

# Submission to the Human Rights Committee in relation to the Republic of Türkiye

142nd Session 14 October - 8 November 2024



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Violations in Syrian Territories Occupied by Türkiye

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## 1. Introduction

1. The ongoing violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Syrian territories occupied by the Republic of Türkiye (Türkiye) have highlighted significant accountability gaps. Despite numerous credible reports of grave violations that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, there has been a persistent lack of investigation, prosecution, punishment, and remedies for victims. This accountability gap has allowed perpetrators to act with impunity, further entrenching the cycle of violations and injustice. The upcoming Human Rights Committee's review of Türkiye presents a critical opportunity for the Committee to address Türkiye and affiliated proxy actors' widespread violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), urging Türkiye to fulfil its obligations as an occupying power and to take meaningful steps to ensure accountability. By examining Türkiye's obligations under the ICCPR in the Syrian-occupied territories, the Committee can help ensure that those responsible are held accountable and that justice is served for the victims of these serious violations.
  
2. To this end, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), and other NGOs, submit this report to the Human Rights Committee concerning the review of Türkiye's report at its 142nd session. The report aims to provide the Committee with critical insights and information to ensure that the grave violations of the ICCPR that have occurred and continue to occur in Syrian territories occupied by Türkiye are thoroughly examined and addressed during the review of Türkiye's compliance with its ICCPR obligations. The report focuses on the following key areas of concern:
  - Right to Life (Article 6)
  - Prohibition of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Violations of Liberty and Security of the Person (Articles 7, 9, 10)
  - Non-Discrimination (Articles 2, 26, 27)
  - Lack of Access to Justice, Accountability, and Remedy (Articles 2, 6, 7, 14, 25)

3. The report heavily relies on data collected from primary sources by STJ, using methodologies consistent with the documentation of human rights violations. The information provided by STJ essentially builds from exclusive first-hand data and consented detailed statements collected by field researchers from primary sources, including victims, survivors, or witnesses. STJ also relies on information gathered from diverse secondary sources, including open sources, as well as informants and individuals embedded within the structures of *de facto* authorities and armed groups. This information is subsequently cross-verified by STJ's network of researchers and reporters, who validate it through primary sources. Additionally, the report draws on information collected through the submitting organisations' research and review of the reports of the International Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) and reports and publications by international organisations. For the legal analysis, references are made to international treaties, case law from international courts, and legal documents such as General Comments from Treaty Bodies.

## **2. Legal Framework Applicable to Türkiye's ICCPR Violations in Syria: Türkiye's Occupation Over Syrian Territories**

4. It is largely accepted that human rights treaties apply extraterritorially, including in cases where a State has effective control over a territory of another State, exercising both power and authority over individuals. In its General Comment 31, the Human Rights Committee noted that a State Party must respect and ensure the rights laid down in the ICCPR to anyone within the power or effective control of that State Party, even if not situated within the territory of the State Party. This principle applies to those within the power or effective control of the State Party, regardless of the circumstances in which such power or effective control was obtained.<sup>1</sup>
5. Türkiye has been militarily occupying large parts of north Syria since 2016. In its first operation in 2016 (Operation Euphrates Shield), it occupied the predominantly Arab region north of Aleppo that included Azaz, al-Bab and Jarablus, which had previously

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment no. 31 (The Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on State Parties to the Covenant)

been under the control of the Islamic State. In its second military intervention in 2018 (Operation Olive Branch), it captured Afrin, a Kurdish-majority area. In its third and last incursion in 2019 (Operation Peace Spring), Turkish armed forces gained control of the area between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ain (Serakaniye, in Kurdish). All these military operations were conducted with and through a local armed group, the Syrian National Army (SNA), which serves as a *de facto* proxy in the occupied areas, and were marked by massive displacement and serious abuses of human rights.<sup>2</sup>

6. Under international law, a territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation is limited to areas where such authority has been established and can be exercised.<sup>3</sup> This is a factual determination, demonstrated by the fact that said authority is established and exercised by the intervening State in the areas in question. In the *DRC v Uganda* case, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stated that, to this end, the Court had to satisfy itself that the foreign armed forces were not only stationed in particular locations but also that they had substituted their own authority for that of the domestic government.<sup>4</sup>
7. Following its military operations in Northern Syria, Türkiye has established and continues to exercise effective control over the areas subject to military incursion. This control is exercised directly by Türkiye as occupying power through military, intelligence and administrative means. Türkiye maintains control over the territories it occupies through the presence of its armed forces and intelligence agencies, with over 100 military sites, bases and observation posts across northern Syria. Furthermore, each of these occupied territories is administratively controlled by local authorities in neighbouring districts inside of Türkiye: the governors' offices of Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, and Sanliurfa directly oversee the provision of education, health, financial services and humanitarian aid in adjacent territories of Syria alongside local councils established by Türkiye and whose representatives are often approved or appointed by

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Everything is by the Power of the Weapon: Abuses and Impunity in Turkish-Occupied Northern Syria", 29 February 2024, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/everything-power-weapon/abuses-and-impunity-turkish-occupied-northern-syria>, (last access: 29 August 2024)

<sup>3</sup> The Hague Regulations Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land annexed to the Fourth Hague Convention of 18 October 1907, Article 42.

