

# Two Media Activists Killed, Two Injured, and Four Arrested, Toll of July 2017

All of them were Killed at the  
Hands of Extremist Islamic  
Groups

# SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Thursday, August 3, 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



## Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Methodology
- III. Executive Summary
- IV. Details
- V. Recommendations

## I. Introduction

Media activism in Syria is continuously deteriorating in light of the lack of attention by many international media organizations to what is happening in Syria and the notable decline in media coverage over the last year compared with previous years.

SNHR publishes a monthly report documenting the violations against media activists who play a prominent role in the civil movement and the armed conflict.

It should be noted that a journalist is a civilian according to the international humanitarian law regardless of his nationality. Any attack deliberately directed against a journalist is considered a war crime. However, when a media activist gets close to action-heavy zones, he is responsible for his own actions where targeting him in such case would be seen as collateral damage. Also, he would lose the right to protection if he was involved in military operations. We believe that media activists must be respected whether they have identification papers as media workers or don't considering the many difficulties they encounter to acquire these papers.

### **Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, says:**

“Media activism is especially important because it often sheds light on a string of various crimes that are taking place on a daily basis. Therefore, we record the violations perpetrated by conflicting parties in our monthly reports on violations against media activists.”



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. The agreement outlined four major de-escalation areas – Idlib governorate and the surrounding areas (parts of Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia governorates), northern Homs governorate, Eastern Ghouta, and parts of Daraa and al Quneitra governorates in the southern parts of Syria. It was provided that an expert committee would accurately assign the borders of said zones at a later date. The agreement provided for a cessation of combat operations, passage of humanitarian aids, and for IDPs to go back to their areas. Following an extensive round of talks between Russia, USA, and Jordan that commenced in May 2017 in Amman, Jordan's capital, the American and Russian presidents announced, on the sidelines of the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, that a ceasefire agreement has been reached in southwestern Syria – Daraa, Quneitra, and Suwayda governorates. The agreement went into force at 12:00 on Sunday July 9, 2017, and provided for the passage of humanitarian aids in addition to a ceasefire between the conflicting parties (Syrian regime forces and their allies on one side, and armed opposition factions on the other side). Also, the agreement specifies that maintaining security in this region is the Russian forces' responsibility in coordination with the Americans and Jordanians. Since the agreement went into effect, the included areas saw a noticeable and relatively good drop in the rates of killing in comparison with the previous months since March 2011.

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. This strongly asserts that there is a ceasefire of some sort on the table, but the crimes that the international community -especially the sponsoring states- won't see are still going on as nothing had changed.

SNHR recorded a significant drop in the rates of media activists killed for the second month in a row following the de-escalation agreement's commencement. Also, we didn't record any incident where media activists were killed by Syrian regime forces, while extremist Islamic groups were the sole responsible for media activists' deaths this month.



SNHR emphasizes that serious and quick steps must be taken to save media activism in Syria, and renews its condemnation of all violations against the freedom of media activism regardless of the perpetrators. The freedom of media must be respected and the workers in the media field must be protected and particularly considered. All individuals involved in violations against journalists and media activists must be held accountable. The international community, represented by the Security Council, must act upon its responsibilities in order to protect civilians and media activists in Syria.

## II. Methodology

According to SNHR's methodology, a civilian journalist is anyone who plays a notable role in reporting and publishing news. He is not necessarily impartial as a journalist should be.

In case a civilian journalist carried a weapon and was directly engaged in offensive military operations, he is no longer deemed a citizen journalist whereas it is possible that he would be referred to as a civilian journalist again provided he retires completely from military action.

The report might include incidents that we believe do not constitute violations of the international humanitarian law. We include it, however, to record it among the incidents that resulted in casualties even though it was within the boundaries that the international humanitarian law allows for.

This report draws upon SNHR's archive and the investigations conducted by the Network in addition to accounts by victims' families, information from local activists, and analyzing the pictures and videos that we have been receiving and archiving in our records since 2011. To read more about SNHR [methodology](#) in documenting victims.

In light of the security and logistic difficulties to access all the areas where violations take place, it is worth noting that these statistics and incidents are only the bare minimum of the actual magnitude of crimes and violations that happened.

