

# 18 Individuals Died due to Torture in May 2017

Including 14 at the Hands of Syrian Regime Forces, Torture Continues Despite the De-Escalation Agreement

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Friday, June 2, 2017

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



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## 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 Ghany, 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

The fourth round of negotiations was held in Astana city, Kazakhstan's capital, on 3 and 4 of May 2017. Russian, Turkish, and Iranian representatives attended as the sponsoring states of Ankara Ceasefire Agreement. The three states agreed on establishing four de-escalation zones, wherein the agreement is to commence on May 6, 2017. Nonetheless, breaches didn't stop, mainly by the Syrian regime, who is seemingly the party that would be most affected should the ceasefire go on, and in particular extrajudicial killing crimes and, more horrendously, deaths due to torture, as rates of deaths due to torture didn't see any changes from the month prior to the commencement of the agreement. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the Russian, Turkish, and Iranian sponsors- won't see are still going on as nothing had happened.

SNHR documented no less than 18 deaths due to torture inside official and non-official detention centers in May 2017, as follows:

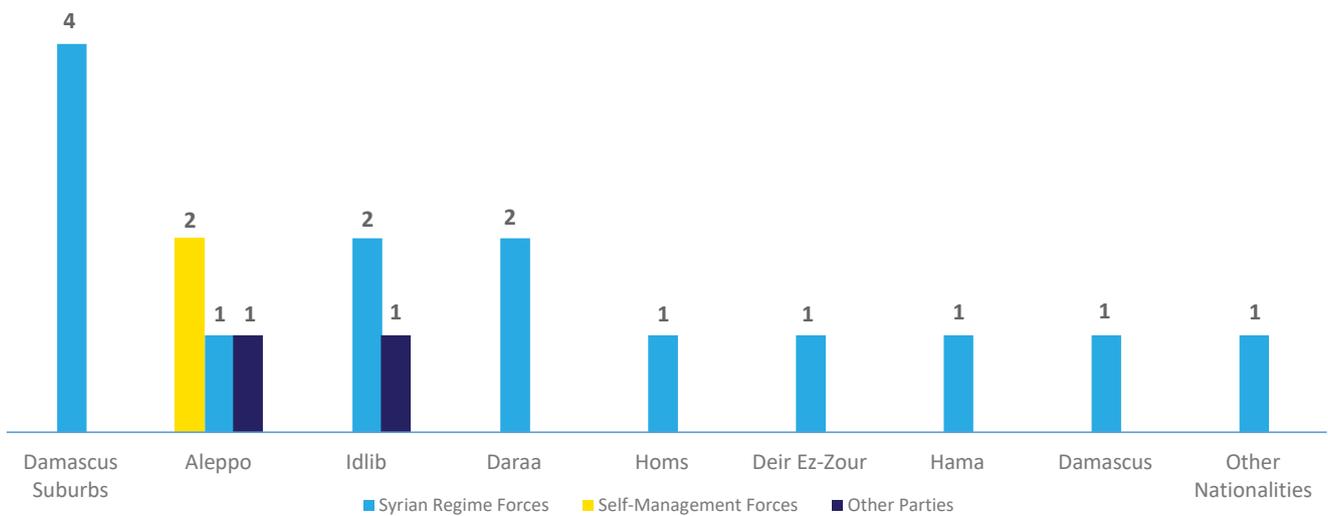
- A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias): 14
- B. Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): 2
- C. Other parties: 2

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

Aleppo and Damascus suburbs governorates saw the highest toll of death due to torture in May, with four deaths each. The remaining death toll is distributed as follows: three in Idlib, two in Daraa, one in Deir Ez-Zour, one in Damascus, one in Hama, one in Homs, and one other nationality.



## Deaths due to torture are distributed across governorate as follows:



Most notable cases of deaths due to torture in May are:  
One media activist, two students, one elder

### III. Most Notable Deaths due to Torture

#### Media activists

Osama Khaled al Hbali, independent media activist, from al Khaldiya neighborhood in Homs city, born in 1988, has an intermediate education certificate. He was arrested by Syrian regime forces on Saturday, August 18, 2012, at an inspection point in al Dabousiya area in suburbs of Homs governorate on the Lebanese-Syrian borders. On Tuesday, May 23, 2017, we received information that he died due to torture in Sydnaya Prison.



Osama al Hbali

#### Students

Alaa Abdul Aal, a student at the computer school, from Idlib city, he was arrested by Syrian regime forces in 2012 from his school in Idlib city. On Friday, May 12, 2017, we received information that he died due to torture in Sydnaya Prison, which is affiliated to the Syrian regime forces.