<sup>4</sup> ICJ, Case Concerning Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (*DRC v. Uganda*), Judgement of 19 December 2005, paras. 172–177

Türkiye. Thus, the Hatay governor oversees the Afrin local council, the Kilis and Gaziantep governors the work of councils in the “Euphrates Shield” areas, while the Sanliurfa governor is responsible for the areas between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ayn.<sup>5</sup>

8. In addition to administrative control, the occupied areas are *de facto* treated as an extension of Türkiye. The Turkish lira has replaced the Syrian currency, and Turkish banks and post offices exclusively provide financial services. Electricity is provided by and through Türkiye’s companies and power grid, while Türkiye’s health directorates oversee healthcare facilities. Inhabitants of the areas are also required to obtain local council-issued ID cards, which are linked to the Turkish national ID system, with information presented in both Turkish and Arabic, while Syrian government-issued identity cards are no longer accepted in these territories.<sup>6</sup>
9. Moreover, Türkiye further reinforces its control over the occupied areas through its *de facto* proxy force, the SNA. Under International Humanitarian Law, it is established that effective control over an occupied territory can also be exercised through proxy armed forces. This is the case when armed groups act as occupying power on behalf of another state which has “overall control” over them, therefore exercising effective control over local authorities in the occupied territory or over the organised groups that have such effective control over the territory of another state.<sup>7</sup>
10. Türkiye exercises direct control over the SNA, which it supplies with military training, weapons, salaries and logistical support.<sup>8</sup> While the SNA officially reports to the Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Interim Government (SIG), a self-declared governing body in Azaz, its factions answer only to Turkish military forces and intelligence agencies. Indeed, Turkish military and intelligence agencies oversee the factions’ conduct in these areas through their operation rooms in al-Bab, Jarablus, Ras al-Ayn and Afrin, which direct the SNA factions. Turkish authorities frequently join the SNA in its conduct, including in the context of arbitrary detention. Turkish armed forces and

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<sup>5</sup>New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, “Intelligence Briefing: The Gangs of Northern Syria: Life Under Turkey’s Proxies”, December 2022, available at: <https://newlinesinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/20221206-Intel-Briefing-Turkish-Proxies-in-Syria-NLISAP-1.pdf>, (last access: 29 August 2024)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> ICTY, Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić, Trial Chamber, Judgment, 7 May 1997, Case No. IT-94-1-T, para. 584

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy.

the SNA often arrest and illegally transfer Syrian nationals to Türkiye, a conduct that is indicative of collaboration and joint operations between Türkiye and the SNA.<sup>9</sup>

11. Based on the facts above, there is sufficient evidence to believe that Türkiye has established and continues to exercise full authority in the areas it has invaded since 2016. It exercises this authority both directly and through overall control of *de facto* proxy forces. As the occupying power, Türkiye has an obligation under Article 43 of the Hague Regulations of 1907 to take all measures within its power to restore and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in the occupied areas. This obligation includes the duty to secure respect for the applicable rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, to protect the inhabitants of the occupied territory against acts of violence, and not to tolerate such violence by any third party.<sup>10</sup> Hence, as an occupying power, Türkiye is obliged to adhere to the minimum standards defined by international humanitarian law and the complementary protections of international human rights law, which apply simultaneously and extraterritorially to the Syrian-occupied territories.

12. As a State party to the ICCPR, Türkiye is under an obligation pursuant to Article 2(1) to respect and ensure the rights recognised by the ICCPR in occupied areas and toward Syrian civilians under its jurisdiction. This legal obligation is both negative and positive and requires Türkiye to:

- Refrain from violations of the rights recognised by the Covenant,
- Adopt legislative, judicial, administrative, educative and other appropriate measures in order to fulfil their legal obligations,
- Ensure that individuals have accessible and effective remedies to vindicate Covenant rights and make reparations to individuals whose Covenant rights have been violated,

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<sup>9</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/45/31, 15 September 2020, Para. 57, available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/45/31>

<sup>10</sup> ICJ, Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, 9 July 2004, ICJ Reports 2004, paras. 111-113; ICJ, Case Concerning Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (DRC v. Uganda), Judgement of 19 December 2005, para. 178.



- Ensure that individuals responsible for violations are brought to justice in cases where investigations through remedy procedures reveal violations of certain Covenant rights,
- Take measures to prevent the recurrence of violations of the Covenant, including providing for and implementing provisional or interim measures to avoid continuing violations and to endeavour to repair any harm caused by such violations.

### **3. Violations of ICCPR in Syrian Territories under Türkiye's Occupation**

13. This section addresses core violations committed, sanctioned, or enabled by Türkiye as an occupying power and the relevant legal framework applicable to Türkiye in the context of the ICCPR's extraterritorial application.

#### **A. Right to Life and Protection of Civilian Populations (Article 6)**

14. Since Türkiye established its authority and effective control in northern Syria—encompassing the so-called “Euphrates Shield,” “Olive Branch,” and “Peace Spring” areas—over the years 2016, 2018, and 2019 respectively, STJ, other NGOs, and the COI have documented numerous violations of the right to life in the occupied areas. These violations include various breaches of the local population’s right to life, such as documented custodial or custody-related deaths and targeted killings, as well as the targeting of civilian objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population—a practice widely referred to as “weaponising of water”.<sup>11</sup> Such deaths were documented

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<sup>11</sup> Under Article 6, Türkiye is obliged to ensure that anyone within its power or effective control, even if not situated within its territory, is protected from acts or omissions that are intended or may be expected to cause unnatural or premature death and is entitled to enjoy a life with dignity. The right to life shall not be interpreted narrowly and must address all acts that involve intentional or otherwise foreseeable and preventable life-threatening situations that can result in loss of life. In this sense, the arbitrary deprivation of life under Article 6 extends beyond injury to bodily or mental integrity and includes the protection of civilian objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as water supplies. Targeting these essential resources constitutes a violation of Article 6, as it directly threatens the right to life by endangering the health and survival of the civilian population. “Human Rights Committee, General Comment no. 36 (Article 6: The Right to Life), Para. 3”. It is established that the ICCPR, including Article 6, continues to apply during armed conflicts. While International Humanitarian Law (IHL) can inform the interpretation of Article 6, the two legal frameworks are complementary. The use of lethal force that complies with IHL is generally not arbitrary. However, violations of IHL, such as targeting civilians or civilian objects or failing to apply precaution and proportionality, result in arbitrary deprivation of life breach Article 6. “Human Rights Committee, General Comment no. 36 (Article 6: The Right to Life), Para. 64.”

among individuals from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The weaponisation of water has particularly affected communities—both local and internally displaced—by the Turkish incursions in 2018 and 2019 in the Kurdish-majority province of al-Hasakah, which the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) controls. Coupled with repeated large-scale Türkiye-led air campaigns<sup>12</sup> and drone attacks.<sup>13</sup> Documented death cases include individuals from all backgrounds, including Arabs and Kurds, with many cases involving people perceived as opposing Türkiye or affiliated with the so-called AANES, which dominated the area before the Turkish occupation in 2019.

