

Documentation of 72 Torture Methods the Syrian Regime Continues to Practice in Its Detention Centers and Military Hospitals

Identifying 801 Individuals Who Appeared in Caesar Photographs, the US Congress Must Pass the Caesar Act to Provide Accountability

SNHR

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

Contents

- I. Introduction and methodology of the report
- II. The Syrian Network for Human Rights' cooperation with the UN Rapporteur on deaths due to Torture
- III. The toll of victims who died due to torture according to the SNHR's database
- IV. The most notable methods of torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers
 - Physical torture
 - Health neglect, conditions of detention and deprivation
 - Sexual violence
 - Psychological torture and humiliation of human dignity
 - Forced labor
 - Torture in military hospitals
 - Separation
- V. New identification of 29 individuals who appeared in Caesar photographs leaked from military hospitals
- VI. Examples of individuals shown in Caesar photographs who we were able to identify
- VII. Various testimonies of torture incidents by survivors of the Syrian regime's detention centers
- VIII. The most notable individuals responsible for torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers according to the SNHR's database
- IX. Conclusions and recommendations



I. Introduction and methodology of the report:

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been subjected to abduction (detention) by Syrian Regime forces; according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights' (SNHR) database, at least 130,000 individuals are still detained or forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011. The total number arrested is far higher, with our estimates suggesting that almost 1.2 million Syrian citizens have been arrested and detained at some point. We use the term 'detention' loosely in this context because in most countries an arrest has legal limitations that are completely missing with the Syrian regime, whose arrests are more similar in form to abductions by mafia gangs than to any legal procedure; for the regime, arrest begins with a group of armed men, often affiliated with the security services, wearing military or civilian uniforms, breaking into a house or raiding a workplace or public place, or at a checkpoint, with arrests carried out without presenting any arrest warrant, official order or judicial documentation for the arrest. These armed men refuse to reveal their names or identities or to give any information about their affiliations or which security service or official body they represent. This abduction is usually accompanied by the use of excessive violence, physical and verbal abuse, both to intimidate the detainee and other people in the area. From the moment of his or her arrest, the detainee is deprived of all legal and human rights and subjected to multiple forms of torture, as well as continuous fear over his or her unknown fate; a person detained in this way is simply deemed to have disappeared in an Orwellian sense, with the ruling authorities denying all knowledge of his or her arrest or place of detention. The regime also forbids detainees from communicating with their families or even informing them of the arrest. Detainees are also denied any opportunity to appoint a lawyer, meaning that almost 65 percent of those detained in this way by the Syrian regime are ultimately classified as forcibly disappeared.

According to the exhaustive monitoring and documentation which SNHR has conducted on a daily basis for nearly eight years to date ever since the beginning of the popular uprising in Syria, and through speaking with thousands of survivors of detention and torture, there is hardly any male or female detainee who has not been subjected to some form of torture which is practiced from the very first moments of detention. Furthermore, no month in all the years since 2011 has passed without us documenting dozens of deaths due to torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers, which is still continuing to the current date. We have documented the deaths of 185 individuals due to torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers since the beginning of 2019 up until September 2019. For all these reasons and given the regime's history, there's not a single reason that makes us believe that the brutal torture practiced by Syrian Regime forces, which is still ongoing under the same strategy up to this moment, has stopped or will stop so long as the regime remains in power.



The SNHR issued a report in September 2014 on [the most notable torture methods used by the Syrian regime](#), but over the years and by talking to more survivors of detention or torture, we were able to document a wider range of torture methods, which we will outline in this report. These torture methods themselves have caused the deaths of nearly 14,000 individuals in the Syrian regime's detention centers that we have recorded; this is only the number we have been able to document rather than the real total which is likely to be far higher. This is also what the world has glimpsed more clearly through the Caesar photographs leaked by a dissident Syrian regime photographer.

All these photos and reports of deaths in detention centers that have spread on hundreds of major media outlets, also the regional and local - except for those media supporting the Syrian regime - did not prompt the Syrian regime to carry out any investigation or even to admit to any torture in its facilities. Instead, the regime supported the officers who issued the torture orders, promoting them to senior positions, and used other state institutions as part of its torture machine by registering the forcibly disappeared persons killed in its detention centers as deceased at civil registry departments often years after their demise, in violation of Syrian law and the rules of registration of deaths in prisons, which are provided for in articles 38 and 39 of the Syrian Civil Status Law. The Syrian regime also violated the Syrian Constitution, in the paragraph 2 of Article 53 thereof which prohibits the ruling authority from practicing torture. The Syrian People's Assembly has consistently remained strictly subordinate to the security services, being unable to demand that the government and the ruling authority be held accountable, to delegitimize these bodies, or even to demand an investigation. This confirms the impossibility of Syria's transition to a system of democratic pluralistic governance in light of the survival of the ruling regime and its security services. Finally, the prohibition of torture is a universally customary rule which may in no circumstances be altered or balanced against other rights or values by any state, not even in an emergency, while any violation of the prohibition of torture is an international crime under international criminal law. Those who have ordered or assisted in the perpetration of torture are criminally responsible for such practices. Syria's government ratified the Convention against Torture in 2004; the Syrian regime's practices of torture amount to crimes against humanity, having been practiced systematically against tens of thousands of Syrians, and amount to extermination.



Fadel Abdul Ghany, Chairman of the Syrian Network for Human Rights, says:

“The Syrian people have the right to help from the rest of the world's states that have ratified the Geneva Conventions in ensuring that the Syrian regime respects the implementation of the Geneva Conventions and that it stops systematically torturing Syrians to death, both of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. This is not only the duty of the Security Council that failed in protecting the Syrians, but of all the countries of the world, which have a shared and urgent responsibility to help end the brutal torture that tens of thousands of Syrians continue to be subjected to. Moreover, Caesar's photographs will always provide overwhelming evidence of the systematic torture inflicted on Syrians, with nobody helping to stop the recurrence of these atrocities since the rest of the world's governments first saw the Caesar photographs and up to the current date. The sadistic methods of torture adopted constitute a threat to the very essence of all humanity, not just to the Syrian people or to the people of the region.”

Methodology:

Through nearly eight years of work, the SNHR team interviewed and communicated with thousands of people who survived detention and torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers, mainly in one or more of the four main security branches (Air Intelligence, Military Intelligence, General Directorate of State Security, Political Security), in addition to in the regime's military prisons, secret and unofficial detention centers and military hospitals. Many witnesses provided us with photographs showing the signs of torture on their bodies and documents issued against them by the Syrian regime. In addition, the SNHR has built up an extensive database containing tens of thousands of government documents obtained over the same period. Through cross-checking survivors' testimonies with the documents in our possession and with the Caesar photographs which we were able to obtain - approximately 6,189 photos, some of which came from Caesar himself, and some others published on the Internet - we note that there is a pattern adopted in all detention centers of methods and processes of torture used by the Syrian regime, which suggests that the orders for and training in these procedures are all issued from one central point and in close coordination and exchange of expertise to deliberately create a range of the most heinous and cruel methods of torture.



The SNHR has a database of various names and details of those killed as a result of torture in detention centers, and another database of enforced disappearances. Since the first days of obtaining about 6,189 Caesar photographs, we wanted to determine the identity of those shown in these photos because this provides stronger confirmation that this individual is dead, and thus helps determine his or her fate and give his or her family closure. To help in achieving this objective, we communicated with Caesar and his colleague Sami, known as the "Computer Man"; it should be noted that we faced severe challenges in this area, most notably being unable to obtain all the photos smuggled out by Caesar, or to publish the photos in our possession consecutively for people to identify, because publication of the photos in this way would involve many violations, perhaps the most prominent of which is the violation of victims' and family members' privacy, with many families understandably not wanting to publish photos of their children or spouses in this way, as the publication of such distressing photos may cause further trauma and pain to the tens of thousands of families whose children are still forcibly disappeared. In addition to this, most of these graphic photos of individuals killed under torture contain shocking and distressing scenes and we believe that disseminating them without very good cause is a violation of human dignity. In 2019, we were able to positively identify 29 more of the individuals in these photos, bringing the total number of identified individuals we were able to document to 801 cases, including two children and 10 women (adult female). Our investigations are continuing to identify 6,189 more of the individuals photographed, whom we have photos of, after being killed under torture in the regime's prisons.

In our archive, we keep copies of the photographs of the victims smuggled out of Syria, which we include in this report; we have refrained from showing them here at the request of the victims' families and in respect for their feelings. In our view, the dissemination of photos in an ill-considered manner in cyberspace involves many violations, most notably the violation of the victims' privacy and the further needless trauma caused to their grieving families. A number of the victims' families also provided us with documents related to the victims, such as death certificates, which we keep in our archives, asking us not to share these for security reasons. Many of the detainees' families assured us that their children were healthy and did not suffer any illness at the time of their arrest, contrary to the regime's implausible claims for the cause of death. Also, none of the victims families were able to take any legal action or other steps after finding out about their loved ones' deaths – often years after the demise – to request an investigation, demand the return of their family member' bodies for burial or even to know the place of their burial or retrieve their personal belongings due to well-founded concerns that any such request would lead to them or other family members being detained or very possibly forcibly disappeared themselves in retaliation.



In order to limit the length of the report to a manageable size and to prevent repetition, we include 20 accounts from torture survivors or victims' relatives which we obtained through direct interviews with witnesses rather than from any open sources. In selecting the accounts for inclusion in this report, we took into account the different years in which incidents took place and the diversity of governorates and detention centers, as well as the variety of methods of torture suffered by survivors, their severity, the detainees' sex, gender, age, and religious and cultural backgrounds in order to emphasize that torture affects all segments of Syrian society. We defined torture methods as survivors described them to us.

Finally, the report is based on the SNHR's database of detentions, enforced disappearances and torture, which have been documented through daily monitoring and documentation since 2011. All the statistics included therein are recorded by name, photograph, place and time of death and detention, and other details and information that we have been able to access, all of which we periodically and continuously update as required. We have dedicated [a link](#) to facilitate documentation and access for victims' families. We have also dedicated a special archive of photographs, videos and documents which we have investigated relating to torture. We also base this report on another Syrian Network for Human Rights' database containing data on thousands of individuals, officials, leaders and officers with the regime whom we believe are involved in violations, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In this report, we include those who we believe are the most notable individuals responsible for torture in order that they may ultimately be prosecuted and convicted.

II. The Syrian Network for Human Rights' cooperation with the UN Rapporteur on deaths due to Torture

The SNHR team conducts regular periodic correspondence with the UN Group on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary excursions concerning victims who died due to Torture. We have devoted [a form](#) on our official website that families can fill out, with the completed forms submitted automatically to the SNHR team responsible for following up on each case, which then communicates with the families to complete the documentation and registration process.

In this context, the SNHR is requesting further cooperation from victims' families in order to submit as many cases as possible to the UN Group on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary excursions. Our team works 24/7 to build broad relationships with the families of the torture victims, to obtain as much information as possible which is stored on our database dedicated specifically to victims of torture, which will also ultimately serve in fulfilling accountability issues at a later date.

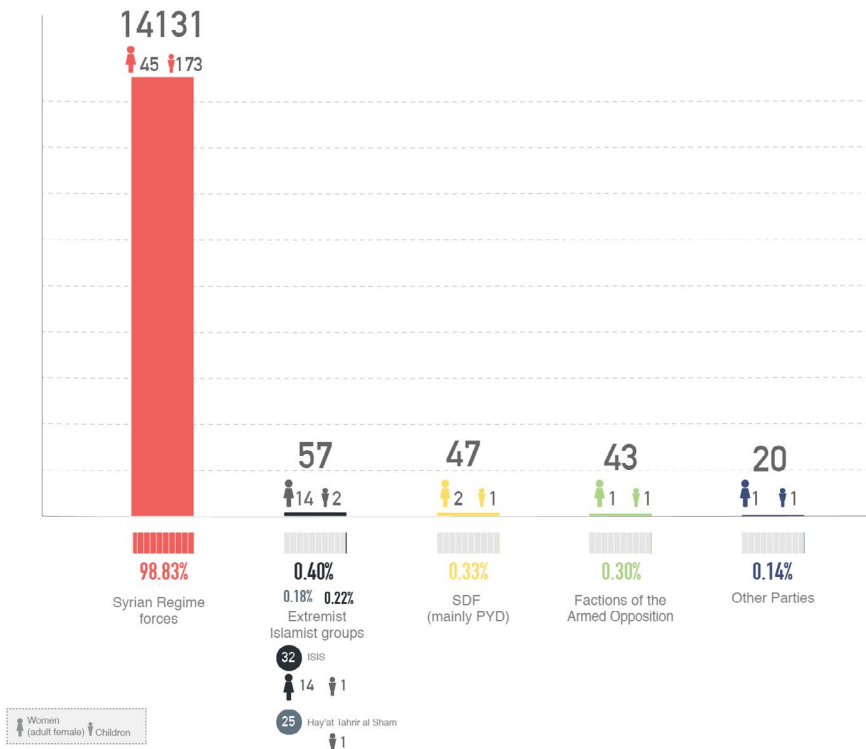


III. The toll of victims who died due to torture according to the SNHR's database

Between March 2011 and September 2019, the SNHR documented the deaths of at least 14,298 individuals, including 178 children and 63 women (adult female) due to torture. The toll of victims who died due to torture in Syria from March 2011 to September 2019 is distributed by the four perpetrator parties as follows:



Distributed as follows:



14,298
individuals
have died due to torture
at the hands of
the main parties to
the conflict in Syria

from March 2011 to September 2019

Syrian Regime forces: 14,131, including 173 children and 45 women.

Extremist Islamist groups: 57, including two children and 14 women

- ISIS: 32, including one child and 14 women
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham: 25, including one child

Factions of the Armed Opposition: 43, including one child and one woman

Syrian Democratic Forces: 47, including one child and two women

Parties we were unable to identify: 20 individuals, including one child and one woman



IV. The most notable methods of torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers

The torture patterns used by Syrian Regime forces in regime detention centers were numerous and so widely practiced that there was hardly any survivor who had not been subjected to at least one and more usually several of these methods. We have classified patterns of torture in seven main categories, with each sub-type consisting of several secondary methods, constituting a total of 72 methods of torture used by the Syrian Regime forces against detainees. There may be other methods used, but we have not yet been able to identify and document these. We always emphasize that a detainee may be subjected to a variety of torture methods during a single torture session. The seven basic patterns are:

One: Physical torture: 39 methods

Two: Health neglect and conditions of detention: Six methods

Three: Sexual violence: Eight methods

Four: Psychological torture and humiliation of human dignity: Eight methods

Five: Forced labor

Six: Torture in military hospitals: Nine methods

Seven: Separation

One. Physical torture:

We, at the SNHR, were able to monitor and document 39 methods categorized as physical torture systematically practiced against those detained in the Syrian regime's detention centers. Physical torture is often more concentrated and intense in the first few days and weeks of detention as well as during interrogation sessions to obtain forced confessions, and continues for long hours or even days. It should be noted that while the male pronoun is used for detainees in these descriptions, all these methods are practiced on detainees of both sexes. We defined the 39 methods we recorded under this pattern as follows:

1- Torture with water:

Water in detention centers is used as a method of torture in various ways, such as drowning or causing burns and shocks as follows:

I. Pouring hot water Scalding hot water near boiling point is poured or sprayed on different parts of the detainee's body, leading to burns of different degrees depending on the amount and temperature of the water used. Most of the survivors we spoke with said that this water was often poured on the victim's abdomen or back.

