

22 Individuals Died due to Torture, including 19 at the Hands of the Syrian Regime Forces in January 2017

Toll of Victims of Torture is Higher than its former Levels prior to Ankara Ceasefire Agreement

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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



Report Contents

- I. Methodology
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture
- IV. Conclusions and Recommendations
- Acknowledgment

I. Report Methodology

Since 2011, the Syrian regime has been denying executing any arrests and, instead, accuses Al-Qaeda and terrorist groups, such as ISIS, of it. Additionally, the Syrian regime doesn't acknowledge any torture or death-due-to-torture cases. SNHR obtains information from former prisoners or prisoners' families where most of the families get the information they have about their detained relatives through bribing officials in charge.

We, in SNHR, refer to the families' accounts. It should be noted that the Syrian authorities usually don't give back the dead bodies of the prisoners to their families. Also, in most cases, families are scared to go and get the dead bodies of their relatives or even their personal items from military hospitals out of fear of being arrested themselves.

Most of the families we contacted have assured that their relatives were in good health at the time of their arrest and illness couldn't have been the cause of death.

Fadel Abdul Ghani, chairman of SNHR, says:

“The principle of ‘Responsibility to Protect’ must be implemented in light of the government’s failure to protect its people, and the fruitlessness of the diplomatic and peaceful efforts so far. Crimes against humanity and war crimes are being perpetrated every day in Syria and mainly at the hands of the organs of the state itself.”



Therefore, SNHR encounters serious difficulties in the documentation process on account of the ban imposed against it and the fact that its members are being pursued by various parties. In light of such circumstances, it might be difficult to fully verify deaths as the process remains subject to ongoing documentation and verification while taking in consideration families' accounts.

To read more about SNHR documentation methodology, please see the following [URL](#).

II. Executive Summary

Ankara Ceasefire Agreement went into effect on December 2016 ,30. Nonetheless, breaches haven't stopped, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be affected the most should the ceasefire go on, especially crimes of extrajudicial killing, and, more horrendously, dying due to torture, as the number of victims dying to torture is higher than the past month before the agreement went into effect. This strongly proves that there is some sort of ceasefire on the table. The crimes, however, that the international community wasn't able to notice, and particularly the Turkish and Russian sponsors, are still ongoing as nothing has changed in that regard.

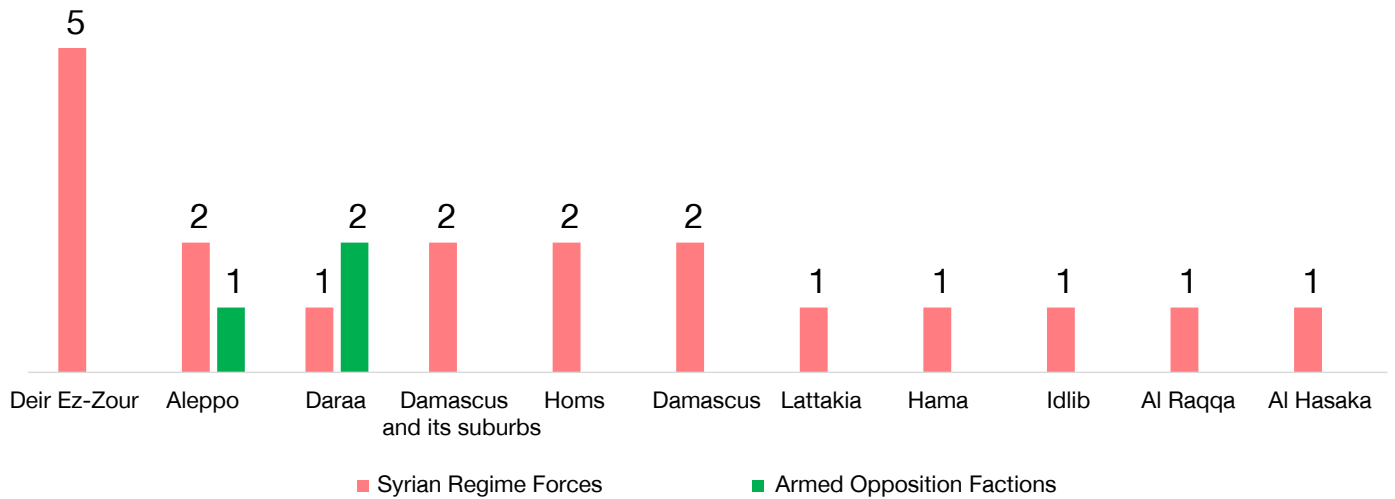
SNHR documented no less than 22 deaths due to torture inside official and non-official detention centers in January 2017. The death toll is distributed as follows:

- A. Syrian regime forces (Army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): 19
- B. Armed opposition factions: 3

Deaths due to torture have been ongoing ceaselessly since 2011, this is an explicit indicator on the systematic violence and excessive forces used against detainees.

Deir Ez-Zour governorate saw the highest number of victims who died due to torture with 5 individuals, while the remaining death toll was distributed across governorates as follows: 3 in Aleppo, 3 in Daraa, 2 in Homs, 2 in Damascus, 2 in Damascus suburbs, 1 in Idlib, 1 in Al Hasaka, 1 in Hama, 1 in Al Raqqa, 1 in Latakia.





Most notable cases of deaths due to torture in January are:

One university student

II. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture

University students

Mahmoud Ibrahim Hajjou, a student at the faculty of literature in Damascus University, from Tal Halaf Al Ghamir in the suburbs of Al Hasaka governorate, -24year-old. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2012 as he was passing an inspection point for the Syrian regime in Damascus city. On Sunday, January 2017 ,8 we received information confirming his death due to torture inside Syrian regime detention centers in Damascus.



III. Conclusions and Recommendations

SNHR can confirm that this considerably huge number of victims who are dying due to torture every month, with taking into consideration that the actual number of deaths is most likely higher, unequivocally indicates a systematized policy that is being adopted by the head of the ruling authorities. All of the state’s organs, branches, and figures are fully aware of these policies. Furthermore, these policies were enforced in a widespread manner which constitutes crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Armed opposition factions practiced acts of torture, which constitutes war crimes.



Recommendations

Security Council

1. The Syrian case must be referred to the International Criminal Court.
- 2 Punishments must be enforced on all the leaders, of any party, who were involved in acts of torture which violates the international humanitarian law and the Resolutions of the Security Council on Syria; particularly Resolutions 2042 and 2139.
- 3 Bind the Syrian government, and the other parties, to fully cooperate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, which was established by the Human Rights Council, in order to investigate torture practices inside detention centers.
4. Allow independent human rights organization to access any place in Syria.

Acknowledgment:

Our most sincere thanks to all families, eyewitness, and activists who contributed majorly to this report, and our most heartfelt condolences for the victims' families and relatives.





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