15. The execution of Kurdish politician Hevrin Khalaf stands out as one of the most emblematic examples, highlighting how the Türkiye-affiliated Syrian National Army (SNA) targets those perceived as affiliated with the AANES. Hevrin, known for opposing and criticising Turkish involvement in Syria, was the secretary-general of the 2018-founded Future Syria Party, and previously the deputy co-chair of the AANES's Energy Committee in the Jazira Canton. She was executed along with her driver by fighters from the SNA's Ahrar al-Sharqiya in October 2019, during the hostilities of Operation Peace Spring. She was ambushed on October 12 on the international highway linking Raqqa to Qamishli. Hevrin was shot in the head, showed signs of beatings with a solid object on her head and body, and had marks from being dragged by her hair. In addition, she sustained several gunshot wounds after death.<sup>14</sup>
16. Also perpetrated by fighters from the SNA's Ahrar al-Sharqiya, STJ documented the executions of two members of an ambulance crew, a nurse and a driver, as well as their SDF-affiliated female military escort, for their work with the AANES. On October 13, 2019, fighters from Ahrar al-Sharqiya intercepted the Kurdish Red Crescent's ambulance in the town of Suluk, within Tel Abyad, and immediately executed both its

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<sup>12</sup> STJ, "Northeastern Syria: Unprecedented Turkish Strikes on Energy Infrastructure", 19 January 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/northeastern-syria-unprecedented-turkish-strikes-on-energy-infrastructure/>, (last access: 2 September 2024)

<sup>13</sup> STJ, "Syria: Turkish Drone Attacks, Russian Airstrikes Ramped Up in Tandem with Astana Talks", 18 August 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-turkish-drone-attacks-russian-airstrikes-ramped-up-in-tandem-with-astana-talks/>, (last access: 2 September 2024)

<sup>14</sup> STJ, "New Evidence Supporting the National Army's Accusations in the Murder of the Kurdish Politician Hevrin Khalaf", 10 December 2019, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/new-evidence-supporting-the-national-armys-accusations-in-the-murder-of-the-kurdish-politician-hevrin-khalaf/>, (last access: 9 September 2024)

driver with a bullet to the head and the fighter recruited to escort the ambulance. After this, the involved fighters drove the ambulance, parked it in front of al-Ahli Hospital, threw the bodies at its entrance and then executed the nurse working in the hospital before they left.<sup>15</sup>

17. Over 2021 and 2022, STJ documented at least four cases of death due to torture in detention in the Olive Branch and Peace Spring strips. On August 03, 2021, a 35-year-old man died in a hospital in Ras al-Ayn Hospital, to which he was transferred after his health deteriorated following torture by SNA-affiliated Civil Police officers. The police detained the victim on August 01 for attempting to cross the border to Türkiye illegally.<sup>16</sup> Also, in Ras al-Ayn, a man was arrested on September 22, 2021, by the SNA's faction Suqour al-Sunna for alleged dealing with the AANES, which dominated the area before the Turkish incursion in 2019. The man died under torture at the hands of the members of the faction.<sup>17</sup> The other two cases occurred in the Afrin region. On January 31, 2022, a civilian man was transferred to a hospital in Türkiye due to his critical condition. Despite the transfer, the man died of a severe cerebral haemorrhage he sustained in detention. The man was detained by the SNA's Ahrar al-Sharqiya faction in January and was severely beaten and tortured in custody.<sup>18</sup> On February 24, 2022, the SNA-affiliated Military Police received the dead body of a civilian man who was detained in the centre of the SNA's Faylaq al-Sham in Afrin, allegedly for working with the People's Protection Unit (YPG) that militarily dominated the region before the 2018 incursion. In the centre, the victim was tortured to death.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> STJ, "New Evidence Pointing to Ahrar al-Sharqiya's Responsibility for Field Executions in Suluk during "Operation Peace Spring", 1 February 2020, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/new-evidence-pointing-to-ahrar-al-sharqiyas-responsibility-for-field-executions-in-suluk-during-operation-peace-spring/>, (last access: 9 September 2024)

<sup>16</sup> STJ, "Syria: 108 arrested in Olive Branch and Peace Spring Strips in August 2021", 17 September 2021, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-108-arrested-in-olive-branch-and-peace-spring-strips-in-august-2021/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>17</sup> STJ, "Syria: 52 Arrested in "Olive Branch" and "Peace Spring Strips" in September 2021", 15 October 2021, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-52-arrested-in-olive-branch-and-peace-spring-strips-in-september-2021/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>18</sup> STJ, "Afrin: Al-Sham Legion Tortured a Civilian to Death", 31 March 2022, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/afrin-al-sham-legion-tortured-a-civilian-to-death/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>19</sup> STJ, "Afrin: Ahrar al-Sharqiya Tortures a Civilian to Death", 1 March 2022, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/afrin-ahrar-al-sharqiya-tortures-a-civilian-to-death/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

