

Statment

The Syrian regime is exploiting passports renewal as a weapon of war

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Article 13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

In addition to the military and physical oppression, the Syrian regime has extended its systematic oppressive campaign to include the administrative and institutional levels as it plays a role to dedicate security, economic, and social crises as a part of its oppression and control system. The Syrian regime has been harassing opposition activists and Syrian citizens since before the Syrian revolution as it issued dozens of banned-from-traveling lists, and deprived tens of thousands of exiles of their rightful passports after they left Syria upon the Hama massacre in the 80s in the first years of Hafez Al-Assad's presidential term.

With expanding the oppression campaign, sieging more areas that are being shelled using heavy weapons, and establishing more military checkpoints inside the cities in a rapid manner, the need to recruit more military personnel and the number of people that are being pursued by the Syrian regime have both significantly increased which forced the opposition activists and even some of the civil-

ians to keep a low profile or travel abroad. Therefore, obtaining a passport has become an absolute necessity for some people on one hand and an opportunity to exploit this need for the Syrian regime on the other hand.

The most prominent practices used by the Syrian regime to exploit passports as a weapon of war in its fight against the opposition

- 1- Travel ban
- 2- Abstaining from granting or renewing passports
- 3- Arresting at border crossings or military checkpoints inside cities.
- 4- Confiscating passports

These practices represented a flourishing opportunity for the black market to make fake passports, or pay large bribes to the officials in the state institutions in order to get a passport which, in some cases, has amounted to 4000\$. Furthermore, it affected many people's lives abroad whose passports didn't renewed or were confiscated for being activists which created a cross-border economic crisis and security problems with the countries that received Syrian refugees that can't renew their passports which would put them at the risk of repatriation.

The Arab League

The Arab League should coordinate with the Syrian opposition to establish an alternative certified passport in the Arab states at least, or to work on renewing the expired passports which will solve a problem that hundreds of thousands of Syrians are suffering from.