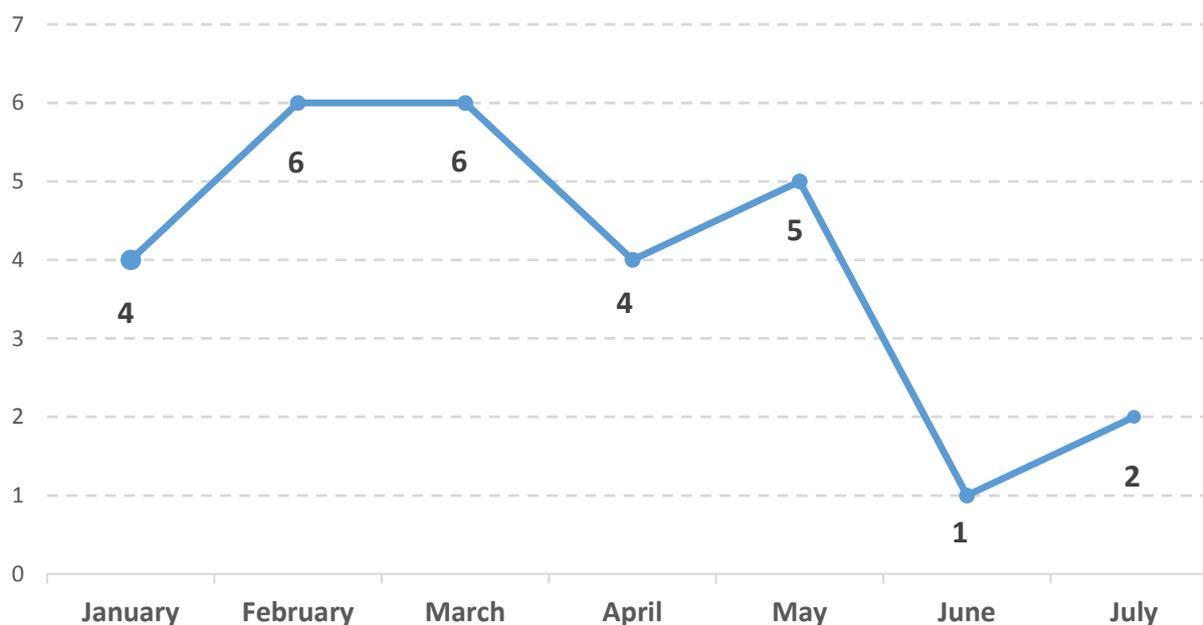


### III. Executive Summary

#### **A. Most notable violations against media activist in 2017**

SNHR has recorded the killing of 28 media activists from the start of 2017 until August of the same year

**Distribution of Media Activist Victims per Month since the Start of 2017**



#### **B. most notable violations against media activists in July 2017**

Violations against media activists during the month of July 2017 are distributed as follows:

- **Acts of killing:** SNHR documented the killing of two media activists at the hands of Extremist Islamic groups;
  - ISIS: one media activist
  - Fateh al Sham Front (formerly al Nussra Front): one media activist
- **Injuries:** we recorded that two media activists were injured at the hands of Syrian regime forces
- **Arrest and release:** we recorded four cases of arrest, where three arrested media activists were released later:
  - Extremist Islamic groups:
    - Fateh al Sham Front (formerly al Nussra Front): we recorded two cases of arrest, where the arrested media activists were released later.
    - Armed opposition factions: one case of arrest, where the arrested media activist was released later.
  - Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party): one case of arrest.



- **Other violations:** we recorded that a media office was bombed by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes

## IV. Details

### **A. Violations by Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)**

- Injuries

#### **Abdul Rahman Yahya Ibrahim**

Monday, July 10, 2017, Abdul Rahman [was shot](#) in his right foot by a Syrian regime sniper, as he was filming a report in al Houla city, northern suburbs of Homs governorate, in the aftermath of a bombing by fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes on that day.

Abdul Rahman, a photographer for al Jazeera News Channel, from Taldaou town, northern suburbs of Homs governorate, born in 1992, has a high school diploma, married.



Asking about the details of Abdul Rahman's injury, SNHR contacted his colleague and media activist Jalal Suliman via Facebook:

“al Houla is a target for the regime warplanes’ airstrikes. Around 5:30 PM on Monday, July 10, while Abdul Rahman was on his motorcycle headed to the city to film a report in the aftermath of the bombing on the city on that day, a Syrian regime sniper, who was stationed at The National Hospital checkpoint on the outskirts of the city, shot him multiple times. One of the bullets went through his metatarsus in his right foot. He was rushed to the makeshift hospital in al Houla city, where he received first-aids. Also, his motorcycle was slightly damaged.”