18. Similarly, the COI documented several custodial deaths in SAN-administered detention facilities and corroborated the case on February 24, 2022, documented by STJ, in its report issued on September 14, 2022, covering the period from January 01 to June 30, 2022.<sup>20</sup> An additional case was documented in its report issued on September 12, 2023, covering the period from January 01 to June 30, 2023, concerning the death of a 44-year-old Ismaili man from Hama on May 27, in the custody of the SNA's military police in A'zaz (Also spelt I'zaz).<sup>21</sup> In the same report, the COI corroborated the deaths of the four Kurdish family members at the hands of the Jaysh al-Sharqiya's personnel.<sup>22</sup>
19. Additionally, between 2020 and 2023, STJ documented the targeted killings of five civilians. On March 25, 2020, members from the SNA's Sultan Murad Division killed a 30-year-old man displaced from rural Aleppo to Ras al-Ayn.<sup>23</sup> This took place after they seized his factory, months into pillaging his warehouses near the city. On March 20, 2023, three members of the SNA's Jaysh al-Sharqiya shot at a Kurdish family for lighting a small fire in Salah al-Din neighbourhood in Jindires town, rural Afrin, in celebration of the Kurdish New Year, Nowruz. The fighters killed four of the family's members and seriously wounded a fifth.<sup>24</sup>
20. Furthermore, since 2019, STJ and the COI have documented several breaches of the right to life by Türkiye in the Syrian territories it occupies by targeting civilian objects indispensable to the survival of the population, especially through cutting drinking water supplies from the Aluk (also spelt Alouk and Alok) water pumping station, located in Ras al-Ayn. In October 2023, the station suffered indirect disruption due to extensive Turkish airstrikes that targeted a large number of vital structures in northeast Syria. One strike rendered the Amuda electricity transfer station out of service, subsequently causing the inoperability of the al-Darbasiyah electricity transfer station,

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<sup>20</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/51/45, 14 September 2022, Para. 73, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g22/463/09/pdf/g2246309.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/54/58, 12 September 2023, Para. 78, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/155/49/pdf/g2315549.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Para. 75.

<sup>23</sup> STJ, “‘Sultan Murad’ Division Kills Man Displaced from Rural Aleppo and Seizes His Factory in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê”, 13 May 2020, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/sultan-murad-division-kills-man-displaced-from-rural-aleppo-and-seizes-his-factory-in-ras-al-ayn-sere-kaniye/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>24</sup> STJ, “Jindires/Afrin: The Full Story of the Nowruz Eve Murder”, 16 May 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/jindires-afrin-the-full-story-of-the-nowruz-eve-murder/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

on which Aluk relies for operation.<sup>25</sup> Prior to this recent instance, STJ monitored 36 disruptions of water from the station, which is the primary source of drinking water for over 800,000 residents in al-Hasakah province and its countryside, as well as the source for filling the tanker trucks that carry water to the makeshift camps of al-Hawl, al-Areesha (or al-Sadd) and Washo Kani (or al-Twaina), which host tens of thousands of IDPs from different Syrian regions.<sup>26</sup> Notably, the disruptions documented lasted from days to over a month and were affected by direct cutting of supplies, military attacks, hampered maintenance, and power cuts by the Turkish military and SNA factions.<sup>27</sup>

21. Several COI reports confirm a similar pattern of violations of the right to life by the SNA factions and the Turkish military. In its report, issued on March 2, 2020, covering the period from July 11, 2019, to January 10, 2020, the COI documented the prevention of maintenance at the Aluk water station following damages due to artillery and ground shelling on 9 and 10 October. Fighters from the SNA's Ahrar al-Sharqiyah abducted the repair crew on 17 October and released them later, delaying repairs for over a month.<sup>28</sup>

***B. Prohibition of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Liberty and Security of Person and Treatment of Persons Deprived of their Liberty (Articles 6, 7, 9, 10)***

22. Since the start of the occupation, arbitrary deprivation of liberty and other detention-related crimes have been a cornerstone of the policy of occupation by Türkiye and its proxy actors. Campaigns of deprivation of liberty have been conducted across all areas under Turkish occupation and throughout the past eight years of occupation. Deprivation of liberty against civilians in Turkish-occupied areas is therefore of widespread nature across areas and time. Moreover, the majority of individuals subject

<sup>25</sup> STJ, “‘As If an Earthquake Had Struck’: Turkish Airstrikes Are Killing Life in Northeast Syria”, 25 June 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/as-if-an-earthquake-had-struck-turkish-airstrikes-are-killing-life-in-northeast-syria/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>26</sup> STJ, “Allegation Letter Addressed to United Nations Special Procedures Regarding the Water Crisis in Northeast Syria”, 14 July 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/allegation-letter-addressed-to-united-nations-special-procedures-regarding-the-water-crisis-in-northeast-syria/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>27</sup> STJ, “Timeline of the Disruptions Series of Aluk Water Pumping Station, North East Syria”, 31 August 2020, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/timeline-of-the-disruptions-series-of-aluk-water-pumping-station-north-east-syria/>, (last access: 14 August 2024)

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/43/57, 2 March 2020, Para. 50, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/022/08/pdf/g2002208.pdf>

to arbitrary deprivation are of Kurdish origin, indicating a policy of persecution on ethnic grounds. Discriminatory grounds in the commission of deprivation of liberty seem to be intended to coerce victims into displacement.

