



**“The Anti-terrorism Court” issued verdicts against
56 detainees in Hama Central Prison,
Amongst 15 death sentences
Detainees in Syrian Prisons: Death Penalty or Death under torture**

Since the beginning of June 2015, up to the moment of preparing this report, the so-called **“Anti-terrorism Court”** issued verdicts against 56 detainees held at Hama Central Prison.

The verdicts are detailed as follows:

I: 12 detainees were sentenced to death. The verdicts were issued after a pardon given by the Syrian authorities in 2014, which included reducing death penalties to life imprisonments. In addition, convictees were asked to pay a fine of 40 million Syrian Liras (almost 135,000 USD) each.

II: 8 detainees were not included the presidential pardon, and therefore were sentenced to death.

III: 25 detainees were sentenced to 20 years in prison.

IV: 11 detainees were sentenced to periods of imprisonments ranged between 12 and 15 years.

V: 7 detainees were sentenced to death on 21st of June, 2015 by the Anti-terrorism Court in Damascus after participating in strike in Hama Prison.





Most of the prisoners in Hama Central Prison are from Hama and Raqqa districts.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights was able to contact a number of prisoners inside the prison: For example, prisoner (D.S), was arrested by the Air Force Security branch in Hama on 4th of November 2012, said that his verdict was issued by the Anti-Terrorism Court in Damascus 15th of June 2015; he was sentenced to 22 years in prison. The sentence was based on a security report which included confessions obtained under severe torture; there was no evidence to support his charge of “forming a terrorist group”.

Prisoner (D.S) expressed his fear from the government forces since he was amongst those who organized the hunger strike. He stated that some prisoners have been imprisoned for four years without undergoing any trial. The prisoners demanded that the Minister of Justice and the Minister of National Reconciliation would visit Hama Central Prison and offer a fair trials before the prisoners end the strike.

Quoting prisoner (D.S): ***“Sentences have not stopped.” “Every Saturday, 40 prisoners are taken to the court in Damascus. However, only two or three prisoners would receive sentences; and most of the sentences are 15 years of imprisonment.”***

Detainees who were on hunger strike refused to go to the court hearings. As a result, they threatened and forced to attend the trials by the prison police. The prisoners also were threatened to be moved to a harsher prison in Latakia or Tartous. Thus, 40 prisoners were forced to attend the court sessions”.

On 22nd June 2015, the National Reconciliation Delegation, affiliated to the government and headed by Mahmoud Al Sibahi, visited Hama Central Prison and promised the prisoners to settle their cases with the government judiciary and security agencies. As a result, the detainees suspended their strike temporarily.

Background of the so-called “[The Anti-terrorism Court](#)”

This court was established by the Syrian authorities in July 2012 according to a presidential decree (decree number 22). “The Anti-terrorism Court” replaced the State Security Court, which was suspended along with the Emergency Law. It is an exceptional court , in which civilian and military judges can proceed. “The Anti-terrorism Court” has the power to trial both civilian and military individuals. This court is located inside the Ministry of Justice building, in Al Mazze in Damascus. This court is used by the government as a tool to show that there is some sort of “justice”.





Sever torture leading to death is a routine practice within Syrian detention facilities. SNHR records document three to four cases of death under torture every day. Our records indicate that the number of individuals died under torture has reached 11358.

It is known to all human rights organizations that the Syrian authorities use torture and threats to force detainees to agree on pre-prepared confessions.

Needless to mention, that the judiciary system in Syria is fully subservient to the state security agencies. In such show trials, prisoners have access to legal aid; however appointed lawyers have no right to communicate with prisoners. Judges usually recite short cliché verdicts that do not mention any substantial evidence.

Since the “The Anti-terrorism Court” was founded in July 2012, and until May 2015, the court reviewed only 35,000 cases, although our records indicate that there are 110,000 detainees. However, only 700 verdicts were issued, which included 50 death sentences and varied periods of imprisonment. Most of death sentences have not yet been implemented. Our records indicate that 5200 detainees have not been convicted, thus they have been released by the court. However, most of the released detainees are still subjected to re-trials and therefore vulnerable to be re-arrested at any time. Some of the detainees have been also released on bail pending their trials.

It is worth mentioning that bribery and corruption are widespread within detention centers in Syria, detainees are financially exploited and their families are routinely asked for huge amounts of money in exchange for information or visits.

In year 2014 only, the court reviewed 6500 cases of prisoners detained at civilian prisons, amongst which 290 women cases. 12,000 applications for release were submitted by the detainees or their lawyers, only 820 were accepted by the court. An application for release is a request submitted by the detainee or their lawyer when there is no evidence to justify the arrest.

Syria has been in a state internal armed conflict since March 2012. All parties involved in the conflict should respect the International Humanitarian Law regarding the treatment of, civilians, fighters and prisoners of war. The International Humanitarian Law states:

Article 126: Detained civilians and prisoners during a local armed conflict should be permitted to receive visitors and relatives.





Article 127: Religion and religious practices of detainees should be respected at all times.

Article 128: Civilian detainees should be immediately released if there is no legal reason to justify their detention.

Based upon what discussed above, all the verdicts issued by of the “Anti-terrorism Court” are considered illegal and therefore cannot be honored. All those involved in such courts including judges should be held responsible for the outcomes of the verdicts they issue.

Syrian Network for Human Rights would like to thank everybody who has helped with this report especially the prisoners, their lawyers and families who provided invaluable information for the purpose of this report.

