

A Joint Statement Condemning the Repeated Targeting of Syrian Civil Society Organizations

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, condemn and deplore the repeated and deliberate attacks on Syrian civil society organizations operating in different regions of Syria. We declare our solidarity and support for these organizations, which have been subjected to all kinds of pressures and violations to impede their duties towards the Syrian society. The last of these attacks were the crime that targeted a center for Syria Civil Defence (SCD) in the city of Sarmin in northern Syria, and another that targeted an office operated by three civil society organizations in the city of Douma in southern Syria.

On August 12, 2017, a center for Syria Civil Defence, known as White Helmets, in Sarmin in Idlib countryside was subjected to an armed attack in which seven members of the center team were killed, and the center was completely robbed. On August 13, 2017, the Popular Movement attacked an office which is shared by the Violations Documentation Center in Syria (VDC), Local Development and Small Projects Support (LDSPS) and Hurras Network in the city of Douma in the countryside of Damascus. The Popular Movement is a group of followers of Jaysh Al Islam. The assailants assaulted staff and visitors that were present with physical violence, sticks and sharp metal objects. The assailants stole certain contents of the office, destroyed the rest and threatened to burn down the office next time.

Despite these ongoing attacks on the civil society that aim to force feelings of insecurity onto workers in this field and to push them to give up their humanitarian duty, the Syrian civil society has repeatedly renewed its commitment to fulfill its duties to serve the Syrian people and to promote and protect human rights. "It is hard to find words to describe my martyred colleagues; each of them leaves stories of hope behind in lives they've saved and injured they've rescued. I feel very proud of their humanitarian actions and the legacy they leave," [said](#) Raed al Saleh, head of the Syria Civil Defence, in commenting on the incident in which seven Civil Defence volunteers were killed, "we promise the Syrian people this crime will not deter us from serving them and alleviating their suffering."

Attacks on human rights activists and civil society workers are not a new phenomenon, with numerous violations of many types monitored and documented. The [statement](#) issued by LDSPS touched on this point, "This new attempt to scare our team reminds us of previous attempts, including what happened in 2013 when one attempt ended with the kidnapping of our four colleagues, Razan, Samira, Wael and Nazim, from the very same office on the night of December 9, 2013."

Civil society organizations play a key role in serving civilians, as well as recording violations against them. "Unfortunately, this attack coincided with the fourth anniversary of the terrible chemical massacre carried out by the Syrian government forces in Ghouta in Damascus countryside in 2013," VDC [statement](#) said, "The Center [VDC] was primarily involved in documenting and recording its victims as part of its work to document violations in order to redress victims and hold criminals accountable."

While we grieve for the lives of the victims and hope for the speedy recovery of the wounded, we call on the international community and international human rights actors to:

1. Condemn such violations
2. Support Syrian civil society organizations by all means to be able to protect themselves and their employees.

The below signatories: (1) hold de facto forces in these areas responsible for the safety of civil society workers, (2) call upon these forces to arrest and bring to justice those who participated in or incited these crimes and violations, and (3) demand these forces to commit to not to interfere with the work and lives of civil society workers and to protect them when necessary.

List of Signees:

1. Al-Bab City Coordinating
2. Al-Kawakibi Organization For Human Rights
3. Al-khadraa organization
4. Al-Marsad | Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights
5. ANA PRESS
6. Badael Organization
7. Baytna Syria
8. Bihar relief organization
9. Citizens for Syria
10. Comunita' Araba Siriana in Italia
11. Dawlaty organization
12. Emissa for Development
13. Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights-Birati
14. Free Syrian Lawyer Association
15. Foundation of Syrian civil society organization
16. Human Rights Guardians
17. Jazour society Training & Development
18. Justice For Life Organization
19. Kawakibi Center for Transitional Justice and Human Rights
20. Kesh Malek

21. Local Administration Councils Unit LACU
22. Local Coordination Committees of Syria
23. Local Development & Small-Projects Support (LDSPS)
24. MADA Center for Studies and Development
25. Mouwatana For Civil Action
26. Najda Now Organization
27. PÊL- Civil Waves
28. Raqeeb Institute for Monitoring and Documentation
29. Sanad Organization
30. SHAML coalition of civil society organizations
31. Start Point organization
32. Syrian activists monitoring organization
33. Syrian Archive
34. Syrian Center For Legal Studies and Researches
35. Syrian Center For Media and Freedom of Expression
36. Syrian Center For Journalistic Freedoms
37. Syrian Feminist Lobby
38. Syrian League For Citizenship
39. Syrian Network for Human Rights
40. Syrian Nonviolence Movement
41. Syrian Women's Network
42. Syrians For Truth and Justice
43. The Day after
44. The Syrian Journalists Association
45. The Working Group for Syria
46. The Working Group for Syrian Detainees
47. This is my life organization
48. Violations Documentation Center in Syria (VDC)
49. Women Now for development