23. Between 2018 and 2024, numerous cases of arbitrary deprivation of liberty have been reported and documented by STJ. These include:

- 167 cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment, and acts of sexual violence against locals in Afrin, Ras al-Ayn, and Tel Abyad between 2021 and 2024. 40 cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment and acts of sexual violence against individuals in Azaz and Afrin occurred in 2018;
- 65 cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment and acts of sexual violence against individuals from Afrin, Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad occurred between 2019 and 2021;
- 62 cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, ill-treatment and acts of sexual violence against individuals from Ras al-Ayn and Tel Abyad occurred in 2022;

24. According to interviewed survivors, in some cases, the deprivation of liberty is directly carried out or occurs in the presence of Turkish armed forces. For instance, the COI, in its report of March 13, 2023, covering the period from July 1 to December 31, 2022, documented a case in Hawar Kilis whereby a detainee said that a Turkish official contributed to his torture by assisting in placing him in the *al-Shabeh* position, interrogated him through an interpreter on alleged links with the YPG, and threatened him with rape.<sup>29</sup> The COI documented another case, also in Hawar Kilis, in its report of March 11, 2024, covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2023, whereby a Turkish officer interrogated a detainee, who was also put through physical abuse by a Syrian prison official.<sup>30</sup> The same report documented several cases in which unlawful detention by SNA fractions in areas occupied by Türkiye is used as a tool for extorting money from the families of detainees. Individuals are frequently held for extended periods without being brought before a judge. They are only released after their families pay significant sums, a practice commonly called a “visa” for entry into certain areas

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/52/69, 13 March 2023, Para. 91, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/010/21/pdf/g2301021.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 11 March 2024, Para. 79, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/012/73/pdf/g2401273.pdf>

controlled by SNA fractions. For instance, one detainee was held for months before being released upon his family's payment of \$1,000, while another spent weeks in detention and was released after a \$5,000 payment. In some cases, detainees' families were not informed of their whereabouts despite paying large amounts to intermediaries linked to the military police.<sup>31</sup>

25. Individuals deprived of their liberty are subjected to different forms of torture and ill-treatment, such as beating, including with sticks, kicking, flogging with thick cables, electrocution, burning with cigarettes, and or subjected to the *al-Shabeh* with a Blanco,<sup>32</sup> and other torture techniques. Women recalled that they were interrogated by male investigators, with their eyes blindfolded during interrogation. Many of them were tortured and subjected to ill-treatment of a sexual nature, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, and rape. They also endured demeaning insults that affected their dignity and honour according to prevailing social, cultural and traditional norms.
26. Individuals are also deprived of their liberty without any legal basis merely for alleged affiliation, cooperation, or dealings with the AANES or the Democratic Union Party (PYD), its institutions, and military wing, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which controlled those areas before the Turkish occupation, or with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that Türkiye classifies as a terrorist organisation and considers the YPG, the backbone of the SDF, to be its branch in Syria. However, the statements collected from survivors demonstrate the detentions were money-driven, as the majority were only released in exchange for exorbitant sums of money their families paid in ransoms. Among other clear motives that underlined the detentions had the purpose of intimidating the detainees to leave their properties and flee their home areas, where property seizures by predominating armed groups continue unabated. In several cases, individuals were arrested for demanding to restore their seized properties.
27. According to information collected by STJ, most of the detainees, after being released, fled Afrin towards IDP camps and safe areas in Aleppo for fear of being rearrested and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Paras. 77-79.

<sup>32</sup> The detainee is hung from the wrists by a pulley (Blanco) rope roller, then hit and left to swing.

persecuted, as has happened to survivors who remained in Afrin.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, many civilians in these areas did not leave voluntarily but were coerced into leaving due to the persecution they faced and the ongoing threat of further persecution. This practice violates Türkiye's obligations under international law as an occupying power, which include the prohibition of forcibly transferring or compelling civilians to leave their homes. Under international law, Türkiye is obligated to respect and ensure respect for its obligations, including human rights and humanitarian law, in all circumstances to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to the displacement of persons. Acts such as terrorising civilian populations through unlawful detention, torture, and other violations that force people to leave may amount to the war crime of unlawful deportation of protected persons.

28. There have also been instances where Syrian nationals detained by the SNA in occupied territories in Syria were subsequently transferred to Türkiye by Turkish forces. In one case, Human Rights Watch documented that between October and December 2019, Turkish authorities, along with the SNA, arrested 63 Syrian nationals in Ras al-Ayn, northeast Syria, following Türkiye's incursion and effective control of the area. These detainees were later transferred to detention facilities in Türkiye, where prosecutorial authorities charged them with offences under the Turkish Penal Code despite the alleged crimes having been committed in Syria.<sup>34</sup> This clearly violates Türkiye's obligations as an occupying power under international law. According to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, individual or mass forcible transfers and deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the occupying power or to that of any other country, whether occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of the motive.

29. Arbitrary detentions and torture in the occupied areas affect not only the local communities but also Syrian refugees forcibly deported from Türkiye to the northern parts of the country. In 2024, STJ documented the arbitrary detention of a man after he

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<sup>33</sup> STJ, "Arbitrary Detention and Torture are a Systemic Oppression Policy in Northwestern Syria", 01 February 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/arbitrary-detention-and-torture-are-a-systemic-oppression-policy-in-northwestern-syria/>, (last access: 13 August 2024)

<sup>34</sup> HRW, "Illegal Transfers of Syrians to Turkey", 3 February 2021, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/03/illegal-transfers-syrians-turkey>, (last access: 19 August 2024)



was arrested, forced to sign voluntary return documents, and deported to Jindires, a sub-district of Afrin, by the Turkish authorities. The SNA-affiliated Military Police held the man on alleged charges of being *shabih* (thug) of the Syrian government forces.<sup>35</sup> In 2022, STJ documented three similar cases, whereby the SNA's Sultan Murad Division detained three Syrian Kurds for several weeks and did not release them until they paid exorbitant ransoms after the Turkish authorities deported them arbitrarily to Hawar Kilis. Two of the detainees were brutally beaten and interrogated about the PKK or perceived affiliation with the PKK.<sup>36</sup>

### C. Non-Discrimination (Articles 2, 26 and 27)

30. As the majority of arbitrary detentions in the occupied areas continue to target Kurds, the Kurdish community and other non-Arab groups continue to suffer a plethora of other abuses, with underlying discriminatory reasons of religious or ethnic grounds. In 2021, STJ documented 12 separate incidents involving the destruction and desecration of cemeteries, historic sites, and religious objects in Afrin by several SNA factions. One incident occurred in August 2018 involving the Hannan Shrine, which houses the graves of historically iconic Kurdish figures. Another incident occurred in May 2020 involving the Chail Khaneh Shrine, a Yezidi site that used to be a community site for worship.<sup>37</sup>