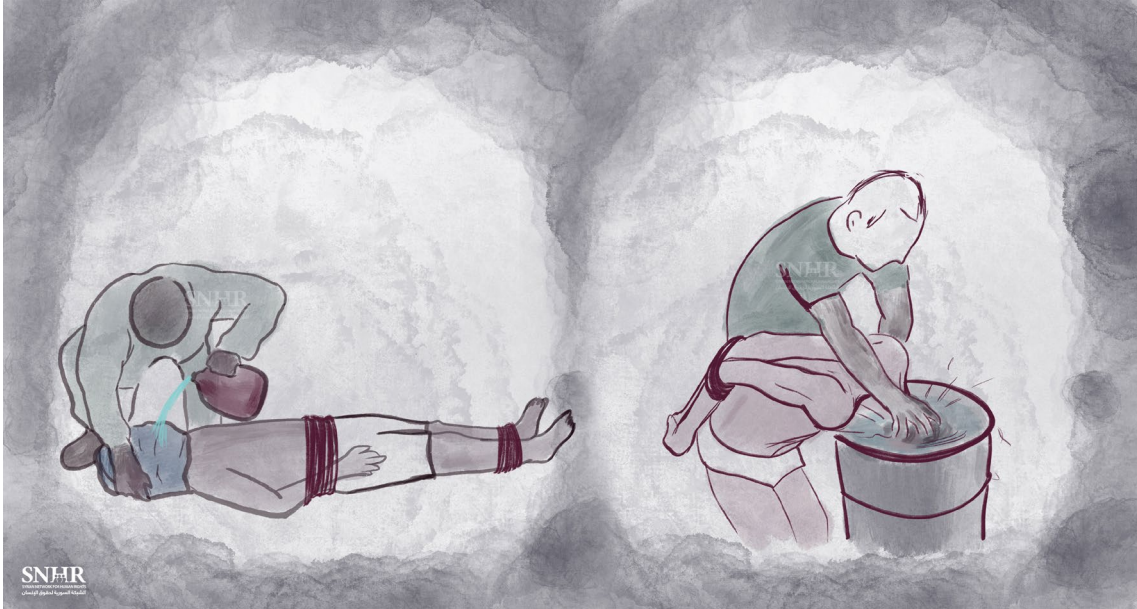




II. Spraying freezing cold water: This method is practiced during interrogation or when the detainee is in the cell. The security member suddenly sprays the detainee with freezing cold water, randomly targeting his entire body or the head in particular. In most cases, the detainee is naked in order to inflict the greatest damage to his body. When sprayed with the icy cold water, the detainee suffers shock, trembling and shivering with cold, especially since this method is often practiced in winter in order to increase the suffering of the detainee in the already freezing temperatures. The detainee is then left without a blanket suffering from the cold cell and drenched in freezing water.

III. Drowning and suffocating: The head of the detainee is placed inside a large container, barrel or basin filled with water. The security personnel force the detainee's head underwater for one to two minutes to make him suffer suffocation symptoms. In other cases, the detainee is waterboarded, being forced to lie on his back; then restrained, with a soaking wet cloth used to cover his entire face, making it difficult for him to breathe. Water is then poured over the cloth to waterboard the detainee.





2- Torture with electricity:

Electrocution: We were able to identify three main ways to practice this method:

- o The detainee is electrocuted by use of an electric baton. These electrocutions are usually directed at the detainee's abdomen or reproductive organs.



- o Electrical wires are connected to a battery that generates electricity, with the powerful electric shocks generated usually directed at the legs and hands.
 - o The detainee is forced to sit on a metal chair and is tied to it with restraints, then an electric current is delivered to the chair to shock the detainee's entire body.
- We note that torture by electrocution leads to damage to the detainee's nervous system and causes a constant headache and involuntary trembling in his body as well as burns of varying degrees depending on the severity of the electrical current used.



3- Torture with fire, burning materials and oil:

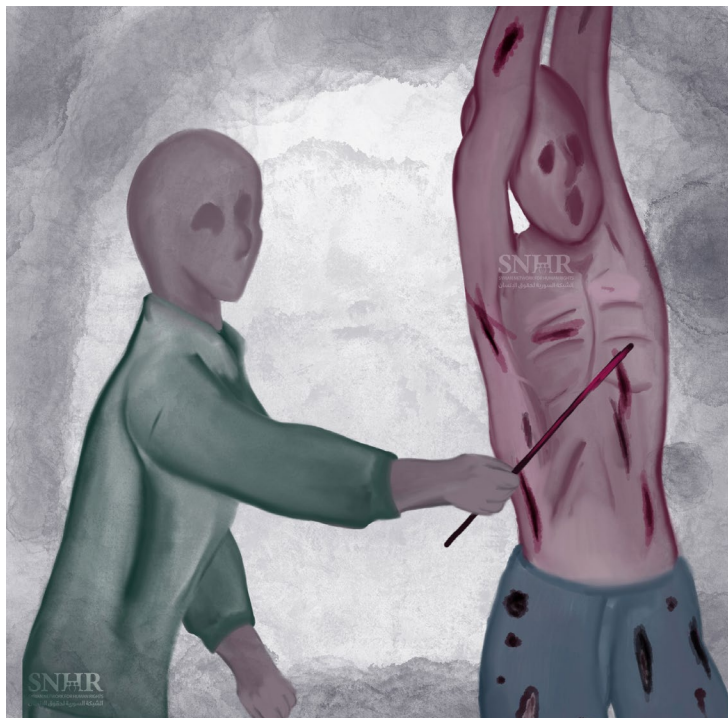
Security members responsible for torture deliberately burn parts of the detainee's body using eight basic methods:

I. Burning with nylon bags: Igniting and dissolving nylon bags on parts of the detainee's body such as the chest, abdomen, back, legs and hands.

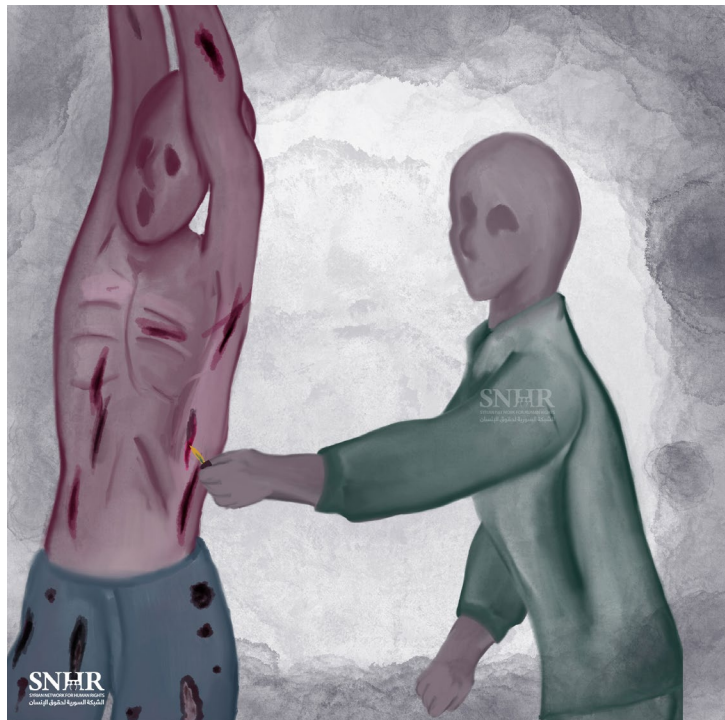




II. Burning with metal skewer: Heating a metal skewer to the highest possible temperature and putting it on parts of the detainee's body, such as their back, face, hands and legs.



III. Burning with cigarette butts and lighters: Extinguishing cigarette butts on the detainee's body or burning the fingers of his hands, feet, ears and hair with lighters.



IV. Burning with oil Security members responsible for torture boil a quantity of oil, usually between half a liter and one liter in a container, then pour it on different parts of the detainee's body leading to severe burns and permanent scars which never disappear.

V. Burning with chemical acids: Spraying chemical acids on parts of the detainee's body causing severe burns and deformities.

VI. Burning with flame: This method is usually associated with the shabeh (Ghost) or fixation torture method, with a heat source (a heater or fire) being placed near the detainee, who is left, unable to move, and slowly exposed to the heat of the flame, so he suffers severe burns.

VII. Burning with gunpowder: Gunpowder is ignited on the detainee's body, usually placed on the back or chest and abdomen. Our team has documented several cases in which the security members responsible for torture wrote the name "Bashar" or "Assad" with gunpowder and then ignited it on the detainee's body.

VIII. Burning with insecticides: Flammable pesticide is sprayed on the detainee's body and then ignited by security members to burn the detainee's skin, and then extinguished, with the burnt skin being flayed in a sadistic savage manner. As with the other torture methods,



the depravity of this act is difficult for normal human beings to imagine, and it is carried out in an attempt not only to inflict pain on the detainee but to terrorize other detainees witnessing it. All these forms of torture cause severe burns to the detainee's body, with the burns subsequently becoming infected. During our work, at the SNHR, to analyze Caesar's leaked photos from military hospitals, we have noted burn marks on the detainee's dead bodies, in some cases reaching the stage of charring.

4- Torture by 'al Shabeh' and suspension:

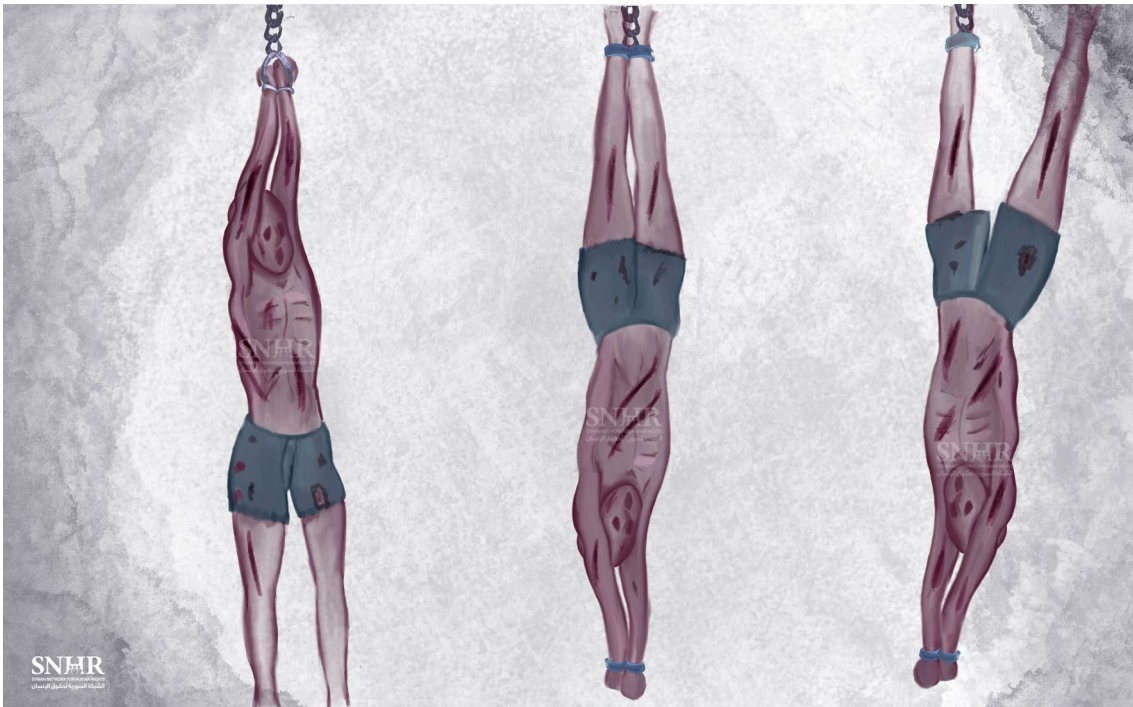
The infamous al Shabeh (Ghost) torture method is common in the Syrian Regime's detention centers. We observed that it is used in five basic forms:

I. Al Shabeh position: The detainee's hands are tied behind his back, then he is raised by the same rope which is tied to rings fixed to the ceiling, leaving his body suspended from the ground so the full weight is hanging from the wrists. This leads to dislocation of the shoulders and the rupture of the muscles in the shoulders and upper arms, and severe swelling of the hands. Detainees are often left this way for hours or days. This shabeh position is the most widespread and commonly used during torture.

II. The reverse shabeh position: The detainee's hands are tied behind his or her back, and his or her feet are also tied to a rope before he is suspended by the feet from the ceiling, head-down. This method is usually accompanied by whipping or kicking to the head and back, causing further pain and severe dizziness due to the increased blood flow to the head.

III. The lateral shabeh position: The detainee is suspended from the ceiling by one hand or foot with his entire body off the ground, with the body swinging and the suspended hand or foot swelling due to carrying the full weight of the body. The detainee is usually left on this position for a few hours or days.