#### **Zaher “al Musawwer” (The Photographer)**

[Zaher](#), his surname is concealed for security concerns, was injured on July 25, 2017 by shrapnel in his chest and back during a bombing by the fixed-wing warplanes of the Syrian-Russian alliance (investigations are still ongoing to accurately identify the perpetrator party) as he was covering the bombing by warplanes on Irbeen city, eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, which is under the control of armed opposition factions.

Zaher, known as Zaher “al Musawwer”, head of the photography department in the unified media office of Irbeen city, from Irbeen city, born in 1997, has an elementary education certificate, single.



SNHR contacted Zaher, via WhatsApp, to ask about the circumstances of his injury:

“On Tuesday, July 25, warplanes -I couldn’t identify the source- attacked Irbeen. I immediately headed to where one of the missiles landed in Irbeen Square to document the aftermath of the airstrike. As I was there with a friend named Abu al Noor, the warplanes resumed their airstrike on the same area. We were trying to hide, but the missile landed near me. The shrapnel got into my chest and back. I was rushed to Ibreen hospital, where I received first-aids. While I survived, my friend Abu al Noor died. The airstrikes on that day also caused huge destruction to the civilians’ properties such as houses and shops.”

- Other violations

### **Damascus Media Center – Ain Tarma town**

Thursday, July 13, 2017, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired two missiles at Damascus Media Center in Ain Tarma town, Damascus suburbs governorate. The office was heavily destroyed and its equipment (computers - cameras) were ruined. The office was rendered out of commission. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

## **B. Extremist Islamic groups**

### **- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State)**

- Acts of killing

### **Khaled Ghassan al Khatib**

Sunday, July 30, 2017, Khaled [died of wounds](#) caused by an artillery shell fired by ISIS artillery, as the shell landed near him while he was covering clashes between Syrian regime forces and ISIS on the battlefield of al Bghiliya village, eastern suburbs of Homs governorate.

Khaled, [a reporter](#) for RT TV channel, from al Salamiya city, eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1992.



Khaled al Khatib



## **- Fateh al Sham Front (formerly al Nussra Front)**

### - Acts of killing

#### **Mousab Walid al Izzou**

Wednesday, July 19, 2017, Mousab was shot in his abdomen by members of Fateh al Sham Front as they were trying to break a demonstration that called for ending the infighting between armed opposition factions and Fateh al Sham Front. The demonstration also tried to stop the Front from taking over the headquarters of Jabhat Thourar Saraqeb in Saraqeb city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Mousab, an independent media activist, from Saraqeb city, northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, born in 1972, married and has four kids.



### - Arrest and release

#### **Khalaf Joumaa**

Thursday, July 20, 2017, Fateh al Sham Front arrested Khalaf near Idlib City Hospital after luring him. He was released on Sunday, July 23, 2017.

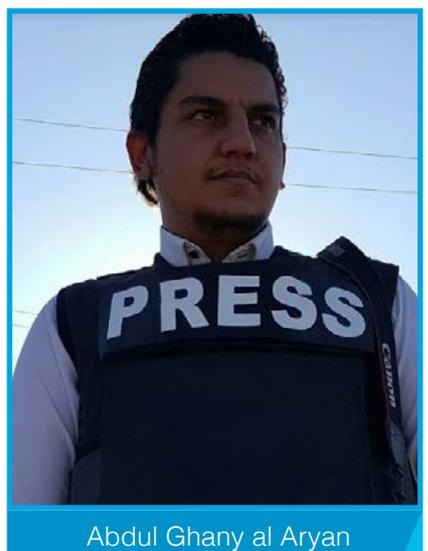
Khalaf, a reporter for al Kul Radio in Idlib city, from Tal Bajer village, southern suburbs of Aleppo governorate.



#### **Abdul Ghany al Aryan**

Thursday, July 20, 2017, Fateh al Sham Front arrested Abdul Ghany from his place of residence in Salqin city, western suburbs of Idlib governorate. He was released on Sunday, July 23, 2017.

Abdul Ghany, a reporter for Qasyoun Agency in Idlib governorate, from Salqin city, western suburbs of Idlib governorate.



