Press release on the situation of Syrian detainees and prisoners in Lebanon

September 2022
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Beirut, Damascus, Paris 08 September 2022
The Lebanese State Security arrested the Syrian refugee Bashar Abdel Saoud on 30 August 2022. Abdel Saoud was tortured to death by a number of officers and soldiers. The victim's photo, which shows clear signs of torture on his body, was leaked and spread over social media platforms. While several press reports confirmed that Bashar Abdel Saoud had been subjected to brutal torture, burns, and bruises - all over his body - caused by severe beatings and flogging with metal wires.

The story of the victim, Abdel Saoud, spread at a time when most Syrian prisoners and detainees in various Lebanese prisons, especially in Roumieh prison - the largest in Lebanon - suffer from poor detention conditions. Starting with ill-treatment and torture during the investigation, as well as litigation procedures that cause overcrowding in prisons, given the judges’ resort to pre-trial detention, arrest without justification, and slow trial processes. As well as health and medical neglect and the absence of medicine, which caused the spread of epidemics and the death of /3/ people, according to press information. The Lebanese state has stopped providing medicine to prisoners. Medical prescriptions under the phrase “At His Expenses” began to appear, according to a prisoner's testimony given in Roumieh prison.

The number of prisoners in Lebanon, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Justice and new statistics, is /6,989/ prisoners distributed between /5,391/ in Roumieh Central Prison and other prisons, and /1,598/ detained in smaller prisons, and places of detention affiliated with the security forces¹.

Several testimonies given by a number of detainees, and documented by the Center (SCM) in this regard, indicate that a large number of Syrian prisoners and detainees, in Lebanese prisons, had previously been arrested during the fight that took place in the Lebanese city Arsal² for several days in August 2022 between the Lebanese army and Syrian opposition groups. Noting that they had no connection with the events in Arsal based on their statements, or even that they were not present within the area at the time. They are being brought before the Military Court on charges of terrorism, where the Lebanese security forces and agencies, most notably the army intelligence, conduct direct raids on their homes, under the pretext: (of terrorism - sabotaging the property of the Lebanese state - kidnapping and killing members of the Lebanese army and security forces - forming armed groups - arms trade).

Several Lebanese security branches, including Army Intelligence and General Security and the Ministry of Defence, have tortured at least /25/ refugees’ Syrian detainees. Which included deprivation of sleep, food, humiliation, beatings, torture with electrical devices, and the absence of medical care, the vast majority of whom are victims of arbitrary arrest, on trumped-up charges related to terrorism and without a fair trial, according to a report published by Amnesty International, "I wish I would die": Syrian refugees detained on terrorism-related charges and tortured in Lebanon”, on 23 March 2021³.

¹ موقع وزارة الداخلية
² وقائع ما حدث في معركة عرسال
The signatory organizations to this statement, condemn in the strongest terms, the practice of torture by any party, as a grave and serious breach of human rights, and appeal to the Lebanese authorities, the United Nations, and the international community, to work towards implementing the following demands:

**First: Lebanese Authorities**

1. Announcing the results of the investigations into the killing of Syrian refugee Bashar Abdel Saoud, and prosecuting those responsible for his killing.
2. Provide all necessary information about Syrians detained and imprisoned in Lebanese prisons, and assign an independent body to investigate the violations, torture, and killings of a number of refugees in these prisons.
3. Reopen new investigations in accordance with due process and legal procedures, reconsider issued judgments, and all statements extracted under torture.
4. Ensure that violations against prisoners and detainees will not be repeated and that the Lebanese Authorities will adhere to international standards and minimum rules for the protection of prisoners.
5. Cooperate with international detention monitors and those of human rights violations, and grant them access to all detention centers, to carry out periodic and non-periodic visits, to find out the reality of the human rights situation in the different prisons.
6. Establishing a mechanism to receive complaints from detainees in Lebanese detention centers.

**Second: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Activate the role of the protection office, and provide legal support and representation, through lawyers affiliated with the Commission, or independent lawyers assigned by the Commission, to defend refugee cases individually and collectively, and follow up on their cases in the courts, to ensure fair, impartial, and transparent trials.

**Third: The international community and international organizations**

1. Contribute to putting pressure on the Lebanese government, to respect and implement its obligations in accordance with the ratified international agreements, and provide protection and safety for all residents on the Lebanese territory, including Syrian refugees.
2. Visit Lebanese prisons, meet with Syrian detainees, and learn about their conditions and the violations they were subjected to, in order to reach a fair trial.
3. Provide legal assistance and support programs for Syrian refugees, ensuring their right to defend themselves before the courts.
4. Assist to improve the living conditions of families and families of detainees and prisoners, and provide all possible forms of care available to families of detainees and their families.
5. Establish professional rehabilitation programs for prisoners inside the prisons, and psychological and practical rehabilitation after leaving prison.

**Signatory Organizations:**

Association of Victims of Chemical Weapons (AVCW)
Caesar Families Association (CFA)
Jana Watan
Lawyers and doctors for Human Rights LDHR
MENA Rights Group
Pro-Justice
Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Researches (SCLSR)
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Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR)
Syrian Network for Human Rights - SNHR
Syrian Women’s Network
Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ
The Syria Campaign
Union of Revolutionary Bureaus
Urnammu for Justice & Human Rights
About Us:

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization monitoring human rights violations in Syria. Founded in 2015, STJ has been based in France since 2019.

STJ is an impartial and independent Syrian human rights organization operating across Syria. Our network of field researchers monitor and report human rights violations occurring on the ground in Syria, while our international team of human rights experts, lawyers, and journalists gather evidence, examine emerging patterns of violations, and analyze how violations break domestic Syrian and international law.

We are committed to documenting violations of human rights committed by all parties in the Syrian conflict and elevating the voices of all Syrians victimized by human rights violations, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, class, and/or gender. Our commitment to human rights monitoring is founded on the idea that professional human rights documentation meeting international standards is the first step to uncovering the truth and achieving justice in Syria.

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