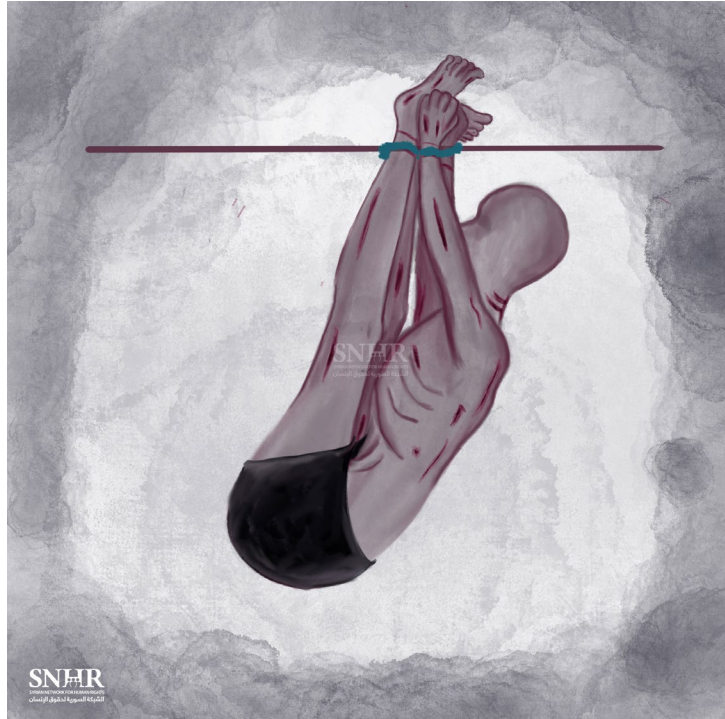




IV. Al shabeh position with ‘Blanco’ suspension: The detainee is suspended from his wrists by a rope on a track connected to a pulley (Blanco) and raised until only the tips of his toes touch the ground, then kicked so his body swings. This method is similar to the traditional shabeh method , with the addition of the Blanco, which is commonly used in slaughterhouses used to slaughter livestock.



V. Suspension with broiler method: The detainee's hands are tied to his feet after which he is suspended in the air from a wooden or metal pillar in a way that grotesquely simulates a rotisserie used to grill meat. This is accompanied with beating the detainee on different parts of his body.



5- Torture by prevention of movement

We observed three forms of this method, which usually coincides with beating and deprivation of food, drink and urination:

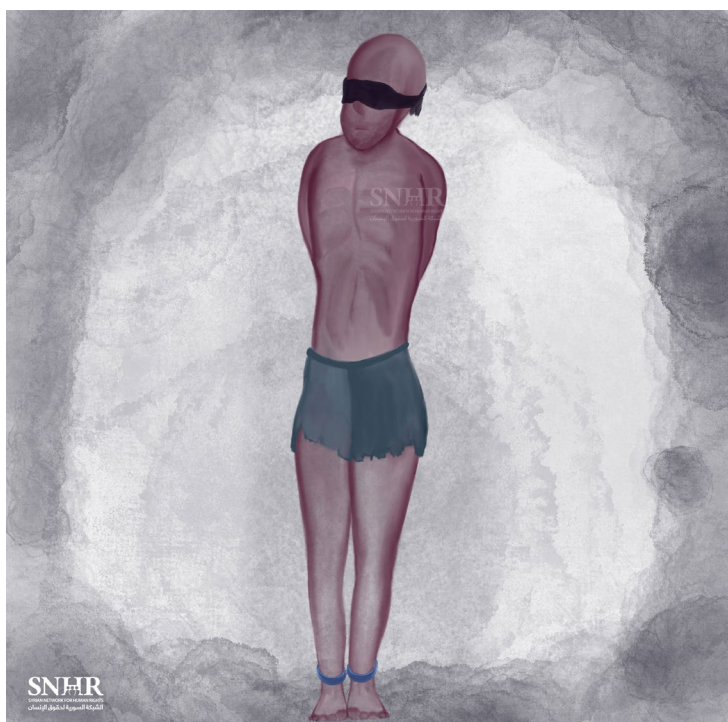
I. Squatting position: The detainee is forced to squat on his toes, with his hands behind his head, without leaning on a wall. He is also prevented from standing on his feet and is beaten if he moves. Usually he is kept in this position for hours or a whole day in order to exhaust his body, especially the muscles of the arms, legs and spine.





II. Standing on one foot: The detainee is forced to put his hands behind his head and raise one of his feet to remain standing on the other without leaning on a wall and is beaten for any movement, usually being forced to maintain this position for many hours or even a full day.

III. Long standing: The detainee's hands are tied at the back or front, with the feet also being bound by the ankles, and is forced to stand without movement for long hours without bending the head down; usually the detainee is blindfolded and this position coincides with the beatings on the neck from the back.



6- Torture by means of restrain positions associated with beatings and causing harm:

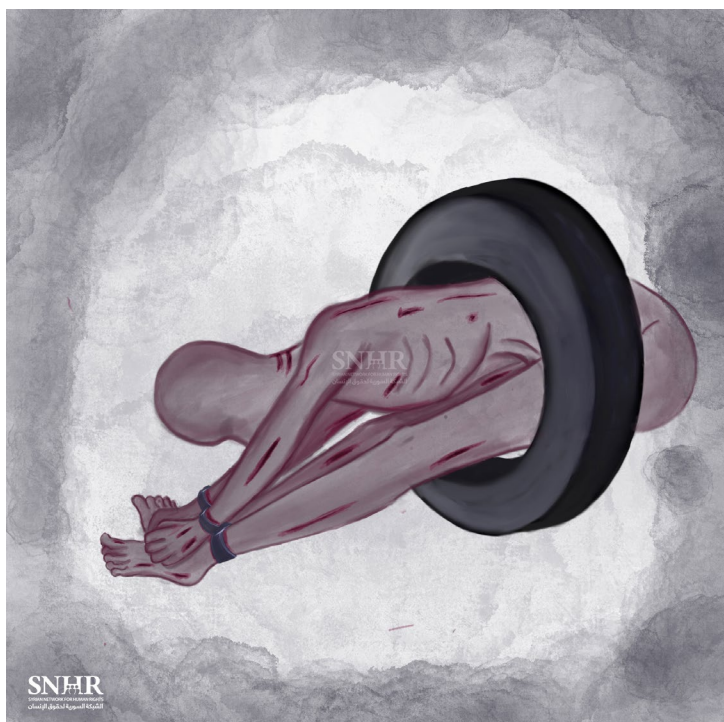
Among the common methods of torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers is forcing the detainee into different restrain positions, beating him and deliberately causing harm to his body. We observed eight basic types of this method:

I. Falqa (Bastinado/Foot Whipping): The hands and feet of the detainee are tied. The security members responsible for torture then raise the detainee's feet and beat the soles with an iron, wooden or plastic club or with cables, electrical wires or hoses. This beating usually lasts for hours and causes swelling to the feet and skin lacerations. Throughout this torture, the security personnel restrain the detainee in a fixed position and prevent him from moving or trying to escape from the beatings. Usually when this process is finished, the detainee is then forced to stand on his wounded feet, and to jump and walk, causing further agonizing pain.

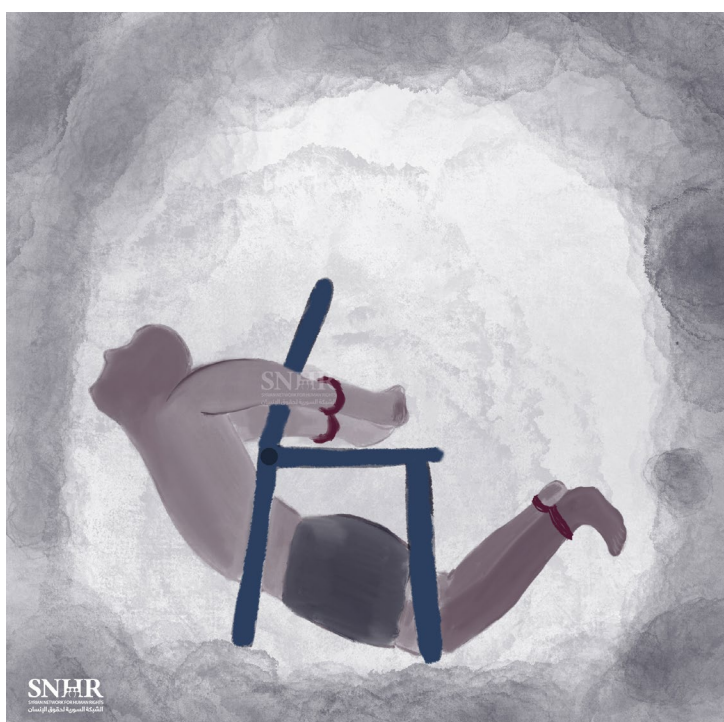


II. The Tire: The detainee's body is bent over and stuffed into a car tire leaving him squashed with his hands touching his feet and unable to move before being beaten and kicked on the various parts of his body. The detainee is left inside the tire for hours before being released from it, causing severe pain and difficulty in movement.





III. The German Chair: The detainee is tied by his hands and feet to a metal chair, which has flexible parts. The security members responsible for torture then bend the back of the chair to cause stretching of the spine and neck, which leads to excruciating pain. This practice may cause severe damage to the spine often extending to paralysis or death.



IV. Bisat al Rih (Flying Carpet): The detainee is tied to a folding wooden board made up of two bendable sections, which are bent towards or away from each other, which leads to terrible pain in the spine, and coincides with the detainee being beaten on all parts of his body.



V. Fixed to a chair: The detainee is blindfolded and made to sit on a small chair with his hands tied behind him before being forced to put his head between his upper legs, and is then beaten on his back, legs and neck. The detainee suffers not only from the pain and injuries of the beating but from the position which makes breathing difficult and leads to further agonizing pain as a result of the severe bending of his spine.



VI. Lying on the ground: The detainee's hands and feet are restrained, after which he is forced to lie on his back, with the security personnel responsible for torture then walking over his body and kicking him brutally with full force in the abdomen, chest and reproductive organs, causing excruciating pain and fractures to the ribs.

VII. Standing installation: The detainee is tied upright to an iron or cement pillar and then beaten on different parts of his body. This coincides with the deprivation of food and water, and even when the detainee urinates and defecates on his body, he is left on this position for periods of between one day and several days.

VIII. Al Salb (The Crucifixion): The detainee's hands and feet are tied to a cross in a grotesque imitation of crucifixion before the beating starts, which particularly targets the reproductive organs



7- Torture by crushing, fracturing, cutting, pulling and gouging, shearing, plucking and stabbing, as follows:

I. Crushing the head: The detainee's head is placed between the wall and the cell's moving door before the heavy door is strongly slammed on the detainee's head, causing severe damage to the bones of the skull and to the brain.





II. Fracturing bones and smashing teeth: The security personnel responsible for torture restrains the detainee's hand or foot then uses a thick stick, jumps or used his foot to hit on the appendage intending to break bones; security personnel generally wear heavy-duty military boots. This method is usually used to break the bones of the hands, fingers, legs and ribcage. In other cases, a strong blow is directed at the detainee's mouth by hand, foot or implement in order to smash his teeth.

III. Pulling out nails and gouging eyes: Detainee's hands or feet are restrained before the security personnel responsible for torture pull out his fingernails or toenails using pliers, large forceps or other instruments. To gouge out the eyes, the security personnel use sharp implements or other tools. The photographs of torture victims leaked by Caesar showed that many of the detainees' eyes had been gouged out, with this practice often leading to their death.





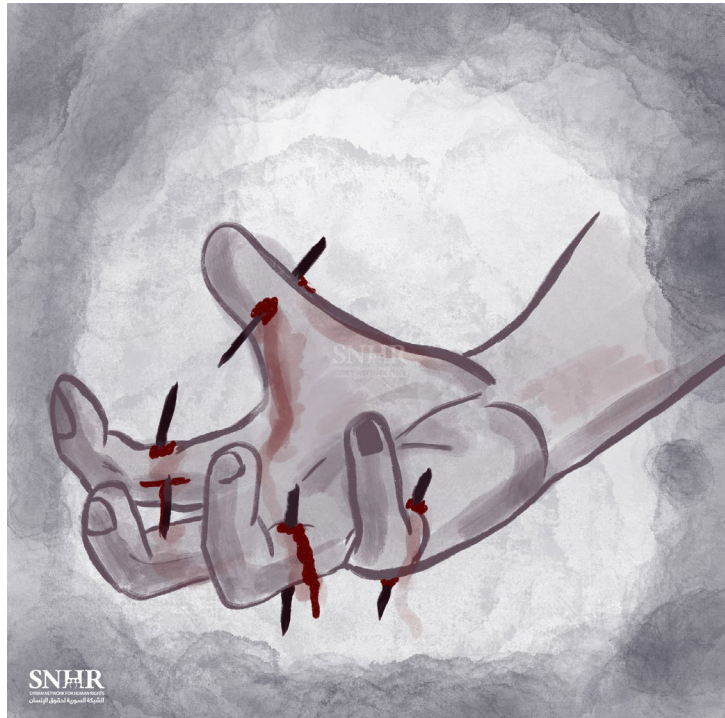
IV. Plucking and removing hair: Security personnel remove the hair from the detainee's body using either their hands, tweezers or adhesives and usually remove the hair from the head or chest.

V. Shearing and cutting off body parts: Security personnel responsible for torture cut off a detainee's ear using garden shears usually used to trim trees, or cut off one of his fingers with a knife or scissors, with these implements also being used to sever detainees' reproductive organs, or remove skin from the abdomen or arm. The photographs leaked by Caesar of victims of torture showed detainees had been subjected to cutting and severing of body parts.



VI. Stabbing: The security personnel use sharp implements such as nails, screwdrivers or knives to stab sensitive parts of the detainee's body, such as shoulder, back and abdomen.

VII. Stapling: A small, thin metal implement, such as a needle, pin or small screw, is inserted into the detainee's body or deliberately sewn into several parts of the detainee's body, such as the nose, lips, ears, back, hands and soles of the feet.



8- Torture by methods of flogging, beating, throwing and dragging. We defined the methods from the range of methods shown below:

I. Throwing: The detainee's hands and feet are handcuffed and shackled before he is lifted and dropped on the cell floor, or he's seized by the four limbs by a number of security personnel and thrown full-force at a concrete wall or heavy iron door.

II. Beating: The detainee is restrained and subjected to continuous and severe beatings on all parts of his body. Beating, as we have already mentioned, is practiced on a continuous basis as part of all the methods and positions of torture used. It is practiced with a club, rod or electric cables, or what is known as the 'Green Brahim' or 'Lakhdar Brahim' (named sarcastically by security personnel after a former UN envoy to Syria), a strong, heavy green plastic tubing used to severely beat detainees.





III. Flogging: The detainee is stripped naked and restrained in various ways, such as being tied to a pillar or forced to lie on his abdomen or back, then flogged. Flogging is usually practiced simultaneously along with other methods and stress positions such as al shabeh.



IV. Dragging: The detainee is forcibly dragged along the ground by his hair or by one foot in the place of detention. This method is usually used while the detainee is being taken from his cell for interrogation.