### **C. Armed opposition factions**

- Arrest and release

#### **Mohammad Jqeir**

Thursday, July 13, 2017, Ahrar al Sham Islamic Movement arrested Mohammad in Salqin city, western suburbs of Idlib governorate, over a post in which he criticized the Movement's practices. He was released on the same day. Mohammad Jqeir, known as Abu Jamal al Tayeh, a media activist, from Aleppo city.



Mohammad Jqeir

### **D. Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party)**

- Arrest

#### **Hajji al Maswat**

Monday, July 31, 2017, Self-Management forces (primarily consisting of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party) arrested Hajji from his place of residence in Tal Tishreen village, suburbs of Hasaka governorate. He was taken to an undisclosed location. His fate remains unknown to SNHR as well as his family.



Hajji al Maswat

### **V. Recommendations**

#### **Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Condemn the targeting of media activists in Syria and sheds light on their sacrifice and suffering.

#### **Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic**

Conduct investigations that focuses on the targeting of media activists given their vital role in recording incidents in Syria.



## **The Security Council**

Work on fighting the policy of impunity by referring the cases in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

## **International and Arabic media institutions**

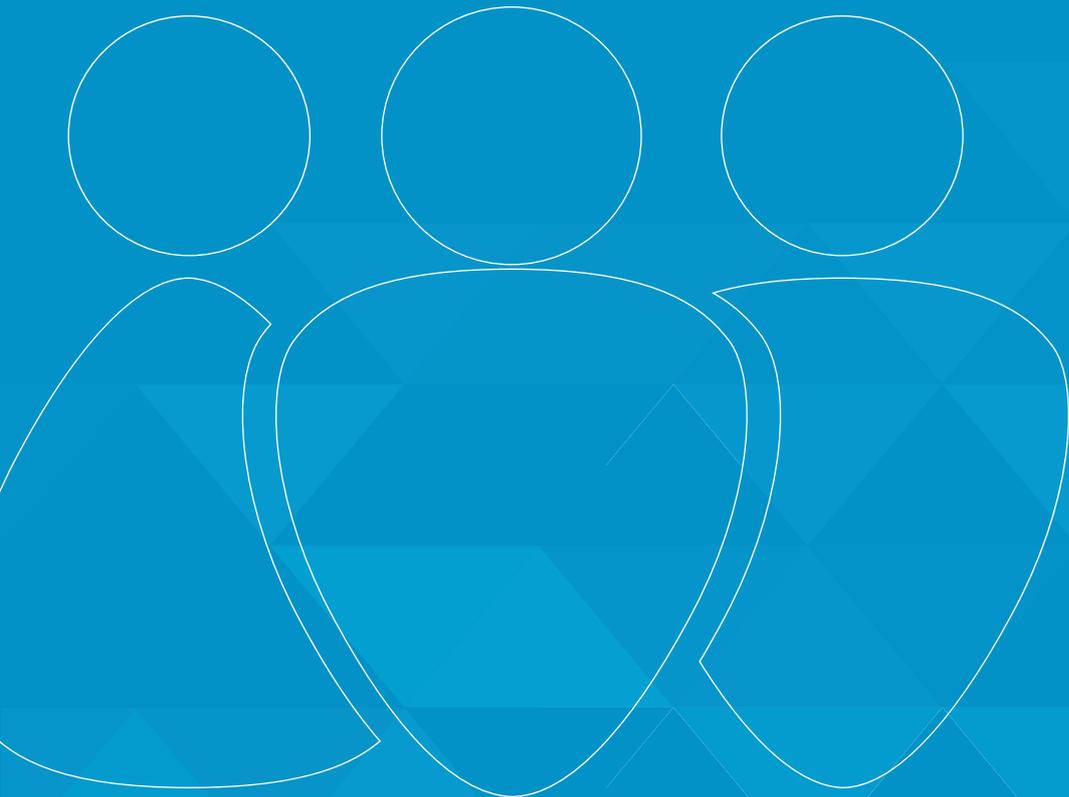
Advocate their colleagues in the field of media by publishing periodic reports that shed light on their daily suffering and memorialize their sacrifice. Also, they must contact their families to console them.

Finally, all parties have to respect the international humanitarian law with respect to the protection of civilians and especially media activists and their equipment.

## **Acknowledgment and Condolences**

Our most heartfelt condolences go out for the victims' families and our thanks to the families and friends of media activists who contributed effectively to this report.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

