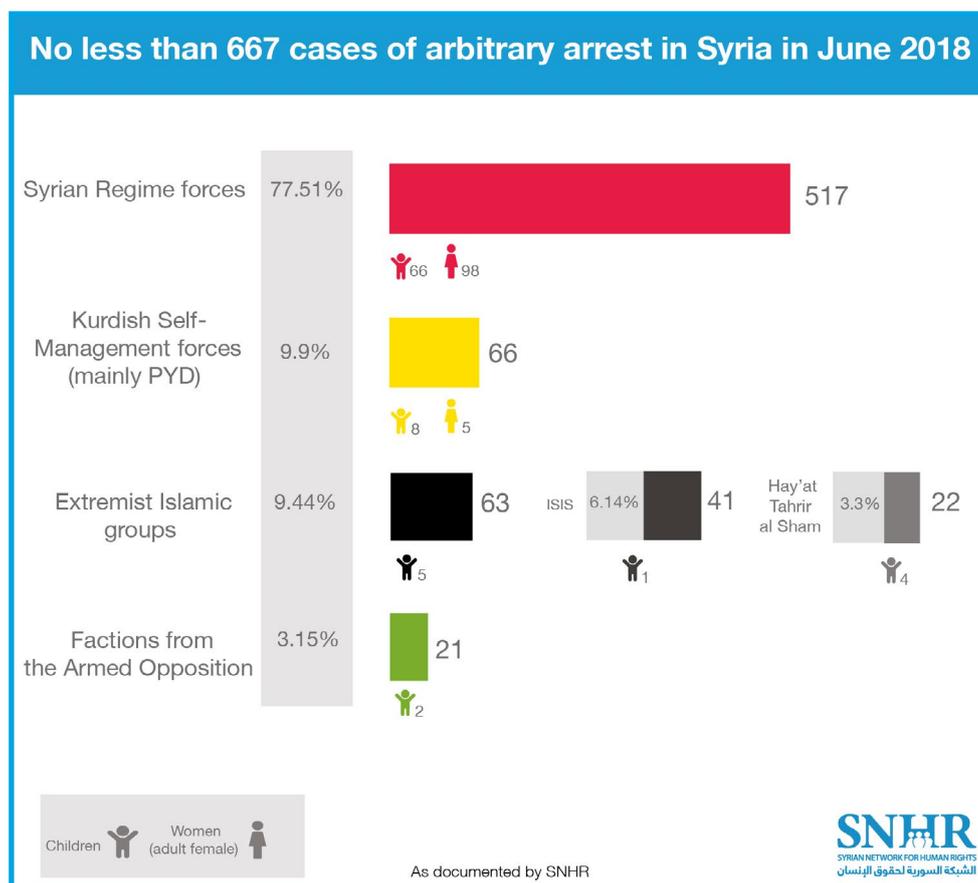


Cases recorded since the start of 2018 were distributed by month as follows:

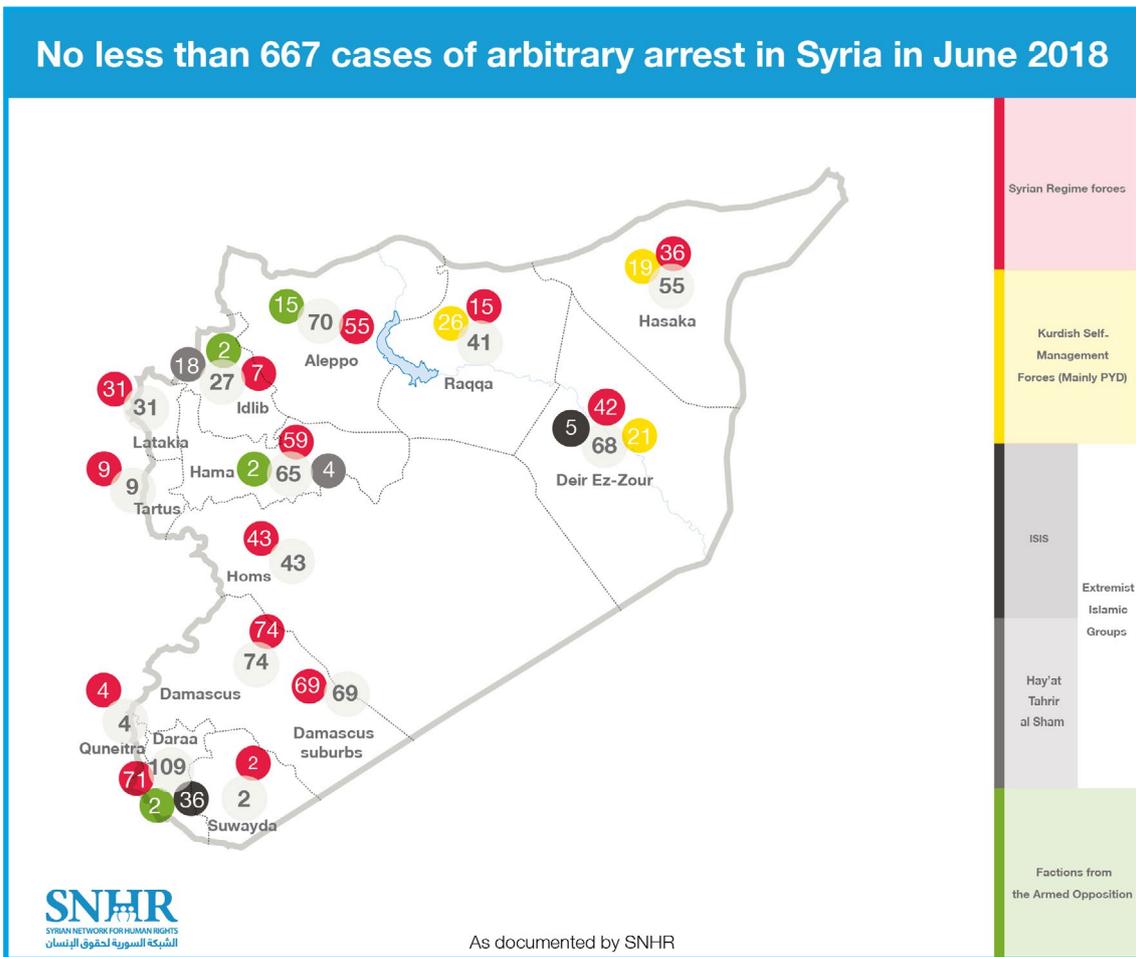


## B. Arbitrary arrests in June

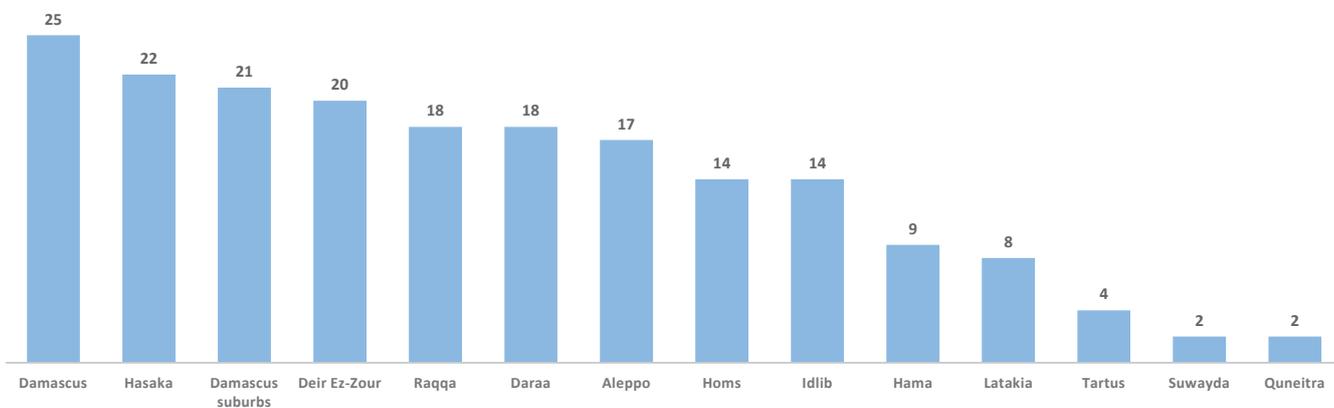
SNHR has documented no less than 667 arbitrary arrests in Syria in the month of June, which were distributed by the parties to the conflict as follows:



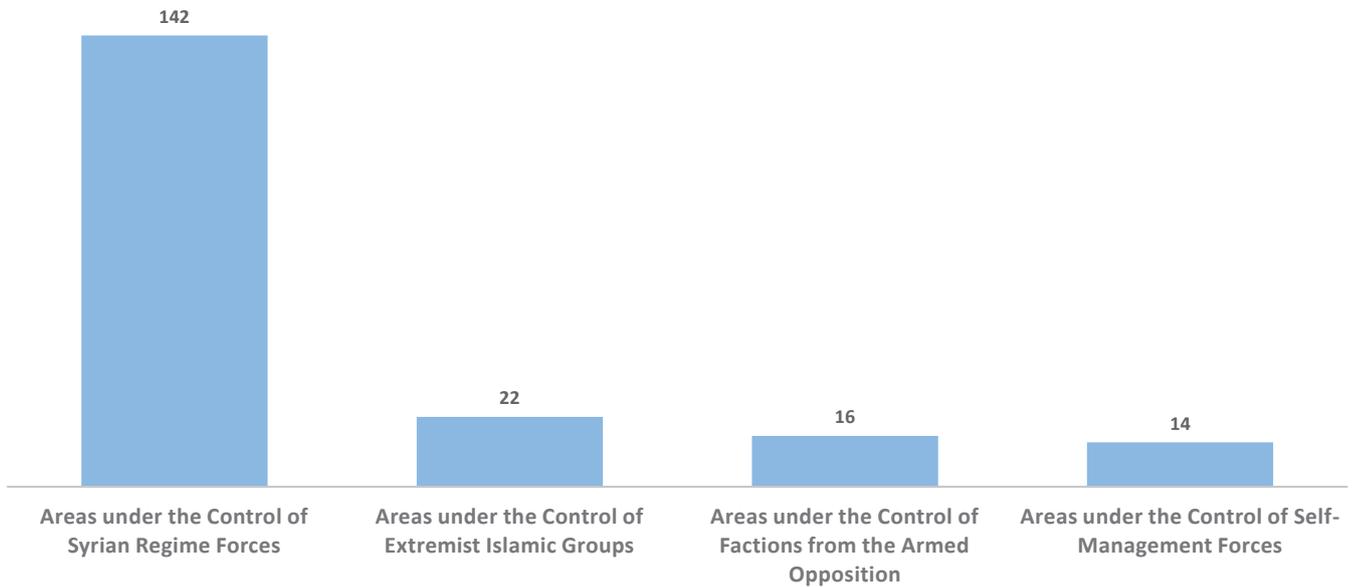
The following map shows the distribution of arbitrary arrests in June across Syrian governorates by the parties to the conflict



We've also documented no less than 194 inspection points that resulted in detention in the month of June. Those were distributed across governorates as follows



Inspection points were distributed by the responsible party as follows:



#### IV. Most Notable Cases and Incidents of Arbitrary Arrest in June

##### A- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

###### Most notable incidents

Tuesday, June 5, 2018, Syrian regime forces arrested five civilians from al Tal city, northern suburbs of Damascus suburbs governorate after raiding their place of residence. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Wednesday, June 6, 2018, Syrian regime forces arrested three civilians from Buqrus Tehtani village, eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate, at a checkpoint in the village. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Thursday, June 21, 2018, Syrian regime forces arrested 11 civilians, including three children and two women, from Janoub al Mal'ab neighborhood, southern Hama city, after raiding their place of residence in the neighborhood. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

###### Most notable cases

Samer Mohammad al Ahmad, from Mahjja town, northern Daraa governorate, born in 1982, Arabic teacher. On Tuesday, June 5, 2018, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in Menkat al Hatab village, northern Daraa governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to his family as well as SNHR.



Mohammad Abdul Mawla al Khaled, engineer, from al Karak al Sharqi village, eastern Daraa governorate. On Friday, June 1, 2018, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces at a checkpoint in Kherbt Ghazala, northern Daraa governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to his family as well as SNHR.

Fatima al Hasan, woman, from Janoub al Mal'ab neighborhood, born in 1988. On Thursday, June 21, 2018, she was arrested by Syrian regime forces' Air Force Intelligence who raided her place of residence. She was taken to an undisclosed location. Her fate remains unknown to her family as well as SNHR.

Samer al Bunni, from al Tal city, northern Damascus suburbs governorate, born in 1994. A university student studying electrical engineering at University of Damascus. On Tuesday, June 5, 2018, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces from al Tal city. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to his family as well as SNHR.

## **B- Extremist Islamic groups**

### **- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of armed opposition factions)**

#### Most notable incidents

Wednesday, June 20, 2018, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham affiliates arrested three civilians from Abdin village, southern Idlib governorate at a checkpoint in Abdin village. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Saturday, June 30, 2018, Hay'at Tahrir al Sham affiliates carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Sarmin city, northern Idlib governorate. We've documented the arrest of 14 civilians. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

## **C- Factions from the armed opposition**

#### Most notable incidents

Sunday, June 10, 2018, gunmen from al Jabha al Shamiya, an armed opposition faction, carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Ma'batli town, which is administratively a part of Afrin area, northern Aleppo governorate. We've documented the arrest of 11 civilians. They were taken to an undisclosed location.