31. In the same vein, in 2023, STJ documented breaches of the Kurdish community's linguistic rights, along with distinct attempts at *Turkification* in Afrin. After March 2018, the Ministry of Education of the Turkish-affiliated Syrian Interim Government (SIG) changed school hours assigned to specific subjects in Afrin, dedicating four hours to Turkish and four to Kurdish. Nevertheless, the ministry then cut the Kurdish language hours down to half, allowing for two hours only and, in some cases, one, while

<sup>35</sup> STJ, "Türkiye: Misleading Statements by Foreign Minister Regarding Forced Return of Syrian Refugees", 22 August 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkiye-misleading-statements-by-foreign-minister-regarding-forced-return-of-syrian-refugees/>, (last access: 2 September 2024)

<sup>36</sup> STJ, "Northern Syria: Three Syrians Arrested after Turkey Forcibly Deported Them to Alleged "Safe Zone"", 22 November 2022, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/northern-syria-three-syrians-arrested-after-turkey-forcibly-deported-them-to-alleged-safe-zone/>, (last access: 2 September 2024)

<sup>37</sup> STJ, "'Blind Revenge': Cemeteries and Religious Shrines Vandalized by Parties to Syrian Conflict", 6 April 2021, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/blind-revenge-cemeteries-and-religious-shrines-vandalized-by-parties-to-syrian-conflict/>, (last accessed: 15 August 2024)

several schools dropped the subject altogether on the pretext of lacking Kurdish language teachers. The mainstreaming of the Turkish language at the expense of Kurdish in the area corresponded to increasing manifestations of Turkish cultural and political dominance, as Turkish flags are hoisted in schools, public squares, and administrative buildings.<sup>38</sup>

32. Also targeting mainly the Kurdish community, STJ documented several instances of taxation in Afrin, which continue to rob, particularly olive farmers, of large margins of profit, with the royalties becoming a source for financing SNA individuals and groups.<sup>39</sup> Keeping tabs on the SNA factions' growing tax economy, in 2021, STJ documented the imposition of various taxes over 2018 and 2019 on Kurdish locals who remained in Shaykh al-Hadid, another sub-district of Afrin, who were forced to pay the SNA's Suleiman Shah Brigade amounts ranging between \$200 and \$400 to be allowed to stay in their own homes. The brigade personnel beat and tortured owners who refused to pay.<sup>40</sup> In 2022, STJ documented how the commander of the Suleiman Shah Brigade seized almost all the olive yield and other crops cultivated by Kurdish farmers in 2018 while he continued to impose taxes and royalties on farmers over the following harvest seasons, which at the time amounted to 25% of the harvest value.<sup>41</sup>

33. Notably, the COI also documented crop-related taxation in SNA-held areas, citing the rise of violence during the olive harvest season in its report, issued on February 8, 2022, covering the period from July 01, 2021, to December 31, 2021. In that report, the COI documented the seizure of large amounts of olive by several SNA factions in taxes, also highlighting the selling of the right to harvest to third parties by the SNA factions al-Jabha al-Shamiya and the Sultan Murad Division against the will of the owners.<sup>42</sup> In its

<sup>38</sup> STJ, "Curricula in Afrin: Between 'Turkification' and Restrictions on the Kurdish Language", 16 March 2023, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/curricula-in-afrin-between-turkification-and-restrictions-on-the-kurdish-language/>, (last access: 15 August 2024)

<sup>39</sup> Ceasfire, "Cultivating Chaos: Afrin after Operation Olive Branch", July 2020, available at: [https://www.ceasfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CFR\\_Syria\\_EN\\_July20.pdf](https://www.ceasfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CFR_Syria_EN_July20.pdf), (last access: 16 August 2024)

<sup>40</sup> STJ, "Afrin: Shaykh Al Hadid: Intimidation and Economic Tightening", 9 March 2020 available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/afrin-shaykh-al-hadid-intimidation-and-economic-tightening/>, (last access: 16 August 2024)

<sup>41</sup> STJ, "How is 'Abu Amsh' Making Millions of Dollars Every Year?", 30 June 2022, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/how-is-abu-amsha-making-millions-of-dollars-every-year/>, (last access: 16 August 2024)

<sup>42</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/49/77, 8 February 2022, Paras. 89-92, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g22/251/52/pdf/g2225152.pdf>

recent report, issued on March 11, 2024, covering the period from July 01 to December 31, 2023, the COI documented that harvest-related taxation remains rife in SNA-held areas, including those imposed by the Suleiman Shah Brigade, citing the arrest of two Kurdish locals by the Brigade for not paying a tax of over \$10,000.<sup>43</sup>

#### **4. Lack of Access to Justice, Accountability and Remedy for Victims in Violation of CCPR (Articles 2, 6, 7, 14 and 25)**

##### **A. Violation of the Right to Remedy (Articles 2 and 3)**

34. Article 2 of the ICCPR imposes on Türkiye a general obligation to respect the Covenant rights and to ensure them to all individuals in its territory and subject to its jurisdiction. Most importantly, pursuant to Article 2(3), Türkiye is required to make available effective remedies to people whose rights have been violated under its jurisdiction. Such remedies should be appropriately adapted to take into account the special circumstances of victimisation of the victims. This is of particular relevance in contexts of occupation where the rule of law and authority by proxy may create protection and accountability gaps, as in the case of Turkish-occupied territories in Syria.

