

## Joint Statement

# Progress on Syria's Detainee File is Critical for Peace in Syria: Syrian civil society

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

The Syrian Network for Human Rights, founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, non-profit independent organization that is a primary source for the United Nations on all death toll-related statistics in Syria



[14 March 2017, GENEVA] Syrian civil society groups are calling on all parties to the Syrian conflict to release arbitrarily-held detainees ahead of the next round of Geneva talks. Speaking on Tuesday at a high-level panel on the situation of human rights in Syria during the 34th session of the Human Rights Council, Syrian activists urged the international community to prioritize progress on Syria's detainee file and to establish a credible accountability process.

“The Syrian uprising started as a call to action against the Syrian regime’s brutal policy of arbitrary detention. Six years later, our people’s demands remain the same: the immediate release of every innocent detainee trapped inside a regime detention facility”, said Joumana Seif of [the Syrian Women’s Network](#), whose family has been imprisoned by Syrian regime forces. “If the international community is serious about securing an end to the crisis in Geneva, then it must bring more pressure to bear on the parties to secure the release of detainees.

“Hundreds of thousands of Syrian men, women and children have been illegally detained and forcibly disappeared across Syria – most at the hands of Syrian regime forces. Thousands have been tortured and killed inside Assad’s jails”, said Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of [the Syrian Network for Human Rights](#). “All detention facilities need to be subjected to international monitors - if there is nothing to hide why does the regime refuse access? Efforts by the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly to document war crimes are encouraging, but our priority now must be to ensure that the abundant evidence of atrocities translates into prosecutions and detainees’ release.”

“Perpetrators of torture, forced disappearance, and sexual and gender-based violence, cannot have a role in a future Syria”, said Noura Aljizawi a former detainee and founder of the civil society group the Start Point. “As every victim and survivor of detention knows, accountability is crucial to ending the impunity inside Syria and it is key to securing a sustainable political solution for our people.”



## **Syrian civil society representatives are currently in Geneva to secure:**

1. The immediate release of all detainees, starting with women and children, from all detention facilities;
2. Full access for international monitors, such as the ICRC, to all detention facilities (including secret and informal facilities);
3. A moratorium on all execution orders, particularly those issued by military and secret tribunals handling terrorism cases;
4. A transitional justice process that secures accountability for all war criminals in Syria, including through prosecution of cases under universal or national jurisdictions;
5. Detainees and accountability firmly on the agenda of Geneva peace talks. There can be no political solution without accountability.

## **About the panellists:**

Syrian panellists at the High level panel discussion on the situation of human rights in Syria during the 34th session of the Human Rights Council included:

Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghani, Executive Director of [the Syrian Network for Human Rights](#)

Ms. Joumana Seif, lawyer actively engaged with [the Syrian Women's Network](#)

Ms. Noura Aljizawi, former detainee and founder of the civil society group the Start Point

Mr. Sarmad Al-Jilane, Co-Founder of [Raqqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently](#)

Mr. Mazen Darwish, lawyer and free speech advocate, Director of [the Syrian Centre](#) for Media and Freedom of Expression





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