## **D- Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party)**

### Most notable incidents

Tuesday, June 12, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Abu al Netal village, northern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. Five civilians were arrested after they raided their place of residence in the village. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Friday, June 22, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in al Sena’a neighborhood, eastern Raqqa city. We’ve documented the arrest of 10 civilians. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

Monday, June 25, 2018, Self-Management forces carried out a raid and arrest campaign in Mazra’et al Qahtaniya village, western Raqqa governorate. We’ve documented the arrest of seven civilians. They were taken to an undisclosed location.

### Most notable cases

Abdul Hamid Tammo, director of foreign relations for Kurdish Future Movement in Syria and member of the Kurdish National Council, from al Derbasiya city, northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate. On Sunday, June 3, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces at a checkpoint in al Derbasiya city. His fate remains unknown to his family as well as SNHR.



Abdul Hamid Tammo

Odai Ahmad al Alloush, child, from al Twihiniya village, western suburbs of Raqqa governorate. On Monday, June 25, 2018, he was arrested by Self-Management forces in al Twihiniya village. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to his family as well as SNHR.



Odai Ahmad al Alloush



## V. 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 demands the immediate end of the crime of enforced-disappearance.

### Human Rights Council

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

### Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

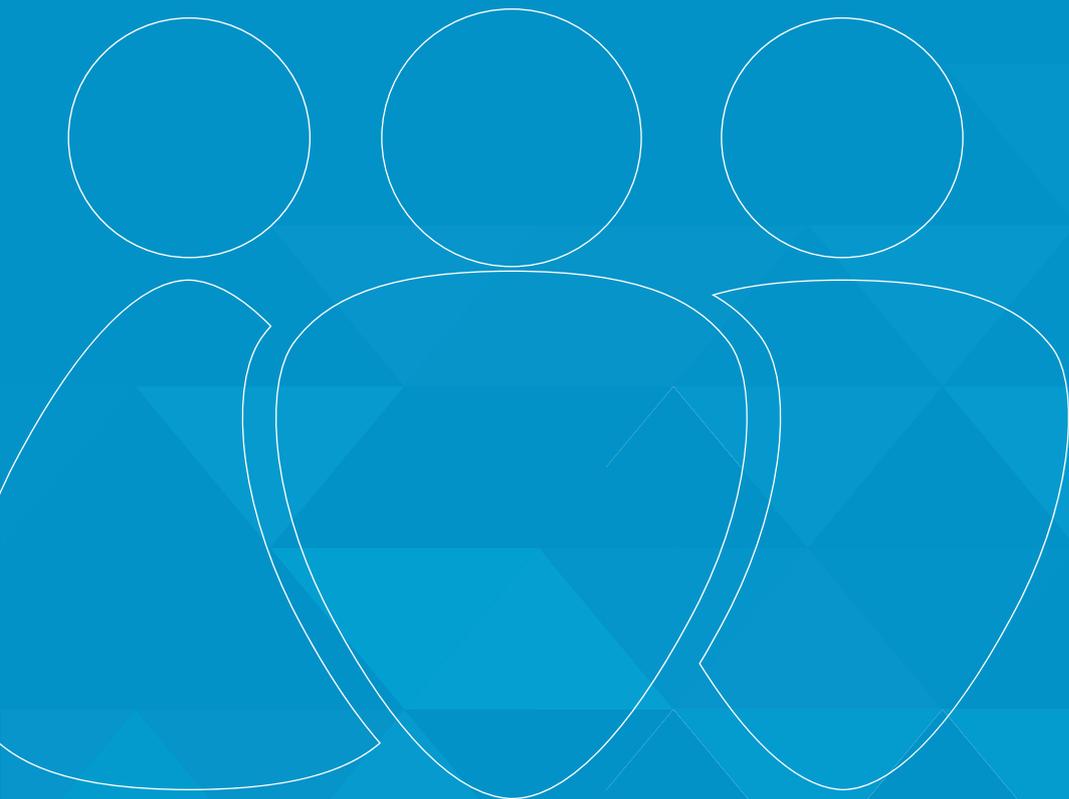
### International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

### 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 87% 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 office to include the detainees issue in the upcoming round of Geneva talks, as this issue is of a greater importance to the Syrian people than other far-term issues that can be jointly addressed later by the parties after a political settlement is reached, such as the constitution.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