35. It is also relevant in circumstances in which the pattern of violations and profile of victims indicate underlying discrimination and possible persecution on ethnic grounds. Within this context, Article 2(1) of the ICCPR requires States parties to ensure respect and protection of rights recognised in the Covenant “without discrimination of any kind”. Additionally, Article 26 prohibits all forms of discrimination, stating that “all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law.” As a result, the ICCPR obliges Türkiye to ensure that access to and the provision of, effective remedies be without discretion of any kind - both in regards to the distinction between access to remedy enjoyed by individuals under its jurisdiction (namely, Turkish citizens in the territory of the State and Syrian citizens under Turkish occupation) and in relation to ethnic, religious and other possible discrimination grounds.

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<sup>43</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 11 March 2024, Paras. 84-85, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/012/73/pdf/g2401273.pdf>

36. Türkiye has obligations to ensure that remedy is accessible in practice from a procedural perspective and effective in addressing the victim-specific case. For a remedy to be effective, it is not sufficient to be available merely in formal terms. It must be practical and provide genuine access to justice, such as being capable of finding whether a violation took place and, if so, being able to remedy it. Furthermore, the effectiveness implies a certain minimum requirement of speediness, as it is possible for the adequate nature of the remedy to be undermined by its excessive duration. The remedy must be impartial, fair and independent in terms of the authority responsible for adjudicating the question of the remedy in a particular case. The requirement of independence and fairness is particularly important in contexts of occupation where authorities responsible for the administration of justice are directly tied to the military and administrative actors in control of the territory. The sections below provided a comprehensive elucidation of why existing remedy and justice mechanisms available within Turkish-occupied areas are inadequate to constitute a fair, prompt and effective remedy and are ineffective in investigating and prosecuting serious crimes perpetrated by members and commanders of the SNA factions.
37. Finally, a remedy must be accessible. The accessibility of a remedy cannot be theoretical or illusory but must be accessible and responsive. In the cases addressed above, it is possible to infer that victimised communities are deprived of an accessible form of remedy, as proven by cases of individuals being detained after advocating for their HLP rights or feeling coerced to leave their areas after being detained or arrested. Detention following attempts to claim remedy and forced displacement as a result of the coercive environment indicate a lack of accessible forms of remedy for victims.
38. In addition to the aforementioned international law elements constituting a right to remedy, ICCPR clarifies that State Parties have obligations not only to provide a victim-specific remedy but also to respond to and address systemic policies and practices to avoid the recurrence of the type of violation in question. Despite the magnitude of violations, victims of human rights abuses by the SNA and Türkiye have rarely been able to access and fulfil their right to remedy, and violations have continued unabatedly across military interventions and geographical areas under Türkiye's occupation.

## **B. Persistent Impunity and Lack of Accountability for Alleged Human Rights Violations**

39. The prospects of accountability and redress for victims remain weak, as demonstrated by the several COI reports referenced herein. The COI cited instances whereby the SNA recognised responsibility for certain violations and pledged investigation and commitment to holding responsible parties accountable. However, those instances are rare and often exclusive to violations that gain massive media traction, as in the case of the four Kurds killed in Jindires,<sup>44</sup> with the COI stressing unabating abuses by a variety of SNA armed groups with impunity as factions continue to disregard complaints lodged by very few victims.<sup>45</sup>

## **C. Access to Justice, Judiciary Independence and the Right to a Fair Trial (Articles 2 and 14)**

40. While the SNA factions evade accountability for the bulk of human rights violations, as mentioned above, civilians in those areas also struggle with the undermined role of the nominal justice mechanisms made available by the local authorities, as it has become a common practice for SNA factions to violate international fair trial standards by administering justice extrajudicially, outside of a court of law established as required by Article 14 of the ICCPR. For instance, in March 2024, STJ documented the punishment, by public flagellation, of a man in al-Bab city by members of the SNA's Ahrar al-Sharqiya for the charge of "insulting God". The man was not interrogated by competent authorities and was penalised without access to a fair trial.<sup>46</sup> Also, in August 2024, STJ documented the extrajudicial execution of two civilians suspected of carrying out a car bombing in A'zaz. The two men were shot dead in the head by members of the SNA's al-Jabha al-Shamiya. The two men were only interrogated by the faction's security service and were executed before they were fairly tried.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/54/58, 12 September 2023, Para. 75, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/155/49/pdf/g2315549.pdf>

<sup>45</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/55/64, 11 March 2024, Para. 84, available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/012/73/pdf/g2401273.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> STJ, "Northwest Syria: Fighters Flog a Man for 'Insulting God'", 1 March 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/northwest-syria-fighters-flog-a-man-for-insulting-god/>, (last access: 19 August 2024)

<sup>47</sup> STJ, "Northwest Syria: Levant Front Responsible for Executing Suspects in A'zaz Bombing", 15 August 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/northwest-syria-levant-front-responsible-for-executing-suspects-in-azaz-bombing/>, (last access: 19 August 2024)

41. As an occupying power, Türkiye is obligated under international humanitarian and human rights laws to administer justice in the occupied territories by maintaining law and order, protecting civilians, and ensuring that legal proceedings meet international fair trial and due process standards. This includes, among other responsibilities, respecting the existing legal system unless security concerns necessitate changes, providing fair trials, and prohibiting arbitrary detention and torture. Additionally, Türkiye is responsible for investigating and prosecuting any violations of these obligations by its forces or *de facto* authorities and proxy actors, ensuring accountability for breaches of international law.
42. However, the population's access to justice is further undermined by Türkiye's interference in judicial operations, adversely impacting the court system, especially the SNA military courts, deemed unreliable by locals, for their lack of independence and impartiality.<sup>48</sup> This military justice system, which functions entirely under the supervision of Türkiye as the occupying power, is largely composed of former SNA officials, with judges appointed in coordination with Turkish intelligence agencies and operating under military command. Detainees are frequently denied legal counsel, and coerced confessions—often the sole evidence used against them—are admitted in trials. Corruption further weakens the judicial process, with families often resorting to bribes to secure the release of detainees, thereby circumventing the legal system entirely. These practices undermine due process and fair trial principles and violate Türkiye's obligations under Article 14 of the ICCPR.
43. In July 2024, STJ documented the arbitrary arrests of 18 individuals and subsequent detention for nearly four months and a trial of eight in A'zaz for holding a protest as a Turkish convoy passed through the area. The eight civilians, several of whom were not involved in the protest, were rounded up on orders from Türkiye and were tried on charges of “disturbing relations with a foreign country.” During interrogation and trial, the detainees' lawyers were denied reviewing or copying the court's investigation

