



## Most Notable Imprisoned and Forcibly-disappeared Journalists

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### Introduction

Even before the emergence of the armed groups in the second half of 2013 and then the extremist groups in 2013, The Syrian regime used the most extreme oppressive policies against journalists and media activists, and expelled and banned 100% of the international news agencies. Although the Syrian regime forces don't tend to carry out demonstrative operations such as ISIS, it is vastly superior to other extremist factions in terms of perpetrating violations against journalists including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arrests.

SNHR documented 31 arrests against journalists who are still either imprisoned or forcibly-disappeared as follows:

The Syrian government: 22 journalists

ISIS: six journalists

Armed groups: three journalists

It is worth noting that this report doesn't include media activists or civilian journalists as SNHR documented the violations against them in tens of its reports.

Also, these numbers are certainly the minimum due to the considerable difficulties we encounter in the process docu-



menting prisoners which is more difficult than documenting victims as many journalists' families and the organizations they used to work with are usually afraid to reveal any details about the journalists' kidnappings and arrests on one hand, and considering that many media organization are already negotiating with the kidnappers and refuse any form of intervention on the other hand.

*Fadel Abdulghani, head of SNHR, says: "The imprisoned and forcibly-disappeared journalists and media activists cases must be a concern for every fellow journalist around the world. Highlighting this issue regularly could press on decision-makers to take serious action in order to insure their safety or at least reveal their fate. They must not be forgotten at all. "*

### **Most notable imprisoned and forcibly-disappeared journalists by the Syrian regime**

1- **Mazen Darwish:** member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and head and founder of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression. He was arrested on 16 February, 2014 by the Air Force Intelligence forces who raided the center headquarter in Damascus.



2- **Blogger Hussein Ghrier:** member of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression. He was arrested on 16 February, 2012 by the Air Force Intelligence forces who raided the center headquarter in Damascus.

3- **Blogger Hani Az-Zitani:** member of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression. He was arrested on 16 February, 2012 by the Air Force Intelligence forces who raided the center headquarter in Damascus.

4- **Palestine journalist Mohannad Mohammad Omar:** born in Damascus, 29-year-old, worked at Al-Alam TV channel and many other newspapers including Qasyoun, An-Nahda, Baladna, Sawt Palestine. He was arrested from Al-Alam TV channel office on 29 February, 2012 by the State Security forces. Afterwards, he was taken to the Internal Security branch and then the State Security branch.



5- **Artist and caricaturist Akram Raslan:** from Hama – Souran city, 40-year-old, he holds a bachelor in gene in literature – department of libraries from Damascus University, he worked at a number of Arabic and Syrian newspapers. He was arrested by the Military Intelligence forces in Hama on Monday 2 October, 2012 from his workplace in Hama (the official newspaper Al-Fedaa’). He is still to this day in solitary confinement in Damascus.

6- Writer **Adnan Az-Zra’ie:** arrested on 26 February, 2012 at night, he was detained for fifteen days at the security branch in Damascus – Al-Jesr Al-Abyad. He was then taken to the security branch in Al-Khatib where he spent also 15 days before he was transferred to the State Security branch in Kafrsousa. It should be noted that Adnan finished his official sentence on 26 April, 2012 where the security branch, in which he is being detained, is legally obligated to put him on trial or release him immediately.



**Adnan Alzera’ie**

According to testimonies by some of his comrades who survived the arrest, Adnan Zra’ie was subjected to extremely brutal torture and he has sustained fractures in his ribs and was forced on several occasions to call some of his family members and friends to make appointments with them which led to their arrest in addition to direct threats that he will be killed in case some of them talked to the media about his case.

7- **Mahmoud Nowarah** Palestine journalist who used to work at DFLP’s Al-Hurriya journal. He was arrested by security forces in Damascus – Bab Sharqi neighborhood on 29 July, 2013.

8- **Jehad Assad** Mohammad, chief editor at People’s Will Party’s official newspaper Qasyoun. He was arrested by the Syrian intelligence in Damascus – Ath-Thwara Street on 10 August, 2013.

9- **Maher Thieb**, program-coordinator who works at the Syrian General Organization of Radio and TV’s Al-Qunietra media center. He was arrested by the security forces on 22 September, 2012 a few months after his resigned.



**Jihad Asa’ad**



10- Painter **Nezar Jasim Al-Hamad**, Applied Arts Institute graduate in Damascus, works in the field of animated films, his most recent works was assistant director of the 15-episodes animated series “Jazerat Al-Mughamrat” (The Island of Adventure). He was arrested by the Syrian intelligence on 21 July, 2012.