Two: Health neglect and conditions of detention:

Detainees suffer unspeakably in the Syrian regime's detention centers, particularly the headquarters of the four security branches and the military prisons, which lack the most basic sanitary facilities. Dozens of survivors told us that they were held in horrendously overcrowded cells of different sizes with an average cell size of 4 square meters by 6 square meters, each containing some 50 detainees, lacking any ventilation or sanitation. The detainees' clothes are often worn, soiled, ragged and torn as a result of beatings and other torture. This is a primary contributor to the spread of illness, disease epidemics and infections, especially respiratory and dermatological conditions due to the lack of oxygen and of exposure to daylight. These unimaginably squalid conditions are very deliberately maintained throughout the Syrian regime's prison network with the aim of inflicting the worst possible suffering and debasement on detainees, causing them to suffer various kinds of diseases, and calculatingly neglecting their treatment in order to ensure the maximum agony for detainees until they simply die. Detainees are also deliberately starved and deprived of food and water, of which they are given only the most minimal quantity, leading to multiple illnesses, with detainees' healthcare also being purposely neglected. Given these conditions, suffering is guaranteed and deaths are routine.



In addition to all of the above, and because of the narrowness of cells and overcrowding, detainees must take turns to stand, sit and sleep, being unable to all lie down or sit simultaneously. They are also given wretched and inadequate portions of food to share between them, with each detainee's portion being far less than the amount necessary for basic wellbeing. Meanwhile, the narrow cells and lack of ventilation and sanitary facilities also lead to detainees constantly breathing a fetid mix of sweat, blood, feces and other bodily excretions, as well as the pus and other substances caused by wounds. All this makes the days, months, and years spent in detention into another form of torture and of constant and immediate trauma.

We were able to observe six basic forms within the context of neglect of health care and conditions of detention:

1- Neglect or denial of access to medicine and treatment:

Detainees are denied full or partial access to treatment and medication, with guards often ignoring detainees' distress and appeals for treatment. Indeed, detainees often hide their pain from security personnel in order not to be subjected to additional torture or sent to military hospitals, where they know they will also face torture, as fellow detainees and cellmates are quick to warn them. If a detainee receives medication, it is often a generic painkiller or other medicine that does not treat the illness or condition suffered by the detainee; medications that the detainee may get are almost wholly limited to analgesics such as Cetamol or Panadol. [In a detailed study](#), we explained how detainees are taken to military hospitals and the methods of torture that have claimed hundreds of lives at these institutions.

2- Depriving the detainee of bathing, use of a toilet and basic hygiene facilities:

We observed that detainees are often allowed to use the toilet only twice a day, for a few minutes, collectively, being beaten as they go to and from the bathroom. This situation forces detainees to sometimes soil themselves or to use a container for excretion. Detainees have little chance of bathing and showering, and are often deprived of a shower for long continuous months, causing widespread skin diseases, lice and scabies among detainees, as well as fetid odors in the overcrowded cells. If a detainee is allowed to take a shower, the time allowed is no more than two minutes at most, and the shower water provided is usually either freezing cold or scalding hot.



3- Depriving the detainee of pillows, blankets and clothes:

Syrian Regime forces refrain from giving detainees in detention centers a sufficient quantity of pillows and blankets, with those issued usually being filthy, threadbare, soiled with blood or other bodily matter, and lousy with parasites. In addition, the detainee is denied adequate clothing and often only wears underwear because his clothes are worn or torn during torture or forcibly removed during inspections. All these practices expose detainees to severe cold in the winter, when temperatures fall to freezing.

4- Human Stacking:

As we noted earlier, large numbers of detainees are crammed into small or very narrow cells which are massively overcrowded. According to dozens of survivors of detention, the average cell size that contains some 50 detainees is 4 by 6 square meters. This has many negative effects and repercussions that we highlighted in the above paragraphs. Some of these cells in basements or at sub-basement levels lack any ventilation, increasing the suffering of detainees, as well as the cruelty and brutality of detention conditions in the Syrian regime's centers.



5- Food deprivation:

During torture, the detainee is punished with total deprivation of food and water. In general, a detainee receives only tiny and grossly inadequate amount of food throughout his detention; this is clear from the emaciated bodies of the survivors we have encountered, and from the photographs of torture victims smuggled out by Caesar, who appeared to be skeletally gaunt, with bones jutting out particularly in the pelvis and ribcage area.

6- Sleep deprivation:

The detainee is deprived of sleep for a variety of reasons. Either sleep deprivation is practiced as a method of torture and in long interrogation sessions, or he cannot sleep due to trauma and the 'human stacking' in the prison cells, with the massive overcrowding denying detainees the ability to all lie down or even to all sit simultaneously, forcing them to take turns in sleeping and therefore allowing each only a few hours of sleep. This is in addition to the physical pain and psychological trauma resulting from torture and of the constant pervasive sense of fear which affects the detainee throughout the period of his detention, leaving him with insomnia.

Three: Sexual violence:

Syrian Regime forces practiced widespread and systematic sexual violence in their detention centers, affecting both males and females, and in many cases amounting to rape. We have recorded at least eight forms of sexual violence in detention centers, some of which take place constantly throughout the grueling hours of interrogation:

1- Verbal sexual violence:

Verbal sexual violence is often associated with arrests and interrogation sessions, where security personnel responsible for the arrest and interrogators direct abusive terms with offensive sexist overtones, using the most aggressive curses and insults to subject the detainee to the greatest possible humiliation.

2- Forced nudity:

The detainee is ordered to fully strip naked during the inspection, and is often stripped naked during torture sessions, to inflict as much harm as possible on his body or to insult human dignity. The security personnel responsible for torture routinely mock the detainee's reproductive organs after forcing them to strip or make crude comments about their sexual inadequacies and similar abusive remarks.



3- Harassment:

Detainees in the Syrian regime's detention centers are routinely subjected to sexual harassment through grabbing or groping of their reproductive organs and other sensitive areas of the detainee's body, such as their chests and necks, by regime security personnel, often during inspections, while detainees are being taken from cells, or when they're being transferred from one detention center to another.

4- Cutting, beating and damaging the reproductive organs:

During torture sessions, the security personnel responsible for torture direct severe beatings to the detainee's reproductive organs. This method, which is used with both females and males, causes agonizing pain and swelling of the organs, and in females sometimes causes bleeding in the uterus which results in losing it. A number of Caesar photographs in our possession show victims whose penises were severed or mutilated.

Many of the surviving detainees described incidents of torture in which security personnel responsible for torture would force male detainees to drink water with salt then tie tight cords around the detainees' penises to prevent them from urinating. Others have also described security personnel burning detainees' penises, extinguishing cigarettes on them or electrocuting them.

5- Rape or inserting tools in reproductive organs:

A number of detainees were raped or forced to have full or incomplete sexual relations either with officers and interrogators, or even to rape each other, with security personnel also forcing implements such as sticks into detainees' anuses or into females' reproductive organs.

6- Forced to simulate sex or disclose details of a sexual relationship:

The interrogator orders the detainee to show his role while having sex with his wife. The detainee is beaten if he attempts to refuse this order. During interrogation sessions, detainees are often subjected to questions about their marital and sexual lives and are forced to tell the details, with the aim of allowing the interrogator to ridicule the detainee or request to have a relationship with the detainee's wife.

7- Forced to harass other detainees or to touch their bodies:

Forcing detainees to collectively strip and touch other detainees' reproductive organs or to lie on top of each other.

8- Hanging weights on male reproductive organs:

Security personnel responsible for torture hang bags of sand or water on the detainee's penis, weighing between one kilogram and three kilograms, tightly tying these and leaving the detainee standing or in al shabeh position, suffering excruciating pain, with the torture ending in deformities to the penis.



Four: Psychological torture and humiliation of human dignity:

This method of torture is constant, accompanying the detainee from the first moments of his detention, and continuing throughout the detention period, which may continue for years. According to dozens of survivors, this method is one of the most humiliating and degrading forms of torture, with its impact remaining etched in the memory of the survivors and being difficult to get rid of. It also causes renewed psychological trauma when remembering the humiliation and degradation they suffered. The SNHR team was able to record eight methods of psychological torture and humiliation that are practiced as standard in detention centers:

1- Forcing the detainee to imitate animals:

The detainee has a rope tied around his neck and is forced to walk on all fours while imitating animal sounds, particularly those made by dogs or donkeys. This often coincides with throwing garbage or food scraps at the detainee.

2- Hear and watch the cries of torture:

Detainees in security branches routinely hear the torture of fellow detainees on an ongoing basis, along with their screams, cries and appeals for mercy. This is because torture is practiced in corridors between cells or in interrogation rooms adjacent to cells. Detainees are also routinely forced to watch other detainees being tortured, with this method being particularly used against detainees with ties of kinship to the others being tortured.

3- Threat and intimidation:

During interrogation, the detainee is subjected to various forms of threats and intimidation, such as threatening to arrest members of his family, such as his wife, children or parents. He may be threatened with death and execution in order to break his will and force him to collapse and make false confessions that suit the wishes of the ruling authority.

4- Insults and humiliate dignity:

During interrogation sessions, interrogators carry out practices that debase human dignity, forcing the detainee to kiss their shoes or lick a toilet bowl. Also, detainees are subjected to abusive language against them and their family members, and may be subjected to attacks on their faith with sectarian abuse and discrimination. We learned that one common practice is to force a detainee to kiss an image of Bashar al Assad and say that he is the detainee's Lord; Syrian regime loyalists have published many videos showing this practice during regime arrest campaigns.



5- Solitary confinement:

Most of the detainees are subjected to solitary confinement on the first day of their detention, with the solitary cell being often less than one meter in size and containing a filthy toilet. The cell is dark, stinking, fetid and full of insects. All these conditions are deliberately maintained and planned in order to lead to the detainee's mental collapse before the interrogation begins. We have observed that in many cases a detainee will be held for months or years in solitary confinement, leading to severe psychological illness, such as severe depression, schizophrenia and insanity.

6- Keeping deceased detainees' bodies in cells or forcing others to carry the dead bodies:

When a detainee dies in the cell, his body remains for hours among his fellow detainees and may be deliberately left there for two days without the guard removing it in order to maximize the other detainees' trauma and suffering. Security personnel also force detainees to carry the dead bodies of deceased fellow detainees and store them in designated rooms within the detention center.



7- Delusion:

Making the detainee believe that he will be released, opening his cell door and then taking him for torture. In other cases, the detainee is falsely led to believe he's being taken for execution when he is actually being transferred between several detention centers. Rather than telling him of his real destination, security personnel delude him that he is on his way to execution simply to inflict further psychological torment.

8- Complete isolation from the outside world:

The detainee is prevented from seeing or contacting his family and from appointing a lawyer and is prohibited from communicating with or receiving any news of the outside world such as listening to news, watching television, or reading newspapers and journals. Detainees are forcibly kept in absolute isolation from the outside world.

Five: Forced labor

Detainees are forced to perform forced labor, whether inside detention centers such as cleaning latrines, transporting food, cleaning dishes, cleaning corridors, or outside the detention centers such as digging tunnels, preparing barricades on the front lines, or building sites for Syrian Regime forces, which expose them to danger. Detainees who carry out such work are often executed after completing it so that they cannot be witnesses or disclose information about these facilities.

While forcing the detainee into forced labor, Syrian Regime forces don't take into account his health and physical condition. He is forced to do this laborious work without any extra rations, despite suffering from the consequences of torture, hunger and malnutrition, and if he slows down, he is subjected to further beatings and torture.

Six: Torture in military hospitals:

Transferring a detainee to a military hospital for treatment is another form of torture. The detainee often doesn't return to the security branch where he was held because of his death. This is for two reasons: First, the detainee is not transferred to the hospital until a later stage of his illness, disease or other condition resulting from torture. Second, he is subjected to torture again in the military hospital in new ways other than those inflicted on him in the security branches. The most prominent hospitals where we recorded the practice of these patterns of abuse are: 601 Military Hospital, Harasta Military Hospital, Homs Military Hospital. We were able to record nine methods of torture practiced in military hospitals, all of which take place in a planned manner:



1- Giving the detainee a number and preventing him from using his name:

Once the detainee arrives at the military hospital, he is issued with a number with which he is forced to identify himself instead of using his name; this is a very deliberate tactic to dehumanize the detainees and ensure that they are not identified. The detainee is warned of the consequences of mentioning his name throughout his stay in the hospital. If he does so, he will be punished by severe beatings, particularly targeting the locations of his wounds and injuries.

2- Beating the detainee's wounds and injuries:

The nurses or guards beat the detainee specifically targeting his wounds or broken bones in order to expose him to severe pain and force him to make the confessions they want; however false these are.

3- Treating the detainee without any sterilization and depriving him of analgesics and medicine:

Doctors, nurses and guards deprive the detainees of analgesics and medication for his treatment, and fail to follow the most basic standards of sterilization and hygiene while treating detainees.

4- Tying the detainee to the hospital bed with restraints tied at the place of his injury:

The detainee is tied tightly to bed by the hospital personnel, with the restraints usually placed on the body part where he's suffered the wound or injury, such as around a broken arm, or by wrapping chains around his wounded chest and abdomen.

5- Sending doctors and trainees to train on his body:

Doctors or trainees are sent to detainees who are undergoing treatment for training and learning and allowed or even encouraged to make medical errors without care, mercy or compassion.

6- Putting more than one sick detainee in one bed:

Doctors or nurses and guards put more than one patient in a single bed, with two, three and sometimes four detainees forced to share one bed without taking into account the type of illness or injury of each detainee.



7- Leaving incontinent and physically immobile detainees to defecate and urinate on themselves, and abandoning them to lie in their own body waste without helping clean them:

Physically immobile and incontinent detainees are completely deprived of the incontinence pads and napkins usually provided for such patients, with those who are immobile but continent deprived of bedpans or other tools for evacuating their bladders or bowels, instead being left to soil themselves and often to remain in soiled sheets and bedding for days, leading to further infections and suffering.

8- Replacement of bandages and harsh removal of devices:

When bandages are replaced or medical equipment is removed from the detainee, this is done in the harshest possible fashion without the use of analgesics or anesthetic, causing further intense pain to the detainee that sometimes so agonizing it leads to fainting.

9- Depriving the detainee of the necessary tools for mobility:

Detainees requiring mobility aids such as crutches or a wheelchair to get to the toilet or elsewhere are left without any sort of help, being forced to crawl or use other means to move about.

Seven: Separation:

Due to the unspeakably terrible conditions of their detention and the monstrous methods of torture listed above, some detainees dissociate completely and lose all sense of reality, reaching a state of intense delirium, followed by amnesia or retrograde episodic memory loss, remembering only the past, becoming delusional, hallucinating and seeing objects or people that are not present, and breaking down in hysterical fits of weeping. Thereafter, such detainees often lose all control of their remaining mental and physical faculties, ultimately slipping into a coma. The Syrian regime deliberately leaves these broken and psychologically traumatized people in overcrowded cells along with fellow, still rational detainees, increasing their existing suffering when they see a fellow detainee losing their mind and fearing that they may undergo the same traumas. This terrible phenomenon is known as 'separation', with a number of survivors telling us that watching their 'separated' fellow prisoners was worse than the physical torture inflicted on them by the Syrian regime. Those who suffer separation often end up dying, with around eight percent of the total death toll among detainees due to torture attributed to this phenomenon, which is concentrated particularly in the regime's infamous security branches and military prisons; whilst it may occur within central prisons, it does so far more rarely.