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<sup>48</sup> STJ, “Jindires/Afrin: The Nowruz Murder Trial in the Shadow of Wider Violations and Impunity”, 20 March 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/jindires-afrin-the-nowruz-murder-trial-in-the-shadow-of-wider-violations-and-impunity/>, (last accessed: 19 August 2024)

reports also on Turkish directives.<sup>49</sup> Türkiye's prosecutorial abuses stretch beyond Syria's national borders.

44. In February 2021, Human Rights Watch investigated the illegal transfer of at least 63 Syrians arrested by SNA factions in 2019 in Ras al-Ayn to detention facilities in Türkiye to face trial on charges under the Turkish Penal Code for alleged crimes that the detainees committed in Syria.<sup>50</sup> Those transfers were previously documented by the COI in its report published on September 15, 2020, covering the period from January 11, 2020 to July 01, 2020.<sup>51</sup> Such infringements continue amidst Türkiye's repeated denial of allegations of human rights violations,<sup>52</sup> whether by its forces or SNA factions. At the same time, it has not started any impartial, transparent, and independent investigations into the myriad of documented abuses nor allowed independent international organisations to enter the occupied territories to conduct such investigations.

## Recommendations

We suggest the following non-exhaustive list of recommendations for the State Party to be raised by the Committee. We also call on the Committee to consider the recommendations related to "access to justice" and "accountability for ICCPR violations in the context of occupation" within its Follow-Up Procedure, pursuant to Rule 75(1) of the Committee's rules of procedure.

- I. **Cease ICCPR Violations:** Urge Türkiye to put an end to the widespread violations of the ICCPR in the Syrian-occupied territories, including violations of the right to life, the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, violations of the non-

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<sup>49</sup> STJ, "Northwest Syria: Local Authorities Arrest 15 Syrians for Protesting near a Turkish Convoy", 9 July 2024, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/northwest-syria-local-authorities-arrest-15-syrians-for-protesting-near-a-turkish-convoy/>, (last access: 19 August 2024)

<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Illegal Transfers of Syrians to Turkey", 3 February 2021, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/03/illegal-transfers-syrians-turkey>, (last access: 19 August 2024)

<sup>51</sup> Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/45/31, 15 September 2020, Paras. 57 and 69, available at: <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/45/31>

<sup>52</sup> Reuters, "Turkey rejects U.N human rights violation claims in Syria", 19 September 2020, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/syria-security-turkey-report-int-idUSKBN2692YX/>, (last access: 19 August 2024)

discrimination principle, the right to a fair trial, and the right of victims of these violations to remedy.

- II. **Cease the violation of the right to life by targeting civilian objects and essential resources:** Urge Türkiye to cease actions or omissions that disrupt the provision of essential services indispensable for the survival of civilians in the occupied territories, such as water and electricity supplies.
- III. **Respect and Protect Fair Trial Guarantees as Required by the ICCPR:** Urge Türkiye to take immediate steps to administer justice in the occupied areas and ensure the right to a fair trial for all detainees, including those transferred to Türkiye, as required under Article 14 of the ICCPR. This includes ensuring the independence and impartiality of judges, the right to legal counsel, and the prohibition of coerced confessions and evidence extracted under torture as evidence in court.
- IV. **Protect Vulnerable Communities and Prohibit Discriminatory Practices:** Urge Türkiye to end discriminatory practices targeting ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Kurds and Yazidis, in the occupied territories. This includes halting arbitrary arrests, property seizures, and other forms of persecution that violate the principle of non-discrimination and other rights guaranteed by the ICCPR.
- V. **Guarantee Access to Justice and Remedies for Victims:** Urge Türkiye to ensure victims of ICCPR violations in the occupied territories have access to effective legal remedies. This includes establishing mechanisms for victims to report abuses without fear of retaliation, providing reparations, and ensuring that judicial processes meet the international standards set by the ICCPR.
- VI. **Ensure Independent Investigations and Accountability for ICCPR Violations:** Urge Türkiye to establish independent, transparent, and impartial investigations into alleged ongoing and past violations of the ICCPR in the Syrian territories it occupies. Türkiye should ensure that those responsible for these violations, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, are held accountable and that victims receive justice and full and effective reparations.





Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) is a France-based and licensed Syrian organisation. Established in 2016, STJ monitors, exposes, and reports on human rights violations that have continued unabated in Syria since 2011, regardless of the affiliation of the victims or perpetrators, under an inclusive approach to documentation. STJ is also involved in Syria-related justice and accountability spaces, contributing to strategic litigation and fighting against impunity autonomously or in cooperation with relevant local and international bodies and organisations. Furthermore, STJ implements capacity-building projects, including documenting human rights violations, collecting evidence, cyber security, social oversight over local authorities, and advocacy at the national and international levels.



PÊL- Civil Waves (PÊL) is an independent, non-governmental Syrian organisation. PÊL works in a diverse multi-ethnic, religious, social, and cultural community and believes that protecting and managing diversity and including all residents fairly guarantees sustainable peace. To this end, PÊL works to engage all citizens without prejudice or discrimination and at all levels. PÊL focuses on victims of forced displacement. It seeks to strengthen the response to housing, land, and property rights violations in Syria and enable the affected people to organise themselves and defend their cases through systematic and expanded legal and narrative documentation of these violations, which is essential in ensuring the dignified return of forcibly displaced and internally displaced persons to their areas of origin.