

Coalition and Abbas Khan's Family Call for Justice

en.etilaf.org/press/coalition-and-abbas-khans-family-call-for-justice

January 24, 2014

Press Release

Office of the President of the Syrian Coalition

Geneva, Switzerland

January 24, 2014

At a press conference held on the eve of peace talks, the President of the Syrian Opposition Coalition and the family of a British doctor Abbas Khan called for the regime to be brought to justice.

Sara Khan, sister of doctor Abbas Khan, called on the regime to identify and hand over for trial those responsible for his brutal torture and death in a regime prison in Damascus. She said that the negotiations in Geneva were linked to her family's fight for justice. "If we are going to talk about peace, we first need to establish the rule of law, accountability and justice," she said.

The Assad regime was infamous during its four-decade rule for detaining prisoners of conscience. Treatment for prisoners was often brutal with torture and summary executions commonplace. Since the start of the uprising in 2011, the regime has detained thousands more.

"What happened to Abbas is no different to what happened to thousands of Syrians," said Sara. "If they tortured and killed a Westerner in this way, imagine what they do to Syrians."

President Ahmad al Jarba has said the regime's culture of impunity must end, and those who torture and kill civilians must be held to account. The Coalition has said those responsible for the torture and execution of 11,000 prisoners as depicted in recently leaked photographs must be tried in front of the international criminal court.

"The pictures (of torture and executions) were really difficult to see. The treatment – starvation, electrocution, strangulation – were the same things Abbas suffered. He was found in the same state," Sara Khan explained.

In his speech, Jarba said, "Today, the world stands before a people who have been tortured, their freedom and rights usurped for more than 40 years at the hands of a criminal family, and the moment they dared to ask for freedom they were answered with bullets, scud missiles, and chemical weapons. The world also stands before a regime that only understands the language of oppression; a regime that believes the screech of bullets is the only way to silence voices calling for freedom; a regime that wrongly thinks by killing the free it can kill freedom."

It is difficult to ignore the scale of the regime's brutality. The mounting evidence underlines the need for a transition to a Syria free of Assad.