



## **Detainee Sara Al-Alaou has been Forcibly-Disappeared by Syrian Authorities in Adra Central Prison Sara Al-Alaou was forced to confess that she practiced sexual jihad**

Enforced-disappearance is still a systematic policy that the Syrian authorities enforce in a widespread manner. According to the monthly report published by SNHR, there are more than 1000 new arbitrary arrest cases every month, many of those detainees have been forcibly-disappeared (according to the international law, enforced-disappearance occurs when a person is imprisoned by state authorities followed by a refusal to acknowledge the person's fate or whereabouts after a period of time has passed since his arrest. In our methodology, we estimate this period of time to be 40 days.). Between the beginning of 2014 and June 2016, five women detainees from Adra central prison have been forcibly-disappeared by the Syrian authorities as their fates is still unknown to their family as well as to us. We have issued a number of statements on the practices of enforced-disappearance that women detainees suffer from. There is an alarming fear that those detainees and tens of thousands of forcibly-disappeared persons (no less than 58,000 civilians are forcibly-disappeared according to SNHR detainee archive) will face sentences that were secretly issued by the military field-court and will be executed by the Syrian regime. Usually, these sentences are death.

Sara Khaled Al-Alaou, from Al-Bokamal city in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, born in 1994, is a student at the medical institute in Damascus University. On Monday 10 June 2013, she was arrested from the campus of Damascus University by security forces and was transferred to a security branch in Damascus city. We couldn't find out anything regarding her fate. Also, the Syrian authorities haven't revealed any information about her to her family as she has been forcibly-disappeared.





On 13 August 2013, her family were shocked when the official government TV channel aired a news program where Sara Khaled Al-Alaou was shown confessing, apparently the confessions were obtained under torture and force. Sara said that she is the leader of Al-Nusra Front and she joined the Front in the tenth grade, which means that she joined when she was 14-year-old, and that she practiced sexual jihad extensively. “Sexual Jihad” is a term used by the Syrian regime and its allies to accuse girls of marrying themselves, for a finite period of time, to elements of the jihadist groups. We highlighted in a previous report that the Syrian regime has forced 14 different women, including girls under the age of 18, to appear on TV and admit that they practiced sexual jihad after they were arrested and transferred to detention centers.

After the confessions were aired, Sara was transferred to Adra central prison and stayed there until 10 June 2016 when a patrol, which is probably affiliated to the Political Security branch in Damascus, took her to an unknown location (neither her family or SNHR know her whereabouts). Just before Sara’s three-year sentence was about to end, she has been forcibly-disappeared by the Syrian regime instead of being released.

The detainees in Syria are subjected to excessive torture sessions during which security forces obtain whatever confessions they want. Subsequently, detainees are tried in close trials that don’t last for more than minutes. These trials don’t abide by any international, or even regional, legal standards. The military field-court is unarguably the worst as this “court” handles crimes falling under the jurisdiction of military courts and during the time of war. The judges of this court are all military individuals and the rulings of the public prosecution are definitive and unreviewable. Also, the court and the public prosecution are allowed to refrain from adhering to the norms and procedures stated in the legislations in-force. Furthermore, the judgments issued by this court is unappealable.

SNHR demands that the Syria International Group presses on the Syrian regime to reveal the fate of Sara and let her go back to her family as soon as possible. The Security Council must take further action with respect to the issue of detainees and forcibly-disappeared in Syria. A binding Resolution must be adopted on this issue particularly. We still believe that after five years the international community hasn’t made any notable effort to address this sensitive issue that is integral to the security and stability of the Syrian society.