V. New identification of 29 individuals who appeared in Caesar photographs leaked from military hospitals

The continuing use of all the aforementioned methods of torture against detainees in the custody of the Syrian regime can lead to only one disturbing conclusion that corresponds to what appeared in the photographs smuggled out by Caesar, and we, at the SNHR, believe that the Syrian regime continues to use all these methods of torture. Thus, the terrible fate of those subjected to torture to death persists in a manner similar to that seen in Caesar photographs, with the only difference being that we no longer receive similar photos smuggled from inside the Syrian regime's detention centers since Caesar managed to smuggle out what he had photographed. There is no logical reason that leads us to believe that the Syrian regime and its brutal security services have stopped carrying out these barbaric practices and we are still documenting the deaths of individuals killed under torture by the Syrian regime. The total number of such cases documented in 2019 alone up to the time of preparing this report has reached at least 185 individuals.

Most of the photos taken by Caesar were in the morgue of the 601 Military Hospital in the Mazza neighborhood of Damascus city, while the rest were taken in the morgue of the Tishreen Military Hospital, located in the Barza neighborhood of Damascus city. These grotesque photoshoots of the bodies were conducted on separate occasions as requested by the military prosecution of the imaging department where Caesar worked. In addition, most of the victims in these photos had been detained in security branches 215, 227, 235 and 216, as well as in some military units and the Air Security Branch. Some of these detainees died while receiving treatment at the bruise section of the 601 Military Hospital, with their bodies then taken to the morgue or dumped in the garage of the same hospital. In these cases, their bodies are referred to as 'bruise section inmates'. These corpses are piled in the garage where they remain for several days; such a location is not even a good place to store goods, so how it can ever be considered suitable for human bodies?



Map showing locations of the Tishreen Military Hospital and the 601 Military Hospital, as well as locations of the most notable Syrian regime's detention centers which witnessed torture and deaths due to torture:



When analyzing the photos, we observed figures written on the bodies of the victims or on stickers affixed to the victim's chest or head. Each of these bore three numbers, namely:

- i. The number of the victim at the 601 Military Hospital
- ii. The number of the security branch in which the detainee was held, and
- iii. The medical record number issued by the forensic pathologist.

The victims in the Caesar photographs also appeared either naked or wearing worn-out ragged remnants of clothing, with the victims' ages ranging from children under 18 to elderly. Some photos were of women military, and we also noted that many photos show victims with disabilities and special needs.

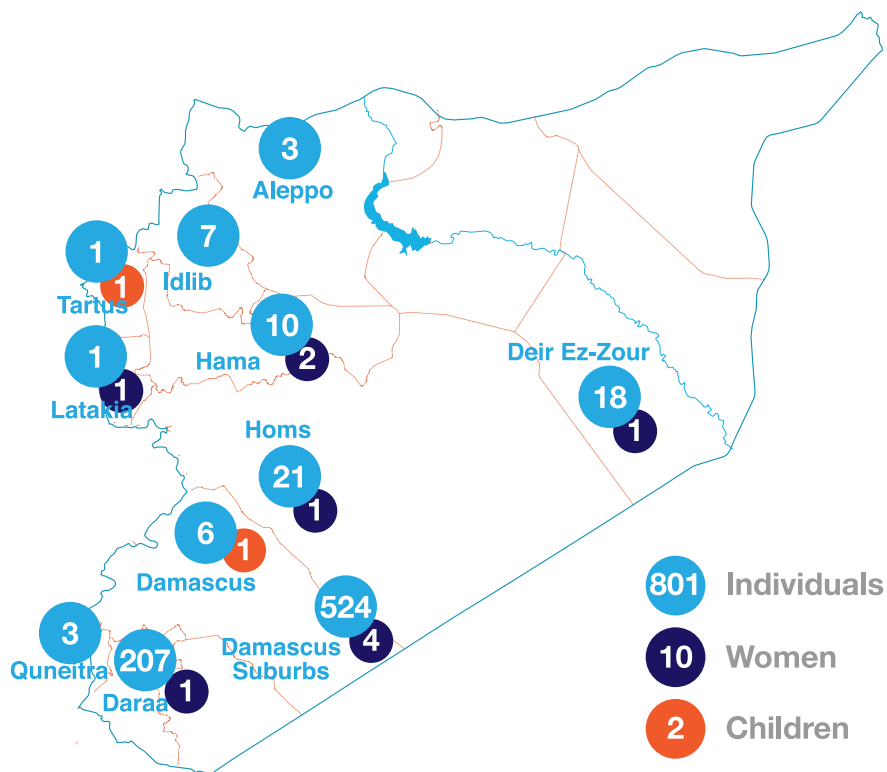


In the previous study issued by the SNHR concerning the photographs of torture victims smuggled out of Syrian military hospitals, we mentioned that we were able to identify 772 victims (including one woman) between March 2015 and the date of issuing the study on September 21, 2015. The efforts to analyze the photos we obtained continued, along with our attempts to identify other individuals shown, but because of the difficulties mentioned earlier, we have only been able to identify 29 more of the individuals shown in the intervening years, meaning that, from the approximately 6,189 Caesar photographs we've received between March 2015 and September 2019, the SNHR has managed to positively identify a total of at least 801 of the victims shown, including two children and 10 women (adult female), with our staff scrupulously analyzing and cross-checking each of these cases to ensure accurate identification.

First: We cross-checked these photos with the database of enforced disappearances; as we have noted, most of the victims shown have been registered as enforced disappearances.

Second: We cross-checked each of the people shown against the database of individuals who we believe died due to torture, we found prior to the Caesar photographs being smuggled out that there was an intersection of 16 percent, that is to say, 124 of the cases registered out of 801 forced disappearance cases had died due to torture; following the release of the Caesar photos, all 801 cases were confirmed as having died due to torture. These individuals whose identities have been confirmed are thus no longer registered as forcibly disappeared, despite the fact that their families haven't received their bodies, because the photographs of Caesar clearly prove the deaths of these detainees.

The 801 cases were distributed across the Syrian governorates as follows:



We can note from the previous map that the highest percentage of victims whose photos we have identified were from Damascus Suburbs with 65.42 percent, followed by Daraa governorate with 25.84 percent, and thirdly, Homs governorate with 2.62 percent.

The 801 cases that we identified were distributed according to the security branch's detention centers where we believe they died as follows:

Detention center	Toll of victims
Branch 215	422
Branch 227	241
Air Force Branch in Damascus	42
Branch 216	33
Branch 235	14
Branch 251	11
Branch 248	6
Branch 220	5
Military Police in Damascus	4
Other military branches	23
Total	801

We note that the highest death rate was recorded in Branch 215; we have previously issued an extensive report specifically on this branch, which is followed in terms of lethal savagery by Branch 227.

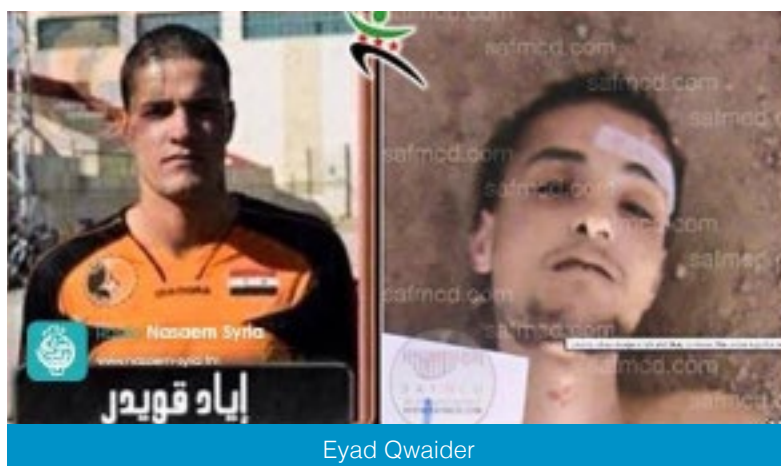
Caesar and his companion Sami informed the Syrian Network for Human Rights about the information and evidence they have, which includes thousands of photographs taken with digital cameras and stored on CDs distributed in a steady and irregular chronological order, with highly accurate imaging level and quality (an average of 1.2 MB per digital image); this will greatly assist criminal investigators in determining the facts about the circumstances of death and the circumstances that led to the deformations inflicted on the detainees' bodies before and after death.



VI. Examples of cases that appeared within Caesar photographs which we were able to identify their owners

Eyad Qwaider

A player at al Wahda Football Club, from Kafrsousa neighborhood in Damascus city, born in 1991, Eyad was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in January 2013, while he was returning from al Wahda football club to his home in Kafr Sousa. On Monday, October 28, 2013, his family received information that he had died due to torture in Branch 215 in Damascus city.



Eyad Qwaider

The SNHR contacted a relative of Eyad (Omar j.¹) who told us: **“Eyad was playing as a defender with al Wahda Football Club. On the day of his arrest, he called his family to tell them that he had finished his training and was on his way home. Eyad’s house is located in the Kafrsousa neighborhood; the regime forces were launching a campaign of raids in the neighborhood that day. Eyad did not arrive at his house despite the passage of hours, with his family repeatedly calling him on his mobile phone, but it was switched off,”** Omar told us that Eyad had never been seen by any of his family since that day and they had received no news about his fate despite their tireless efforts to obtain information.

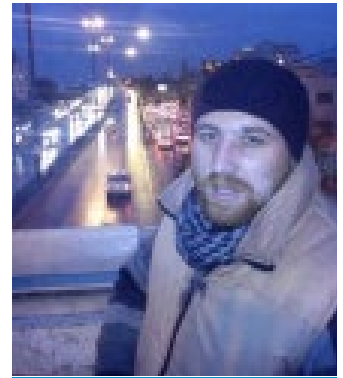
“Eyad’s family did not know who arrested him or why he was arrested and asked al Wahda club for help, but they did not receive any information or cooperation from them,” Omar said, adding that a former detainee at Branch 215 told the family that Eyad had died there, with another intermediary later confirming this report. Despite this, Omar said: **“But we still had hope that he was alive, until Caesar photographs were published and we identified Eyad’s photo among them. Only then did we lose hope of his survival.”**

¹Through phone on February 2, 2019



Yaman al Rashidat Abazeed

Yaman, a Sham Network correspondent in Daraa governorate, from Daraa city, born in 1987, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Wednesday, October 10, 2012, while passing through the Air Security Branch's checkpoint near Daraa city. He was registered as being a case of enforced disappearance until his family identified his photo among the smuggled out Caesar photographs.



Yaman al Rashidat Abazeed

We spoke with Mohammad al Rashidat Abazeed², the victim's brother, who told us: **“Yaman was on a media tour with a number of his colleagues to cover events in the eastern region of Daraa governorate. On his way back to Daraa city in the evening, he was stopped at an Air Security temporary checkpoint, who found the media equipment he had with him and arrested him immediately, and he disappeared since then. On Friday, March 20, 2015, a friend sent us one of the leaked photos, saying that it was of Yaman. We followed Caesar's photos and actually found a photo of Yaman with a paper on his chest labeled 2535, written on it “arrested for Branch 216 in Damascus city.”**

The SNHR obtained copies of the leaked photos of Yaman, which we keep in our archives, showing signs of torture and bruising on Yaman's abdomen, head and hands.

Ayham Mustafa Ghazzoul

A dentist and an assistant at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Damascus, from Deir Atteya city, north of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1987, Ayham was arrested by personnel from Branch 215 at the University of Damascus' Faculty of Medicine on Monday, November 5, 2012, and was detained in Branch 215, where he died due to torture on Sunday, November 11, 2012, six days after his arrest.

The SNHR spoke with the victim's mother, Ms. Mariam Hallaq, who told us that she had learned from a friend who had been with Ayham on the day of his arrest that Ayham had been detained in a room at the Faculty of Dentistry where he was brutally tortured. She added: **“He received a severe blow to his head that caused him to faint. His friend told me that they had pulled out his nails, stabbed his ears, poured boiling water on him, and then the members dragged him to the security vehicle of the Branch 215, bleeding from his ears. About three months later, on Thursday, January 31, 2013, another detainee released**

²Through phone in February 2016



from the branch told a family friend that he had been in the same cell as Ayham when he died on Sunday, November 11, 2012, as a result of the brutal torture he was subjected to during the interrogation, with the memenrs of Branch 215 refusing to treat and aid him.”



Ayham Mustafa Ghazzoul

On Monday, May 12, 2014, Ayham’s mother received his death certificate from the Military Police, which claimed that he had died of a sudden breathing disorder and heart failure - we have retained a copy of the death certificate in our archive - without being given his body or personal effects despite her efforts to obtain these. In May 2015, she identified his photo among the photos smuggled out by Caesar, with the photo showing signs of torture, and a sticker on his forehead saying “A body for Company 215 No. 320”, while another sticker placed on his chest said “number 2129”.

Nedal Abdul Aziz al Haj Ali

Nedal from the village of Kherbet Ghazala in the eastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, a graduate of the University of Damascus with a PhD in Civil Engineering, was 37 years old at the time of his arrest. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Tuesday, July 2, 2013 while he was passing through one of the regime’s checkpoints on the road between Damascus and Suwayda governorates. In March 2015, his family learned of his death due to torture in Branch 227 in Damascus city following the release of the photos smuggled out by Caesar.



Nedal Abdul Aziz al Haj Ali



The SNHR spoke with Amer al Hourani³, a nephew of the victim, Nedal, who said: **“We had conflicting information about my uncle Nedal being in the Palestine Branch or the Region Branch in Damascus city. When the leaked photos of detainees began to spread, we started looking for him among them for days. On March 19, 2015, we found his photo and were sure it was him by the shape of his haircut. His face was unchanged despite his severe emaciation and the obvious signs of torture on his body.”**

We retain the photo of Nedal from those smuggled out by Caesar in the SNHR archives. The photo shows the same figure, 2648, written on his hand and abdomen, and under this figure is written - Branch 227 - the Region Branch in Damascus city.

Mohammad Nour al Din Za'tar

Mohammad, a doctor specializing in otorhinolaryngology and a Masters student, from al Tal city in the north of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1983, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Monday, December 30, 2012, in al Tal city. On Sunday, April 7, 2013, his family learned of his death in Branch 216 from a released detainee.