11- **Nabil Walid Ash-Sharbaji**, graduated from the media faculty in Damascus University in 2010, 28-year-old, works in the field of electric journalism and prepared many reports. He was arrested on Sunday 26 February, 2012 on a security checkpoint in Dariyya.

12- **Thabet Al-Mhiesen**: from Ar-Raqqa – Tal Abyad, graduated from the media faculty in Damascus University, used to work at “Syria Newz”. He was kidnapped on Wednesday, 2012 along with his friend Qutaiba Mar’ie at a security checkpoint located between Qadsiya and Qura Al-Assad area in Damascus.

13- **Qutaiba Mar’ie**: works at the public relations department in Damascus stock market. He was arrested at a security checkpoint located between Qadsiya and Qura Al-Assad along with Thabet Al-Mhiesen on 1 August, 2012.

14- **Shyar Khalil Shayr**, Syrian journalist, from Aleppo countryside – Ifreen city, 29-year-old. He was arrested on 23 April, 2013 by the security forces when he was in Sarouja popular market in the middle of Damascus. He was referred to the terrorism court in Damascus on 15 July, 2013 and then to Adra Central Prison on 17 March, 2014 according to our latest information.

15- **Jehad Jamal**, 42-year-old, blogger and independent writer, known by his alias name “Milan”, graduated from Law faculty in Aleppo University, he was arrested several times the most recent of which was from Ninar Café in Damascus on 7 March, 2013 along with a group of his friends and they were released later except for Jehad who was transferred afterwards to Palestine branch and then the Military Security branch 248. Recently, he was transferred again for field-trial in Sydnaya Prison.

16- **Hussein Eissou**, independent writer, from Al-Hassaka, 64-year-old. He was arrested on 3 September, 2011 from his home by the Air Force Intelligence Al-Hassaka branch headed by Jamil Hassan.



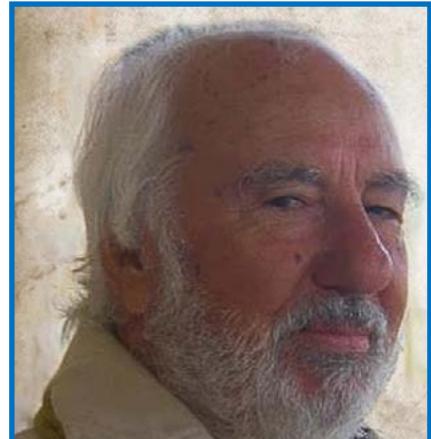
17- **Ghiath Al-Qassab Bashi**, from Hama, 39-year-old, cameraman who used to work at the Syrian General Organization of Radio and TV. He was arrested on 25 November, 2013 after his house was raided in Al-Jarajma neighborhood. Subsequently, he was transfer to Adra Central Prison.

18- **Mahieb Salman An-Nawwati**, Palestinian journalist, traveled on 28 December, 2010 from Norway to the Middle East to continue his work and to supervise the translation of a book he wrote, he was planning on returning to Norway on 9 December, 2012. However, he disappeared in Damascus on 5 December, 2012 and was seen later in one of the Military Security branches in Damascus according to a previous prisoner.

His family addressed filed a request to the Norwegian authorities regarding his disappearance. To this day, Mahieb is still missing despite the investigations done by the Norwegian authorities in the hospitals and police stations in Syria.

19- **Yousuf Iwed As-Syana**, writer and poet, 80-year-old. He was arrested by the security forces in Daraa on 13 September, 2013 from His home in Daraa – Al-Qosour neighborhood, his laptop and a large portion of his papers were seized as well.

Yousuf was previously the deputy secretary-general of the Arab Socialist Union. Eventually, Yousuf retire from political activism ten years ago. Also, he was the head of the writers' union – Daraa branch for four years before he was isolated in 2008. He has five poet collections the most recent of which was entitled: "Maqamat".



**Yousuf Iwed As-Syana**

20- **Jdea' Abdullah Noufal**, writer and human rights activist, 63-year-old, from As-Suwyida and was residing in Damascus countryside – Sahnaya, he is the founder and head of the Center for Democracy and Civil Rights which is affiliated with the UN's human rights office, the center was founded and licensed by the Syrian government in 2012. Jdea' was previously arrested in the 80's and was also imprisoned in Sydnaya Military Prison (1993-1997) after he was accused of working with committees that defend freedoms and human rights.

