

## In September: Nine Media Activists Killed, Two kidnapped and arrested, and Four injured

*In September: Nine Media Activists Killed, Two kidnapped and arrested, and Four injured* 366 media activist have been killed from the beginning of the Syrian revolution until the end of September according to SNHR documenting team.

### This report includes

- First: Summary
- Second: Introduction
- Third: Details
- Fourth: Appendixes and Attachments
- Fifth: Acknowledgment

### Summary

Killing: SNHR documented the killing of nine media activists as follows:

- **The Syrian regime:** killed seven media activists including three media activists who died under torture inside the Syrian regime detention centers.
- **Extremist armed groups:** ISIS killed one foreign journalist while another media activist was killed by unidentified armed group.
- **Arresting and kidnapping:** Two cases of kidnapping and arrested were recorded; the Syrian regime arrested a media activist while ISIS kidnapped a foreign journalist.
- **Injuries:** Four injuries were documented; all of which were caused by the Syrian regime.

### Introduction

Syria has become one of the most dangerous working environments for media activists in light of the ongoing armed conflict. Crimes targeting media activists are being increasingly perpetrated amid a complete and blatant impunity. Media activists are not only being harassed, pursued, arrested, kidnapped, or killed but are also being used as a leverage to gain political advantages, like what ISIS is doing of killing and detaining foreign journalists, or for a substantial ransom.

The deteriorating security conditions and the ongoing crimes and violations against media activists at the hands of the armed parties, mainly the Syrian regime and ISIS, are the most notable challenges and obstacle that the media field is facing today in Syria. These challenges prevent the media work from keeping up with the complicated and rapid developments on different levels. Furthermore, it resulted in negatively affecting the performance of the media as one of the civil-society organizations Huda Al-Ali, a researcher at SNHR, says: *“This report documents the most notable violations against media activists. However, it also highlights the current situation and sheds a light on the most notable challenges and obstacles that the media field is facing today as it strongly affect the freedom of the media work and make it considerably difficult to access and verify information.”*

### **The most notable challenges and obstacles which caused a significant media crisis in Syria:**

- The media scene in Syria is losing hundreds of media activists because of the killing and arresting and the lack of freedom, security which resulted in a very dangerous working environment.
- The Syrian regime is vastly responsible for most of the crimes against media activists in quantity and quality. New cases where media activists die under torture are being recorded every month in addition to tens of media activists who are being arbitrarily detained by the Syrian regime. The Syrian regime’s systematic policy of directly targeting, killing, pursuing, and harassing media activists haven’t changed at all.
- The opposition media failing to establish a comprehensive and unified media model. To this day, the opposition media is still an unclear divided apparatus which lacks a reliable methodology, planning, and experienced qualified working staff which wasn’t much of a surprise given that media is merely a mirror that reflect the reality. One can’t overlook the efforts made to document the war crimes and violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime, yet, much is still needed to be done.
- Lack of experience and qualified trained working teams, the poor capabilities of the active media institutions, and the need to a better legal and media mentalities and its scattered affiliations and views.
- Most of the sources rely on publishing breaking news from the social-media websites or “personal networks” as most of these sources are not based on a reliable network of reporters while most of media groups lack any form of analysis of the reality and outcomes.
- Undermined impartiality and credibility, distorting and hiding the truth, the difficulty to monitor developments, the diminishment of the independent free media work, and lack of commitment to the principles and ethics of journalism due to the lack of a suitable working environment for free media work.
- The emergence of military media at the expense of the independent civil media after many media activists had to join armed faction in order to seek protection. In order for the independent free media to work, it must be away from the leverage of weapon and violence so it can do its duty as one of the civil-society institutions in addition to the major role it should play in the Syrian

conflict today including collecting and delivering news and contributing in documenting crimes and violations regardless of the perpetrators in an impartial and accurate manner.

- ISIS's dominance over the media in its territories after it managed to impose its laws through a systematic oppressive policy whose brutality matches the Syrian regime's policy against media activists, which includes killing, torturing, kidnapping, pursuing, and harassing.
- The deterioration of the freedom of the media in the PYD-held areas as the Kurdish party arrests, pursues, threatens, and tortures any media activist. In some cases, it expels some of them to Iraqi Kurdistan under the pretext of betrayal in order to silence mouths and terrorize any other activists.

All of this puts in the face of the sick reality that the media scene is experiencing in Syria today in light of the ongoing violence. The media in Syria today is politicized which prevents the existence of a suitable environment for a free media.

As we face this harsh reality that lacks the foundations, whom a free professional media needs to function, and the results of hiding the truth, silencing mouths, and obscuring facts, SNHR affirms the necessity of taking serious and immediate actions to save what could be saved of media activism in Syria and renews its condemnation of all the violations against media's freedom and truth-covering regardless of the involved parties and its kind or magnitude. SNHR also stresses the importance of respecting media work, insuring the safety of those who are working in that vital field, and paying them special consideration. The perpetrators of violations against journalists, activists, and media activists must be brought to justice and the International Community, represented by the Security Council, should shoulder its responsibilities to protect the civilians in Syria.