Mohammad Nour al Din Za'tar

Marwan K.⁴, a close friend of the victim, told us: **“Through some acquaintances, I received photos of Mohammad in 2013 showing his death and the signs of torture and extreme emaciation on his body. I sent it to his cousin to confirm with me that he was Mohammad, and he also identified him, and kept the photos and hid this news from his family; he was the only son of his family with four sisters. After a while, Mohammad’s family received his death certificate from the Military Police, so we told them about the photos after that.”**

The SNHR obtained copies of the smuggled out photos of Mohammad, which we keep in our archive; on Mohammad’s abdomen the number 144 had been written and under this the number of Branch 216, while a piece of paper on his chest carried the number 187. The photos showed clear signs of torture and bruising to Mohammad’s lower torso, head and hands.

³ Through phone in January, 2019

⁴ Through phone in January, 2019



Salah Ali al Sheghri

A third year secondary school student, from al Bayda village in the suburbs of Tartous governorate, Salah, born in 1994, was arrested by members of the Political Security Branch while he was passing through one of their checkpoints in al Bayda village on Saturday, August 4, 2012. He remained listed as a case of enforced disappearance until 2015 when his family learned of his death due to torture on Sunday, November 11, 2012, with his family subsequently identifying his photo, among those smuggled out by Caesar, in June 2016.



We spoke with Ibrahim al Sheghri⁵, brother of the victim Salah, who told us: **“The regime forces targeted with arrests anyone written on their IDs that they are from the al Sheghri’s [family]. As Salah was passing through a Political Security checkpoint; the members manning the checkpoint asked him to go with them to the branch for questioning”**. Ibrahim believes that Salah’s arrest was aimed at pressuring their third brother Anas, who had been detained earlier, to extract confessions from him. He added: **“We have not received any confirmed information about the whereabouts of Salah. One time we heard that he is in the Palestine Branch in Damascus and at another time that he is in Branch 291 in Damascus also. My father went through some acquaintances to the Military Police, where they gave him a small paper on which they wrote the date of Salah’s death as on November 11, 2012. We later found his photo among the leaked photos.”**

The photo, among the Casar photos, showing Salah’s body shows a label on his forehead on which is written Branch 215 in Damascus city.

We further note that Salah was the brother of prominent activist Anas al Sheghri, who has been listed as forcibly disappeared by Syrian Regime forces since May 14, 2011. Anas’ family told us that they have seen a photo among those smuggled out by Caesar showing someone very similar to Anas and strongly suspect that it is him.

⁵ Through phone in January, 2019



Fares Saeed al Miqdad

Fares, a barber from Ma'raba village in the suburbs of Daraa governorate, born in 1971, was arrested by gunmen affiliated with the Military Security Branch in Suwayda in October 2012 in his home in Suwayda and taken to an undisclosed location. He remained listed as a case of enforced disappearance until his family identified his photo in early 2016 from among those smuggled out by Caesar.



The SNHR spoke with Mahmoud al Miqdad⁶, a brother of the victim Fares, who told us that Fares had not participated at all in the popular uprising. He added: **“Fares remained neutral and traveled to Suwayda city to live there since the beginning of the revolution with his wife and six children, until one day when a Military Security patrol came to his house and asked him to go with them, and they took him with his car.”** Mahmoud told us that the family had received no information about his brother from the moment of his arrest, adding: **“When Caesar’s photos appeared, I began to search for his photo among them, and I found it.”**

Thamer Mamoun al Najjar

Thamer, from Daraa city, was born in 1990, a student at the Institute of Business Administration in Daraa city, as well as studying legal studies in the open education system at the University of Damascus. He was arrested, along with his father and another brother, by gunmen affiliated with the Military Security Branch in Daraa city on Thursday, December 20, 2012, in a raid on his home in Daraa city, and was listed as a case of enforced disappearance until his family identified his photo on Tuesday, March 31, 2015, among those smuggled out by Caesar.



⁶ Through phone on December 20, 2018



We spoke with Ahmad al Najjar⁷, the brother of the victim Thamer, who told us that Thamer was arrested along with his father, Mamoun al Najjar and another brother, Mohammed al Taher. Ahmad added: **“Members manning the Hamida Checkpoint in Daraa city raided our house and arrested the three and all news of them was cut off, until Caesar’s photos spread, then the search and check began. We found only Thamer’s photo, but we believe that my father and brother Mohammad also died with him after they were brutally tortured by security personnel in Daraa city and in Branch 215 in Damascus.”** We retain Thamer’s leaked photo in our archive, which shows a sticker placed on his forehead, on which is written ‘Branch 215’. The photo also shows severe signs of torture to Thamer’s face and head.

Isam Taha Hadla

Isam, born in 1976, came from the al Farraya neighbourhood of Hama city, and worked in the sale and purchase of household items. He was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in al Farraya neighbourhood on Monday, October 22, 2012, whilst he was on his way home at night, and taken to the Military Security Branch in Hama city. Isam, who suffered from psychological disorders, concentration disorders and epilepsy, and had been receiving constant medical treatment, remained listed as a case of enforced disappearance until his family learned of his death in June 2013 after receiving his death certificate from the Military Security Branch in Hama. On Sunday, March 15, 2015, his family identified his photo among those smuggled out by Caesar.



The Syrian regime’s issuing of a death certificate for a detainee giving a false cause of death, followed by his family discovering a photograph of him showing signs of brutal torture, is further compelling evidence that the regime is heavily implicated in the crime of torture.

The SNHR spoke with Isam’s wife⁸ who told us that she had submitted a medical report confirming her husband’s health to the Military Security Branch in Hama, adding: **“They did not respond to us and threw us out. A few months later, the Military Security Branch contacted us and asked us to come to receive his death certificate, and I didn’t get any further information. It was a great shock to me! What’s the guilt of a patient who**

⁷ Through phone in April 2015

⁸ Through phone on February 20, 2016



did not harm anyone to die due to torture?! Despite that [receiving Isam's death certificate], I didn't lose hope that he was alive, and one doesn't rule out that these security services may provide false death certificate. This continued until the [Caesar] photos spread, and I began the journey of searching among them. I found his photo; his facial features in the photo were very clear despite the presence of a wound on the cheek."

[A piece of paper](#) with the number 1591 and the branch number, 215, of the Military Security Branch had been placed on Isam's forehead in the photo of his body, with the smuggled out photographs of the victim, Isam, showing signs of torture on his face.

Medical report for the victim Isam Hadla confirming his illness and showing he had been receiving treatment prior to his arbitrary arrest on October 22, 2012

Mohammad Hussein al Allawi

Mohammad was an agricultural engineer working for the Directorate of Agriculture in Damascus city, from Akash village, administratively a part of Bari al Sharqi district in al Salamiya city, in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, and a resident of al Mleiha city, east of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1970. He was arrested by gunmen affiliated with the Syrian regime's State Security Branch on Wednesday, February 20, 2013, in a raid on his workplace in the Directorate of Agriculture in Damascus city. He remained listed as a case of enforced disappearance until his family identified his photo on Sunday, March 29, 2015, among the photos smuggled out by Caesar.



Abdullah al Allawi⁹, Mohammad's brother, told the SNHR: **"When photos of the torture victims leaked by Caesar spread, we searched for Mohammad's photo among them and found it; he had died in the State Security Branch. Mohammad was arrested by a State Security Branch patrol. His family went to the branch repeatedly to ask about him, but they denied him being there. With their repeated denials, we stopped asking about him out of fear for him and three other detained people from our family as well."**

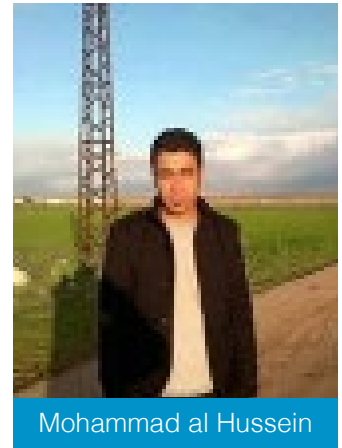
Mohammad's photo shows a sticker on his forehead on which is written 'Branch 251', the Internal Branch of the State Security in Damascus city. Mohammad is the cousin of another victim Rehab al Allawi, whose body also appeared among the photos smuggled out by Caesar.

⁹ Through phone in January 2018



Hasan Mohammad al Hussein

A farmer from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, born in 1985, Hasan was arrested by Syrian Regime forces on Saturday, January 7, 2012, along with two of his friends, [Abdul Razzaq Qabalan](#) and [Ahmad Ryad al Ali](#), in Jaramana city, southeast of Damascus Suburbs governorate. All three remained listed as cases of enforced disappearance until Hasan's family identified his photo among the photos smuggled out by Caesar on Wednesday, April 1, 2015, with his friends' photos also identified amongst these.



SNHR spoke with Mustafa al Ali¹⁰, a friend of Abdul Razzaq, who told us that a patrol affiliated with the Patrol Branch arrested Hasan and his friends in Jaramana. He explained: **“Hasan and his friends used to work on cars to transport vegetables; after they were arrested, we did not get any information about them. When photos of those dead as a result of torture spread, we began searching and found Hasan’s photo. Then we found Ahmad’s and Abdul Razzaq’s photos, all of whom had died in the Patrol Branch after being tortured and starved to death.”**

We analyzed the photo of the victim Hasan, which showed a sticker on his forehead on which was written Branch 216, the Patrol Branch affiliated with the State Security; the same applies to the photos of his friends, Abdul Razzaq and Ahmad.

VII. Various testimonies of torture incidents by survivors of the Syrian regime’s detention centers

Due to the limited size of the report, we will outline nine different accounts in terms of the geographic and social background of people who survived multiple Syrian regime detention centers.

Abdul Hai Nayef al Sheikh, from Souran city north of Hama governorate, born in 1986, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in mid-2011 in a raid on his house in Souran city due to his brother's failure to join compulsory military service with Syrian Regime forces. He was then taken to an undisclosed location, remaining under enforced disappearance for seven months. After his family contacted several parties and intermediaries who have relations with security branches, and after they paid a large sum of money, Abdul Hai was released from Hama Central Prison in Hama city. As a result of the torture in custody, he was left with chronic mobility problems and a severe speech defect.



¹⁰ Through phone in May 2015



The SNHR contacted Mohammad al Sheikh¹¹ , a relative of Abdul Hai, who told us: **“Abdul Hai’s house in Souran city was raided by personnel, who arrested him instead of his brother. Abdul Hai was then in good health and not suffering from any illness. About seven months later, Abdul Hai was released from Hama Central Prison but he was in such a deplorable state of health that he could not stand, walk normally, or talk. After being shown to doctors, it was found that Abdul Hai had been tortured and beaten on his head and back, which resulted in brain haemorrhage, with his condition continuing to worsen day by day. Abdul Hai became almost disabled and cannot live without medicines.”**

Nayel Bashir al Mughrabi, an activist in the popular uprising, from al Nabk city north of Damascus Suburbs governorate, born in 1990, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime’s State Security Forces on Saturday, March 5 2012, in a raid on the house of a friend near the entrance of Yabroud city north of Damascus Suburbs governorate. During the raid, Nayel was shot, wounding his leg, after which he was taken to Harasta Military Hospital northeast of Damascus governorate, where he was severely tortured, before being released on July 1, 2012, in a prisoner exchange operation organized by a relative.

[Nayel al Mughrabi after his release](#)

The SNHR contacted Nayel¹² , who told us that he was accompanied by nine of his friends - all of them activists in the popular uprising – in a house when Syrian Regime forces surrounded the building where they were. He added: **“One of my friends opened the door to the officer. Once he moved, the officer killed him by a gunshot fired at his back. Two of my friends escaped from the back door of the house, while three others were shot dead by the members who broke into the house, while me and two others managed to escape, and I hid in a small room on the roof of the building. Hours later, they found me and dragged me to the ground and asked me three times, “Where is your weapon?” and each time they shot me. The first bullet lodged in my right knee, while the second and third hit me in my right leg, too.”** Nayel provided us with [a video](#), saying that some of the security personnel carrying out the raid had been filming their actions when they fired the first bullet into his knee, then they stopped filming before the other two shots were fired.

Nayel added: **“After they shot at me, they threw me and my friend Mohannad Barakat from the roof to the asphalt, and they also shot Mohannad’s feet. Although Mohannad managed to grab the edge of the roof, the members stamped on his hands until he fell down, breaking his bones. For me, the members gathered around me after I fell from**

¹¹ Through phone on August 18, 2019

¹² Through phone in June, 2019



the roof, then they continued beating me all over my body with their gun butts until I fainted. I woke up and found myself chained in a bed, my eyes covered with a cloth, and on my injured leg an external fixation device. I asked the duty officer, “Where am I?” He replied, “You’re our guest” He told me that my name is now number ‘29’ and warned me not to use my real name or mention any personal information about myself to anyone.”

We learned from Nayel that he had remained unconscious for about five days, and he later learned that the place where he recovered consciousness was Harasta Military Hospital in Harasta city northeast of Damascus Suburbs governorate, specifically on the seventh floor of the hospital, in the section run by the State Security Forces; the seventh floor consists of two parts: one belonging to the Air Force and the other to the State Security Forces.