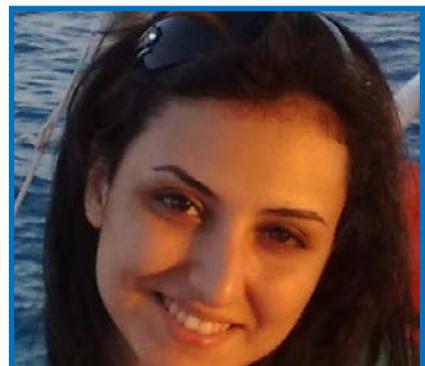


On Friday 31 October, 2014, Noufal was arrested along with two of his colleagues the journalist Omar Ash-Sha'ar and the journalist Maria Sha'bou on the Lebanese-Syrian borders in Jadedat Yabous as they were heading to Damascus after they attended a workshop on human rights in Beirut. They were later referred to the Political Security. There are reports suggesting that Noufal was forbidden from calling his lawyer and family. Also, it should be noted that he suffers from heart and blood pressure conditions and his health status is very critical. His fate is still unknown.

21- **Omar Ash-Sha'ar**, worked previously as a chief editor for the English section of the private news website dp-news.com which is licensed by the Syrian government. He was arrested previously on 11 November, 2013 after a patrol raided his home in Jermana and confiscated his laptop, he spent eight months in prison before he was released on 15 June, 2014. Also, his wife the lawyer Majdoulien Hassan was arrested for her civil activism previously in 2013.

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22- Doctor **Mariya Sha'bou**, 26-year-old, independent journalist and human rights activist, she was born in jail and spent her first one and half years there. Mariya is originated from a family that is known for her opposition to the Syrian regime; her mother Rana Mahfouz was arrested while she was pregnant with her and spent four years in prison (1988-1991) for working with the Communist Labor Party. Also, her father Bahjat Sha'bou spent 10 years over the same charges as her mother in Sydnaya Military Prison.



**Mariya Sha'bou**

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## Most notable imprisoned and forcibly-disappeared journalists by ISIS

1- **Obayda Batal**, media activist, Orient News TV channel reporter, he was kidnapped by ISIS forces in Aleppo countryside – Tal Ref't on 25 July, 2013.



**Obayda Batal**

2- **Ahmad Fayyad**, was a reporter for “Al-Ikhbariya”, a Syrian news TV channel, he was kidnapped by ISIS forces in Ar-Raqqa on 11 August, 2013.

3- **Rami Az-Zourak**, media activists and director of “Ana” Radio station, he was kidnapped by ISIS forces in Ar-Raqqa on 1 October, 2013, after he was arrested, the faction raided “Ana” institution and seized its equipment.

4- **Ishaq Mukhtar**, Mauritanian, journalist and Sky News reporter, he was kidnapped by ISIS while he was covering in northern Aleppo on 15 October, 2013.\

5- **Samir Kassab**, photographer and journalist, used to work for Sky News, he was kidnapped by ISIS forces while he was covering in northern Aleppo on 10 October, 2013.

6- ISIS revealed that it has **John Cantile** by publishing a video footage onto the internet on 19 September, 2014 entitled “Listen to the British hostage John Cantile’s, messages” in what appears to be forced statements by the journalist to warn anyone from starting a war against ISIS. Cantile has been kidnapped since November 2012 in northern Syria.



**John Cantile**



## Most notable imprisoned and forcibly-disappeared journalists by armed opposition

1- **Constantine Jourafief**, Russian cameraman, 32-year-old, he was kidnapped on 12 October, 2013 by At-Tawhid battalion in Aleppo countryside as he was entering Syria through the Turkish borders. SNHR has no information about his fate.



**Constantine Jourafief**

2- **Talal Janbakli**, cameraman for “Al-Ikhbariya”, Syrian news TV channel, he was kidnapped in Der Ezzor on 4 August, 2012 by Haroun Ar-Rahid brigade. SNHR has no information about his fate.

3- **Zakariya Haj Jammou**, reporter for yekiti-media.org, a news website, he was kidnapped by An-Nusra front between Al-Yabesa and Tal Akhdar villages near Ar-Raqqa – Tal Abyad on 21 August, 2013. Zakariya was covering the clashes between Kurdish forces and An-Nusra front when he was kidnapped.

## Most notable imprisoned and forcibly-disappeared journalists by unknown armed groups

The artist and photographer **Mohammad Wael Saeed**, 40-year-old, he majored in art and specialized in photography at arts school and graduated in 1996, he was working in the field of photographic documentation in Syria and was an art director at Tishreen newspaper. Wael was kidnapped on 1 January, 2013 at 6:30 AM while he was returning to his home from work in Adra Al-Ammaliya by unidentified group. There is no information about his fate to this moment.



**Mohammed Wael Saeed**

### Acknowledgment

Our thanks and appreciation goes to the arrested journalists' families and friends who majorly contributed to this report which we hope that it can highlight the issue of imprisoned journalists in order to release them, protect them, and hold the violations perpetrators accountable.