Press release

Washington: SNHR Holds Meetings at the White House and the US Departments of State and Defense

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.

Washington: September 30 – October 3, 2019: The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) held several meetings with high-level officials from several US government offices, including:

- The White House National Security Council
- Department of State, Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Robert Destro.
- Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Levant Affairs and Special Envoy to Syria, Joel Rayburn.
- Department of Defense, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, Michael Mulroy.
- Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Office of United Nations Political Affairs.
- Department of State, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Office of Global Programming.

During these meetings, Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, delivered a number of presentations discussing various issues selected according to the needs of each meeting. Among the most prominent issues of discussion and demands were the following topics:
The Syrian regime’s continued perpetration of a wide range of crimes against humanity, primarily torture in detention centers and the use of extremely sadistic methods of torture, as well as its continued arrests, especially the pursuit of displaced persons from the areas of Eastern Ghouta and southern Syria. Another subject was the increase in the exceptionally cruel and barbaric methods used by the Syrian regime in the form of laws aimed at seizing and taking control of the homes, properties and possessions of IDPs and refugees, as well as the Syrian regime’s targeting of churches and places of worship in Syria, some of which have been turned into military outposts. Other issues discussed included the violent Russian offensives on northwestern Syria and the Russian strategy of deliberately destroying cities and towns and using excessively brutal military tactics to inflict some form of collective punishment, along with the resulting waves of displacement and the need to provide protection zones for civilians safe from air attacks which are responsible for 75 percent of killings in Syria.

Mr. Abdul Ghany also emphasized the need to begin compensating victims in the northeast of Syria, the urgent necessity for the launch of further investigations into attacks by International Coalition forces that have resulted in casualties or material damage, and the need to begin reconstruction operations there, and to create a suitably safe and stable climate for genuinely democratic local elections in which all the people of the region can participate, and to establish and lead a dialogue to build positive relations there.

The SNHR head also focused on some of the violations carried out by Syrian Democratic Forces, such as arrests, enforced disappearances and other violations, which have caused widespread local outrage.

The meetings also featured discussion of how best to ensure that the issue of forcibly disappeared persons by all parties is monitored and consistently followed up through holding an exhibition of paintings commissioned by the SNHR of prominent activists who are still categorized as forcibly disappeared, with holding a conference on the sidelines of the exhibition that provides Syrians with a greater opportunity to talk about the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons and other patterns of violations.
The SNHR is keen to make regular visits to the United States of America to liaise with government officials, in order to share the latest findings from the SNHR’s reports and to discuss issues of mutual concern, and hopes that these interactions can form the basis for a positive and mutually beneficial relationship in which its reports may be used to help prioritize the issue of human rights in Syria as a US policy concern.

We note that at the beginning of October 2019, the Syrian Network for Human Rights signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the United States of America in order to share data for use in the investigation and accountability processes, with the data-sharing phase set to begin in the next few days.

The SNHR is considered to be a key partner of the US government, and a key source in all human rights reports and statements issued by the US State Department’s Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy, and Labor in relation to Syria for eight years to date, as well as with other government offices and agencies. SNHR is hopeful that this positive partnership will continue and grow stronger.