Nayel told us that 32 other detainees, including two children, were detained with him in the same section of the hospital and all were injured and chained to beds. He also told us that he remained in Harasta Military Hospital for nearly four months, where he was subjected to various methods of torture, as well as witnessing other detainees being tortured. He added: **“The personnel used to beat us at two times of day, at 4:00 pm and 2:00 am, where four personnel accompanied by an officer used to come to us. One of the personnel would kick us, while the rest hit us with different types of sticks, pentagonal [multi-strand] cables and electrical cables and chains. For the first two-and-a-half months, we were kept naked and blindfolded.”**

Nayel spoke about the methods of torture suffered by other detainees who were with him, including children: **“There was a 15-year-old child with me from Douma city in Damascus Suburbs who shared the same medical bed with me. The regime personnel used to beat him with the back of a grenade on his teeth until they all broke. On one occasion, they sprayed ‘Pif Paf’ insecticide all over his body, set him on fire, then wrapped his body with gauze, and from time to time they lifted the gauze, peeled his skin with a blade and then bandaged him with gauze again.”** Nayel also told us about another child he was with in custody, who he said was 12 years old: **“He was crying continuously and asking for his mother. The officers ordered him to lie down and then kicked him with their feet.”** Nayel added that he had encountered, during his detention he had encountered detainees suffering with dementia and others with Downs syndrome; their health problems didn’t spare them, however, and they were severely beaten like other detainees. Nayel told us that going to the military hospital’s bathroom to defecate was allowed only



once every two days. He also told us about the death of his friend Mohannad Barakat, with whom he had been detained at the hospital. He said: **“It was 12:30 after midnight, and I was lying on the bed next to him, blindfolded; we were forbidden to talk together. Mohannad asked to go to the bathroom, the officer started beating him with a whip, with every blow missing Mohannad hitting me. I felt that most of the blows were on his stomach, and it seemed that it caused him internal hemorrhaging. I could feel it despite my blindfolded eyes and because we were on the same bed. He had bled and the feces came out of his body, and only then did they stop beating him, and they unchained two other injured men, sent him with them [to the toilet] and asked them to wash him, then they brought him back to bed at 00:45. Shortly after that, Mohannad wanted to go to the toilet again, they beat him again until he bled again. At approximately 01:00, Mohannad grabbed my hand and whispered to me, and I was pretending not to hear him, in case the personnel paid attention to our conversation and I would be beaten again. Mohannad whispered: ‘I know I will die; my family will one day ask you the reason for my death - tell them I died because of the medicine.’ Until now, I do not know what Mohannad meant by his words. He might mean that I shouldn’t tell his family about how much torture he suffered.”**

Nayel told us about a detainee with the number ‘28’ who was tortured by an officer named Firas Haidar, who used to gag the detainee’s mouth and nose and pour bottles of alcohol on him. Nayel also told us about the details of the medical treatment of his injury: **“University students trained in hospitals conducted six operations on my leg, which was shot by the personnel at the time of my arrest. The students extracted a bone of a length of 12 cm from my leg, and put an external fixation device on it.”** Nayel added: **“At one time, I was taken by a trained fourth-year doctor called Sinan to take the iron plates out of my legs. Before he started his work, he said to me: ‘You are a patient to me, whether you killed, carried a weapon, or whatever. Whatever your charge is, you are a patient to me. My job is to treat you and get you out of here.’ For a moment, I couldn’t understand what he meant until his work started. He took me to a place adjacent to the toilet door, where they were changing the bandages of the injured wounds, and asked me to sit in a chair, usually we’re forced to sit on it when bathing or urinating; this chair has nails hammered from the bottom up towards the body of the person sitting on it. It was this chair that I sat on, when Sinan brought the drill to work on my leg to take out the iron plates.”** Nayel says: **“The beating and torture I have suffered were very severe. The scars are still in my body so far.”**

[Photo showing Nayel injured leg shot after being released](#)



Abdul Salam al Salem, from Damascus city, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces' personnel on Tuesday, February 5, 2013, in the center of Damascus city in a security ambush, and remained in detention for five years, being transferred during that time between several detention centers, most notably the al Khatib Branch, the State Security Branch in al Mujtahed area in Damascus city, and finally the Adra Central Prison. He was released on Tuesday, January 15, 2019.

We spoke with Abdul Salam¹³, who described what he was subjected to: **“In al Khatib Branch, I was stripped naked with dozens of other detainees and tortured with the ‘tire’ and ‘falaqa’, and also ‘al shabeh’ “the ghost”. Twenty days after I remained suspended in the torture room, I witnessed a rape of a man in front of my eyes, where they raped him and then inserted a stick in his bottom until he fainted, then they dragged him out and we did not see him after that, and most probably he died. I was physically tortured in the al Khatib Branch for a whole month and reached a state of ‘separation’ and felt I was about to die.”** Abdul Salam told us that he was transferred after that to the State Security Branch. He added: **“In State Security, the newly detained were tortured to death, but we were also suffering from the scarcity of food and sleep and from being beaten with sticks or our way back and forth from the toilet.”**

Fuad Abdul Baqi, an information engineer, from Manbej city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was arrested by the Syrian regime's Air Security Force on Monday, April 24, 2017, at a checkpoint near Damascus city while he was on his way to Damascus city from Aleppo city. He was held in al Mazza Military Prison for most of the period of his detention. He was released on Monday, January 8, 2018, about three months after he was transferred to Adra Central Prison, after paying money to a judge at the Terrorism Court. We met Fuad at his home in Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, who told us about the torture he suffered in the al Mazza Military Prison:

“Since they put me in the Air Force's checkpoint's vehicle, the driver told me, ‘We'll show you the stars of noon.’ I asked him why I was arrested. The answers were insults and curses. When I arrived at the Air Security Branch in al Mazza, two men pulled me from the car into the branch and then threw me to the ground, then they started beating me with their military boots on my chest, stomach and face. Then an officer came and ordered the personnel to take off my clothes. At this point, I had not received an answer to my repeated question, ‘What have I done?’ Only insults, curses, more beatings and the phrase ‘Later you know what you did!’ Fuad said security personnel at the detention

¹³ Through phone on February 25, 2019



center poured hot water over his head, causing burns to his head, face and chest. He added: **“They threw me in a solitary cell despite my screams of the pain of the burning, and I stayed there until they took me out at night to the interrogation room. During the interrogation, I was ghosted and burned. Every time they poured hot water on me during the interrogation session. Then they put me in a communal cell. I had suffered from infections of burns in my body because of the cell overcrowding and dirt.”** Fuad later learned that the reason for his arrest was a call made by someone from a telephone line registered in Fuad’s name. The call was by a relative of Fuad, wanted by the Syrian regime.

Fuad also told us about other psychological and physical torture he witnessed at the al Mazza Military Prison, where he was held for one year: **“One day, the cell door was opened, and they told us that they would shave our hair. We were beaten and ridiculed, and the barber shaved a part of the hair and left another, with the rest of the personnel laughing at us. I stayed almost a year in al Mazza Prison. Torture was on a daily basis and does not stop all night. At one time, the personnel ignited safari gas [a butane camping gas canister] in the corridor and forced one of the detainees to sit on it and his screams almost filled Damascus city, then they took him away, and we didn’t know what happened to him.”**

Omar Ahmad al Sheghri, from al Bayda village in the outskirts of Banyas city, Tartous governorate, was a 17-year-old secondary school student at the time of his arrest. On Monday, January 16, 2012, he was arrested by members of the Syrian regime’s Military Security Forces after they raided his place of residence in Ibn Khaldoun neighborhood of Banyas city. He spent most of the subsequent three-and-a-half years of detention in Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate and in Branch 215 in Damascus city, and was released on Thursday, June 11, 2015.

Omar¹⁴ told the SNHR about the most heinous methods of torture he suffered during his detention in Sydnaya Military Prison, some of which bear clear sectarian undertones:

“One of the most difficult methods of torture I experienced was pouring a liquid on some place on the body and running an electric charge through it. When electrocuted, electricity comes out of the point through the liquid and causes unbearable pain. The second method was tying the penis with a thread and feeding me salt and water several times, and after a quarter of an hour, a bitter pain begins for long hours in the area of the kidney and pelvis,” Omar added: **“During the interrogation, I suffered several fractures to the hands, feet and rib cage as a result of beating with an iron rod, and signs of the fractures are still seen on my body.”**

¹⁴ Through phone on January 20, 2018



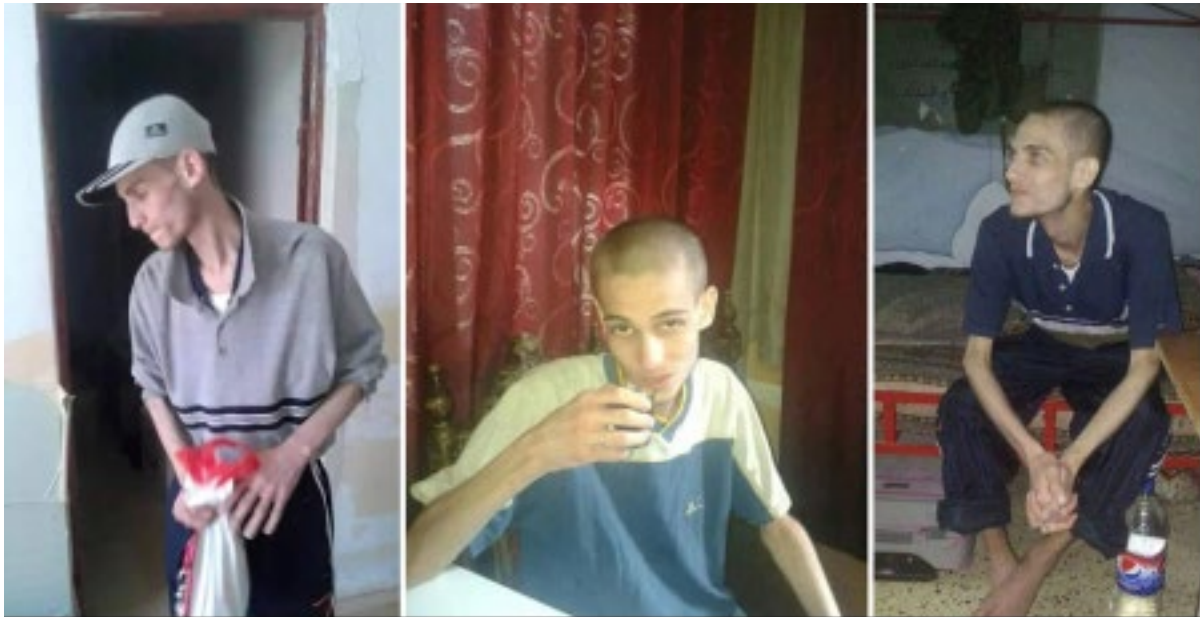


Photo showing Omar's severe emaciation and low weight after his release from the government detention center on Thursday, June 11, 2015, having been subjected to starvation and neglect of health care. His weight when he was released from detention was about 35 kg, and he also got tuberculosis.

[Medical examination](#) documents confirming that Omar al Sheghri got tuberculosis while he was detained in a Syrian regime's detention center.

Omar says: **“There are still thousands of people who are being subjected to the same brutality by the security forces. Years after I was released, I remained sick and exhausted because of the severe torture that I had been subjected to throughout the period of my detention. The pictures of my friends who died near me as a result of torture never leave my mind. No-one can imagine the hell happening in the detention centers.”**

Dr. Kamal Mohi al Din al Jum'a, born in 1972, from al Ghadfa town in the suburbs of Idlib governorate, a cardiologist specializing in cardiac surgery, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime's State Security Branch on Wednesday, June 6, 2012, in his workplace at the Cardiac Surgery Hospital in Aleppo city, and taken to the State Security Branch in Aleppo city, where he was held there for four days. He was then transferred by military aircraft to Branch 285 affiliated with the Military Security in Kafrsousa neighborhood of Damascus city, where he was detained for 57 days, during which he was subjected to various forms of continuous torture including beatings, electric shocks, the 'shabeh' and flogging. He was then transferred to Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, where he spent approximately 19 months, before being transferred to Balona Prison in Homs city, from where he was released on Wednesday, April 13, 2016.





Dr. Kamal Jum'a before his arrest by Syrian Regime forces on June 6, 2012, and after his release on April 13, 2016

Dr. Kamal Juma¹⁵ told the SNHR about the most severe forms of torture he suffered: **“In Branch 285 in Kafrsousa, from the moment I entered the branch, I was subjected to various types of torture, such as my putting me inside the tire, beating me, ‘ghosting’ me, electrocuting and insulting me. The severest, most brutal torture was putting me on the ‘wind carpet’ completely naked and blindfolded; the ‘wind carpet’ is two wooden boards covered with iron and connected to each other by joints, forcing you to lie on top of it on your belly and tie you on it, then bending the boards, and here your vertebrae start to disintegrate, then they pour freezing cold water on the back during the process of torture, which usually lasts for about two hours.”**

Lina al Ahmad, a nurse, from Daraa city, was arrested by members of the Syrian regime's Military Security Forces on Wednesday, May 13, 2015, at her workplace in a clinic in Daraa city because of a security report written by an informant against her. She was transferred to Branch 215 in Damascus city, then to the Palestine Branch, and then to Adra Central Prison, before she was released in mid-2016.

We spoke with Lina¹⁶, who told us that she was arrested in the sight of her colleagues at her workplace, then transferred to the Military Security Branch in Daraa city. She added: **“I stayed in the Military Security Branch in Daraa city for only two days. They directed insults at my honor, and the detective threatened to strip me and making me walk naked in front of all the branch's personnel in case I refused to confess, and then I begged and kissed his foot so he would leave me alone. Then he returned me to the**

¹⁵ Through phone in May, 2016

¹⁶ By phone on January 13, 2019



cell and transferred me two days later to Branch 215.” Lina added: **“They electrocuted me and stripped me of my veil, and then stripped me of my clothes during the inspection in front of three personnel. The interrogation lasted for five days, during which I was beaten and insulted. About a month later, they transferred me to the Palestine Branch, where I was infected with scabies and lice, and three of my teeth were broken after my mouth was kicked by an officer.”** Lina added that her family paid a huge amount of money, due to which she was transferred to Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate, then released after nearly seven months of being detained there.

Yousef al Sheikh Na’san, a retailer from Jendeires village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, was aged 55 at the time of his arrest. He was detained by personnel from the Hasaka division of the Syrian regime’s State Security Branch in the center of Hasaka city on Sunday, July 20, 2014. He was transferred two days later by a military helicopter to Damascus city and then to Branch 227 in Damascus city, before being released in early 2015.

The SNHR spoke with Yousef¹⁷, who told us that Syrian Regime forces arrested and transferred him to Damascus city via helicopter gunship. He added: **“The regime’s members were on security alert and were carrying out arrests against young men. I think this was because of problems with the Asayish [Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces security division] forces. Members of the Syrian regime approached me while I was buying goods for my shop and asked me why I was standing there. They then beat me and covered my head and took me to a place I do not know, where they beat me there with six others using a whip. About two hours later, they drove us to a helicopter that took us to Damascus, and in the helicopter, they threatened to throw us out of it.”** Yousef told us that their destination after the helicopter landed was Branch 227 in Damascus, adding that he was beaten and verbally assaulted with racist language, and he did not know the charge against him even after his release. He recalled: **“I spent my entire detention in Branch 227; it was hell. I was subjected there to sectarian and territorial practices. In one of the torture sessions, the interrogator put my head in the pit latrine and ordered his personnel to urinate on me. They also forced me to clean the toilets and wash the blankets, with all this always accompanied by constant beatings.”**

¹⁷ By phone on February 4, 2019



Salma al Shawi, from Deir Ez-Zour city, who was 28 at the time of her arrest, was arrested on Friday, July 20, 2018, by members of the Syrian regime's State Security Branch in a raid on her home in Deir Ez-Zour city. The next day, she was transferred to the State Security Branch in Damascus city, before releasing her in September 2018.