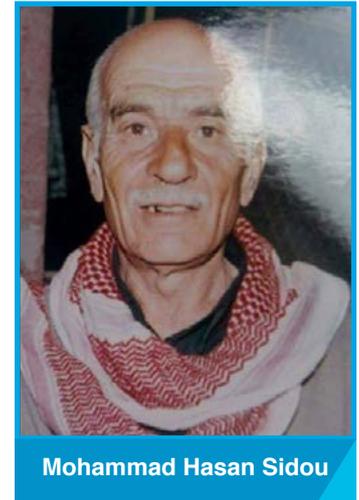
Alaa Abdul Aal



[Mohammad Ahmad al Sbagh](#), university student, from Talmanas town in eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. On Wednesday, May 10, 2017, he was abducted by unknowns as he was heading to his university in Idlib city. On Wednesday, May 24, 2017, his dead body was found tossed on the road between al Tah and al Der al Sharqi in suburbs of Idlib governorate, with torture signs visible on the dead body.

### **Elders**

Mohammad Hasan Sidou, elder, from Bilan village, which follows IFreen city in suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was 80 years of age at the time of the arrest. On Wednesday, May 10, 2017, he was arrested by Self-Management Forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) from his place of residence in Bilan village over cannibal cultivation charges in Shran county in suburbs of Ifreen city. On Wednesday, May 24, 2017, he died of a heart attack while he being tried before one of the Self-Management forces' people's court in the center of Shran county.



### **IV. 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.



## **Recommendations**

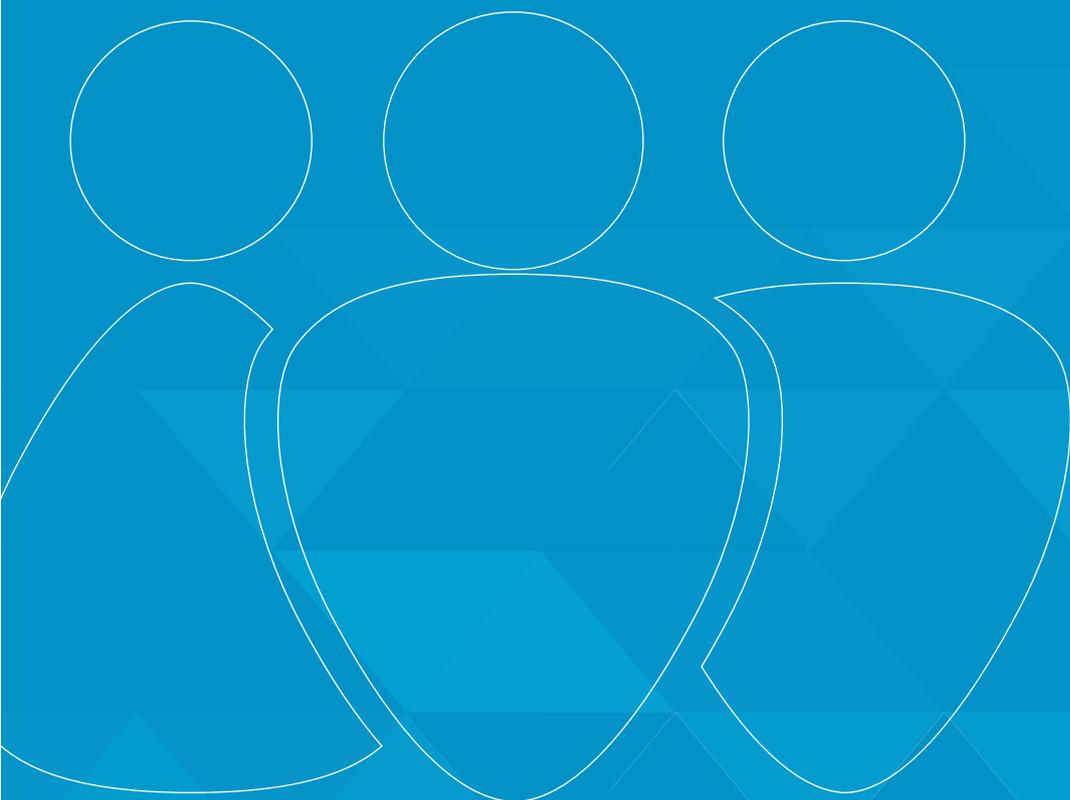
### **Security Council**

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 and Condolences**

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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