

More Syrians Die Under Torture in Assad's Dungeons as Int'l Community Remains Silent

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Press Release

Syrian Coalition

National Commission on Detainees and Missing Persons

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The Assad regime continues to subject detainees and forcibly disappeared people in its prisons to systematic, brutal torture and ill-treatment, a policy it has adopted since 2011. Reports by human rights groups have documented the names of more than 100,000 Syrian citizens, including some 12,000 Palestinian-Syrians who have been detained by the Assad regime since March 2011.

Rights groups' reports highlighted the brutal methods of torture the Assad regime uses against detainees, including mutilation, beatings with metal rods, burning them with cigarettes, and other methods that lead to death during or because of torture. The Assad regime has also been involved in extrajudicial executions and physical liquidation of detainees. Reports by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) confirmed the responsibility of the Assad regime for the death of 13,066 detainees in Assad's prisons as of June 2018, including women and children. The victims included around 500 Palestinian-Syrians, while it is feared that the real number may be much higher.

A terrifying report by Amnesty International in early 2017 revealed some of the crimes being committed by the Assad regime against detainees in Sednaya Military Prison. The report talked about mass executions of detainees and systematic extermination inside the prison.

Testimonies collected by international organizations confirmed that prison officials and their heads as well as senior regime officials were well aware of what is going on inside detention centers. The crimes and violations against detainees include abduction, enforced disappearance, denial that the arrests took place, torture and execution. They also include refusal to hand over the bodies of detainees to their families, burying them in mass graves, and not registering their deaths in time. Each of these acts constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity.

Moreover, reports by independent rights groups presented compelling evidence about the responsibility of senior regime officials for these crimes and violations. The reports stressed that those officials must be held accountable, especially as international human rights law stressed that authorities are responsible for the safety of detainees and says they must prove if the death was natural through serious medical examination and impartial investigations.

Another SNHR report indicted that the Assad regime manipulates the civil registry by ordering civil registry officials to register the death of detainees, which amounts to striking evidence of the Assad regime's responsibility for their enforced disappearance.

We in the National Commission on Detainees and Missing Persons renew calls on the UN Security Council to address the tragic situation in the prisons and detention centers of the Assad regime with some sense of human responsibility and to take a bold decision to refer the war crimes in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

It is imperative that the international community, civil and human rights organizations and activists who advocates freedom and human dignity around the world to work seriously to save the lives of tens of thousands of young men, women, men, old men and children. The issue of detainees needs to be addressed in accordance with the basic human rights that everyone on earth must uphold.