We spoke over the phone with Salma¹⁸, who told us: **“The personnel broke into our house and arrested me in front of my children and family, and directed the most vicious insults at me and took me to the State Security Branch. The interrogator there told me that they wanted my husband, and I told them I didn't know his location since he left the city four years ago, so he threatened to transfer me to Damascus if I did not change my statement. Indeed, I was transferred to the State Security Branch in Damascus the next morning, where I witnessed the world of the dead and hell.”**

Salma described what she was subjected to in the State Security Branch in Damascus, saying: **“As soon as I entered the branch, they stopped me beside the bathroom, and I heard the screams of torture and insults to the detainees, and I started crying. One of the personnel told me to save my tears for the time I'd join the rest of the detainees in the 'concert' as he called it, and then he put me in a solitary cell, where I stayed for 20 days where no-one talked to me. After that, an officer took me out and asked me about my husband, where he was, and said that he was performing marriage jihad with Mujahidat (female fighters), and tried to rape and harass me, but I was screaming strongly so he ordered his personnel to beat me, then he hit me with a small pane of glass, which smashed on my face. He then ordered them to put me back in the solitary after beating me with 'falqa', and I stayed in solitary for another month. They used to bring me food once every two days and the toilet was inside the solitary cell, then they released me, and I learned that my family paid two million Syrian pounds for my release.”**

VIII. The most notable individuals responsible for torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers according to the SNHR's database

Over the past eight years, the SNHR has attempted to collect evidence linking violations to the specific individuals involved in perpetrating them, or ordered to carry them out, and has built a special database that includes details on hundreds of those involved in perpetrating violations, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The following are the main individuals identified as being among those involved in directing and perpetrating the torture practiced by the Syrian regime:

¹⁸ By phone on February 4, 2019



Yasin Ahmad Dahi, a Brigadier-General, from Khrebe village in Tartous governorate, was born in 1960. He headed the Branch 235 affiliated with the Military Security Division known as the Palestine Branch in 2014, and supervised the torture of detainees there. Before being appointed to run the branch, he was a detective officer there, becoming an assistant to the head of the branch in 2012. He was also appointed as Chairman of the Military Security Branch in Deir Ez-Zour city in 2013 and of the Military Security Branch in Homs city in 2016.



We note that Dahi has been nicknamed “the Monster of Ghouta” for his participation in regime raids on the cities and towns of the Eastern Ghouta region, where he participated in the raid on Saqba city in the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus on Saturday, June 16, 2012, which resulted at the time in the deaths and arrests of dozens of civilians. He also participated in a massacre in Mesraba town in the Eastern Ghouta of Damascus on Wednesday, April 4, 2012.

Shafiq Ahmad Massa, a Brigadier-General born in 1956, whose mother’s name is Abla, comes from al Zara village in the western suburbs of Hama. He has served as the head of [the Branch 215](#) affiliated with the Military Security Division and supervised the crackdown on and detention of peaceful demonstrators in 2011 by members of his branch in the Kafsousa neighborhood of Damascus. He is also accused of committing torture and issuing orders to carry out extrajudicial killings against detainees in Branch 215, which is known as the “Death Branch” due to the high number of deaths due to torture there.

Ahmad Alia, an officer from Jabla city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, the director of the prison in Branch 215, is currently aged 60 . He is well known for issuing torture orders in Branch 215, as well as for his sectarianism and brutality towards detainees. He supervises the inspection of female detainees, with many of the female detainees we spoke with telling us about the harassment they had been subjected to by Ahmad Alia. He also supervises the distribution of food to the cells and, according to information obtained from former detainees, he used to impose the penalty of deprivation of food on entire cells, or deprive detainees of part of their food share. Ahmad Alia also prevents detainees from leaving Branch 215 for medical treatment, except in very rare cases.

We note that Ahmad Alia is known as ‘Gargamel’ among the female detainees.

Abdul Salam Fajr Mahmoud, born in 1959, a Brigadier-General, whose mother’s name is Shahznan, comes from al Fou’a village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. Abdul Salam is the head of the Investigation Branch affiliated with the Air Security division in Da-

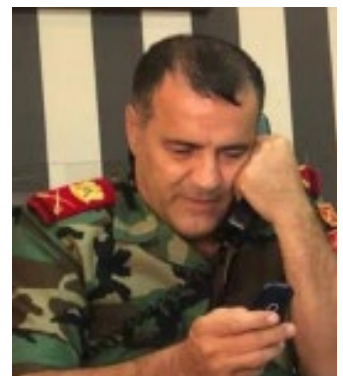


mascus city. Abdul Salam practiced various methods of torture at the Air Security division's Mazza Military Prison and is accused of being personally responsible for the murder of many detainees, most prominently the children Hamza al Khatib and Thamer al Shara'i, according to testimony provided by Afaq Ahmad, a defector from the branch's management. According to accounts from former detainees obtained by the SNHR, Abdul Salam Mahmoud was responsible for supervising the transfer of the bodies of detainees who died due to torture in the interrogation branch to the Military Hospital 601 located in the Mazza neighborhood of Damascus city, after other detainees were forced to number their cellmates' bodies.

Jawdat al Ahmad, a Brigadier-General, from Qerdaha city in the suburbs of Latakia governorate, has been the head of the Air Security department in the central region in Homs city since 2011. During his tenure, the Air Security Branch has witnessed systematic, widespread and extremely brutal torture; he has allocated a section of the ground floor in the branch for the daily mass torture of detainees. According to survivors of detention there, Jawdat al Ahmad imposes penalties on personnel responsible for torture if they are lax in practicing it with sufficient brutality against detainees. The SNHR has also learned through accounts of survivors of detention that Jawdat al Ahmad supervised the abuse of detainees' bodies and gave orders that they be dumped in the roads near neighborhoods whose residents had opposed the Syrian regime to spread further fear in those neighborhoods.

We also note that Jawdat al Ahmad participated in several massacres committed in Homs governorate, including the massacres in Bab al Dreib, Karm al Zaytoun, al Bayyada, Baba Amr and Ashera, as well as al Sa'a (the Clock Tower Square) massacre that took place in Homs city on Sunday, April 17, 2011, when his personnel stationed on the roofs of buildings near the Police Comman building and the road between the old and new Clock Twoer Square, opened fire indiscriminately on civilians.

Ryad Habib Kharfan Abbas is a brigade officer, from Ein Qayta village, administratively a part of Beit Yashout district, in Jabla area in Latakia governorate. He is the Commander of the Military Police in Syria, which is responsible for the management of military detention centers such as the infamous Sydnaya Military Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate. In mid-2013, he was the head of the Political Security Branch in Aleppo city where he directly supervised interrogations and torture, in addition to issuing orders to detectives empowering them to use all methods of torture during interrogation.



Ryad Abbas



Ghassan Jawdat Ismail, a Major-General, from Jneinet Raslan town, east of the Draikeesh area in Tartous governorate, born in 1960, is currently the Director of Air Security, and was formerly the Deputy Director of Air Security.

Ghassan Ismail issued orders for his personnel to participate, along with the Fourth Division, in the repression and shooting of demonstrators in Darayya city in Damascus Suburbs governorate in 2011, and is accused of liquidating detainees in the Mazza Military prison in Damascus city, and of forcibly disappearing other detainees. He is also accused of involvement, along with Brigadier General Wafik Naser, the former president of the Military Security Branch, in the repeated kidnappings that took place in Suwayda in 2018.



Ghassan Ismail

Ghassan held three positions before being promoted to the Deputy Director of Air Security. He was the Head of the State Security Branch in Suwayda governorate in 2016, prior to which he was the Head of the Special Tasks Branch in 2011.

In July 2012, Ghassan was listed by the European Union on a list of 27 Syrian regime individuals included in package 17 of the sanctions.

In general, every official in the Syrian regime is fully aware of the regime's torture practices, often participating in them, and capable of acting to save detainees from torture, and those who have not done so are implicated in and contributing directly to the crime of torture. The Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity clearly defines the responsibility of individuals in its second article, which states: "If any of the crimes mentioned in article I is committed, the provisions of this Convention shall apply to representatives of the State authority and private individuals who, as principals or accomplices, participate in or who directly incite others to the commission of any of those crimes, or who conspire to commit them, irrespective of the degree of completion, and to representatives of the State authority who tolerate their commission."

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

Legal Conclusions:

Syrian Regime forces have systematically and extensively practiced the crime of torture, reaching the extent of killing victims, violating the right to life, as well as constituting a flagrant violation of international human rights law. It has been proved beyond doubt that the Syrian regime is fully aware of this and of the certainty that the inhuman conditions of detention and the brutal methods of torture routinely and inevitably lead to continuous suffering



and pain and regularly to death. Despite knowing all of this, the regime has done nothing to stop these criminal actions. Killings as a result of torture constitute crimes against humanity under Article VII of the Rome Statute and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, which amount to war crimes, forming a systematic and repetitive pattern, and can thus be classified as extermination. This is also a flagrant violation of Syrian law and of the Syrian constitution.

Recommendations:

UN Security Council and the United Nations:

- Protect civilians detained by the Syrian regime from torture and lethal torture, and rescue those who remain alive.
- The General Assembly of the United Nations must take the initiative in the Syrian situation and resort to invoking the principle of Uniting for Peace, given the total paralysis affecting the Security Council due to the Russian-Chinese veto.
- Establish a mechanism to compel the Syrian regime to end practices of torture, and to reveal the whereabouts of the bodies of the victims and to hand these over to their families.
- Russia must stop blocking the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- All UN relief agencies must search for families that have lost their primary breadwinner or one or more of their children due to torture, initiate rehabilitation, and ensure that aid is continuously delivered to their beneficiaries.
- Ensure immediate punishment of all individuals involved in the Syrian regime's vast torture network.

The International Community and states of the world:

- States which are parties to the Convention against Torture must take the necessary measures to establish their jurisdiction over perpetrators of torture and make all the necessary material and security efforts for this objective.
- Take serious punitive measures against the Syrian regime to deter it from continuing to kill Syrian citizens under torture, including political, economic, and military measures, including no-fly zones.
- Due to the failure of the Security Council to protect detainees who have become hostages to the Syrian regime which is, as a result, killing whoever it wishes by torture, a coalition of civilized nations must be formed to intervene politically and militarily to protect civilians and save tens of thousands of detainees from death due to torture.



- Provide more funds, support and sufficient grants to local organizations concerned with the care and rehabilitation of torture victims and their families.
- Provide support to individual activists and local organizations that document violations without imposing tutelage or political directives.
- Unite to implement the Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian law, by establishing a special criminal court to hold the Syrian regime accountable for crimes against humanity and war crimes it has committed, and take a clear, unanimous and repeated international consensus of not accepting that it continues to dominate the Syrian state.

OHCHR:

- Make greater efforts to combat and condemn systematic torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers, and issue periodic reports and repeated condemnation statements addressing this sensitive issue.
- Repeat its request that the Security Council refers the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Human Rights Council

- Allocate a special session to discuss the crimes of torture in the Syrian regime's detention centers as it reached a level of ugliness never witnessed in modern times.
- Request that the Security Council and relevant international institutions assume their responsibilities in this very serious matter.
- Put pressure on the Syrian government to stop torture, open prisons and detention centers to see the situation of thousands of detainees and conditions of their arrest.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI):

- Study the cases included in this report, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights willing to cooperate and provide more evidence and details.

The Syrian regime:

- Immediately stop using all torture methods and deploying the capabilities of the Syrian state in torture and in terror of Syrian society.
- Immediately allow access for the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all objective human rights organizations to the detention centers.

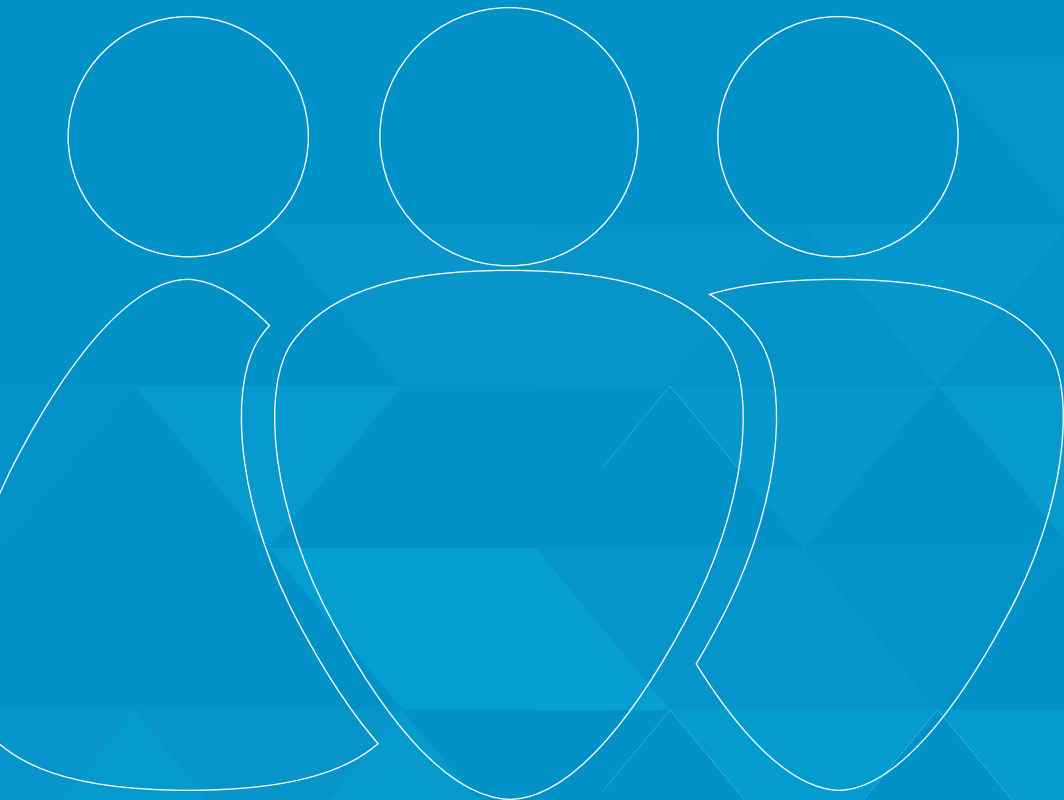


- Take legal and historical responsibility for this comprehensive national catastrophe.
- Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrary detained, particularly children and women, and reveal the fate of tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons.
- Stop violating the Syrian constitution and international law in a horrific and monstrous way, which grotesquely insults the Syrian constitution and the Syrian state.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the survivors of torture for their gracious and effective contributions to this report, and to offer our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and their friends.





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