## Details

### A. The Syrian regime

*Starting with the most notable violation: three media activists died under torture inside the prisons of the Syrian regime*

"Abu-Marwa" (SNHR abstains from mentioning his name as per his family's request), manager and founder of the Facebook page "Akhbar Al-Latakia Lahtha be Lahtha" (Latakia breaking news). Abu-Marwa was arrested two years ago from As-Slibibya neighborhood in Latakia city. He died under torture on 22 August, 2014.

"S.R" (SNHR abstains from mentioning his name as per his family's request), from Damascus – Al-Midan neighborhood. Died under torture on 26 August. His family hasn't received his body yet.

Ibrahim Abdurrazzaq Al-Mutlaq Al-Hamdani, worked at Tadmour coordination. Died under torture after he was arrested by the military security on 13 July, 2013, he was then transferred to the branch 215 in Damascus. His family was informed about his death when they went to visit him on 16 September by the authorities after they gave them his personal I.D.

### **The Syrian regime killed also the following media activists:**

Wasim Ash-Shalabi who was killed by the shelling against Al-Waar neighborhood in Homs while he was covering the shelling (11 September), photographer Abu-Zaid who was killed by the shelling of the Syrian regime warplanes while covering the events in Eastern Ghouta (11 September), Abu-Omar Al-Yabroudi by the shelling of the Syrian regime warplanes against Talbiesa city in Homs countryside while covering the events (16 September), Mohammad Dib Ash'oush, one of the founders and members of "Tajamoua' Shabab Jisreen" (Jisreen youth assembly) by the airstrike that targeted Hamouriya town in Damascus countryside (16 September).

### **The following media activists were injured by the Syrian regime**

Karam Al-Masri who was shot by a Syrian regime sniper in Aleppo – Salah Ad-Din neighborhood (2 September), manager of the media office of Al-Hamza squad Abu-Qais Al-Hourani who was injured by the Syrian regime army's fire in Daraa countryside – Der Adas town (18 September), Mahmoud Abu-Ali who was shot by a Syrian regime sniper in Jam'yat Az-Zahraa – Burj Al-Athem near the Air intelligence (20 September), founder of "Yaqin media institution" Abu-Saeed Al-Balkhi while he was covering the events in Daraa – Ma'rba town (21 September).

### **The following media activists were arrested by the Syrian regime:**

Muddar Hassan Khodour, administrator of the Facebook page "Nosour Matar At-Tabaqa" (eagles of At-Tabaqa military airbase) over lunching "Wenoun" (where are they?) campaign after ISIS managed to take over At-Tabaqa military airbase to highlight the fate of the Syrian regime soldiers who were at the airbase at the time (31 August).

### **Other violations**

The journalist Mahmoud Al-Hamwi office was targeted in Hama countryside – Al-Latamna with a barrel bomb by the Syrian regime warplanes (6 September) which destroyed the office and put it out of commission.

Also, the Syrian regime warplanes targeted the broadcast center of the radio station "Watan" in Idlib countryside (17 August) the shelling destroyed the devices while no one was injured. The Syrian regime forces had targeted Watam FM radio station also this month which caused to stop broadcasting completely.

### **B. Violations perpetrated by groups fighting against the Syrian regime**

Starting with the most notable crime: the killing of the American journalist Steven Sotloff at the hands of ISIS (2 September). ISIS published a video footage entitled: "a second message to America" that showed Steven on his knees wearing an orange shirt and standing next to him a masked armed man holding a knife who condemned the American intervention in Syria and Iraq before he slaugh-

tered Sotloff. Afterwards, the masked man threatened to kill a British hostage named David Haines. It is worth noting that ISIS have perpetrated a similar crime two weeks before killing Sotloff when it slaughtered the journalist James Foley. Sotloff had been missing before it was revealed that ISIS kidnapped him one year ago in Northern Syria.

Mohammad Abduljalil Al-Qasem, a reporter who worked at Rouzna radio station in Idlib, by unidentified armed group in Idlib countryside – Ma’rat An-Nu’mān (11 September). Al-Qasem used to provide a number of news websites and agencies with news from Idlib such as Al-Jazeera.net and Rouzna radio station.

#### Kidnapping

ISIS revealed that it had kidnapped the British journalist John Cantlie via a video footage that was published on the internet (18 September) entitled: “listen to the messages of the British hostage John Cantlie”. The “forced” statement appeared to be a warning of waging a war on the faction. Cantlie was kidnapped in November 2012 in northern Syria. It should be noted that ISIS had slaughtered two American journalists and a British relief employee. This video was three days before an international conference that will be held in Paris by an alliance that consists of 27 Arabic and western states in addition to three international organization to discuss the military intervention in Iraq.

## Appendixes and Attachments

Pictures and video footages of the media activist included in this report

### A. The Syrian regime

Ibrahim Abdurazzaq Al-Mutlaq Al-Hamdan   Wasim Ash-Shalabi   Mohammad Dieb Ash’oush

Karam Al-Masri

Abu-Qais Al-Hourani

Muddar Hassan Khodour

The office of the journalist Mahmoud Al-Hamwi in Hama countryside – Al-Latamna

The moment of dropping the barrel bombs on the media office in Hama northern countryside – Al-Latamna city

**B- Armed groups fighting against the Syrian regime**

The American journalist Steven Sutloff

### Acknowledgment

Our thanks and apperception go to the victims' families and their relatives whose valuable contribution helped us substantially to finish this report on this level

