

## Torture Persists: Testimonies and Indicators Reveal Alarming Incidents in Post-Assad Syria



STJ Urges the Transitional Authorities in Damascus to Launch Urgent and Transparent Investigations into Alleged Torture Crimes Committed After the Fall of the Regime, and to Ensure Accountability Without Exception. It Also Calls for Ending Impunity and Aligning Syrian Laws with International Standards to Prevent Torture and Guarantee Effective Protection for Victims.



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**CEASEFIRE**  
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## **Torture Persists: Testimonies and Indicators Reveal Alarming Incidents in Post-Assad Syria**

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## 1. Introduction

Acts of torture and ill-treatment did not cease following the fall of the Assad regime; rather, they have continued in different forms. Since 8 December 2014, dozens of videos have circulated on social media platforms, documenting incidents of torture, beatings, and degrading treatment across various regions in Syria,<sup>1</sup> including against individuals belonging to religious and sectarian minorities such as Alawite, Druze, and Christian communities. These incidents leads Syrians for Truth and Justice to raise serious concerns about the recurrence of patterns of past violations.

Despite these alarming indications, the Syrian transitional government has not adopted any effective legislative or administrative measures to combat torture or prevent human rights abuses during arrest operations, security raids, and area-wide search operations. It has also failed to take serious steps to hold those responsible for beatings and ill-treatment during arrests to account, calling into question its commitment to the principles of transitional justice.

This contradiction becomes even more striking in light of the [Code of Conduct and Military Discipline](#) issued by the Ministry of Defense of the transitional government in April 2025, which explicitly prohibits insulting or mistreating detainees during operations and emphasizes the need to respect civilians, treat them with dignity, and refrain from any form of abuse or discrimination. Nonetheless, the continuation of violations by individuals affiliated with the Ministry itself exposes a serious gap between stated commitments and actual practices, undermining the credibility of any genuine effort to build institutions grounded in respect for human dignity and the values of the transitional period.

Syrians for Truth and Justice issues this report on the occasion of the [International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#), marked on 26 June 2025, to highlight serious indicators of the ongoing perpetration of torture in Syria after the fall of the former regime, and to demand an immediate end to such abuses and accountability for all perpetrators without distinction.

## 2. Background

Torture constitutes a grave violation unequivocally prohibited under all international instruments, without exception or derogation –even in times of emergency or armed conflict. [The 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CAT\)](#), in Article 1, provides a clear definition of torture and affirms its absolute prohibition. Syria acceded to the Convention on August 1, 2004, thereby becoming legally obligated to prevent acts of torture, investigate allegations thereof, and prosecute those responsible.

Additionally, Article 7 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), which Syria ratified in 1969, stipulates: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Similarly, the [four Geneva Conventions](#) of 1949 – particularly Common Article 3– uphold the absolute ban on torture, including during non-

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<sup>1</sup> Daraj Media. video posted on Facebook. 5 May 2025.  
<https://www.facebook.com/darajmedia/videos/617684041300752>

international armed conflicts, and require parties to respect persons not taking part in hostilities, including detainees.

Nevertheless, torture remained a widespread and systematic practice in both official and secret detention centers operated by Syria's security apparatus throughout the rule of the former regime (Assad regime).

Under Syrian domestic law, in addition to Article 391 of the [Syrian Penal Code](#), which prescribes imprisonment from three months to three years for any official who tortures or uses violence against others, the former government enacted [Law No. 16 of 2022](#) on the Prevention of Torture. This law provides an expanded definition of torture. According to Article 1, torture is defined as *"Any act or omission that causes severe physical or mental pain or suffering intentionally inflicted on a person to obtain information or a confession, punish them for an act they have committed, intimidate or coerce them, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind. It also includes acts committed or condoned –explicitly or implicitly– by public officials or others acting in an official capacity, as well as acts perpetrated by individuals or groups for personal, material, political, retaliatory, or vindictive motives."*

Despite this, the law has not been meaningfully implemented.<sup>2</sup> STJ and other independent entities have not documented a single case where perpetrators of torture have been held accountable under this law. Given Syria's failure to uphold its obligations under the CAT, the enactment of the law appears to be largely symbolic, likely intended to ease international pressure, particularly in light of the case brought by Canada and the Netherlands against Syria before the International Court of Justice.<sup>3</sup>

In practice, torture was not limited to isolated or exceptional incidents, but constituted a systematic policy targeting political dissidents, both male and female. Over the course of the conflict, tens of thousands of cases of torture have been documented by international<sup>4</sup> and local<sup>5</sup> organizations, as well as by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria

<sup>2</sup> Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ), "Request for a Statement by the Special Rapporteur on Torture in Relation to the International Court of Justice Order on the Indication of Provisional Measures in The Netherlands/Canada vs. Syria Case", 17 September 2024, <https://stj-sy.org/en/request-for-a-statement-by-the-special-rapporteur-on-torture-in-relation-to-the-international-court-of-justice-order-on-the-indication-of-provisional-measures-in-the-netherlands-canada-vs-syria-case/>

<sup>3</sup> Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), "The International Court of Justice Announces Dutch-Canadian Application Against the Syrian Government". <https://scm.bz/en/the-international-court-of-justice-announces-dutch-canadian-application-against-the-syrian-government/>

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Human Rights Watch. Torture Archipelago. 3 June 2012. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>. See also: Amnesty International. Syria: Human slaughterhouse: Mass hangings and extermination at Saydnaya Prison, Syria. 7 February 2017. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/5415/2017/en/>

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM). Invisible Scars Torture in Syria and its Legal and Socio-Economic Implications. March 2021. <https://scm.bz/en/invisible-scars-torture-in-syria-and-its-legal-and-socio-economic-implications/>. See also: The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture: SNHR Has Documented the Death of 15,383 Syrians Under Torture Since March 2011, with 157,287 Still Detained and/or Forcibly Disappeared. 26 June 2024. <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/26/on-the-international-day-in-support-of-victims-of-torture-snhr-has-documented-the-death-of-15383-syrians-under-torture-since-march-2011-with-157287-still-detained-and-or-forcibly-disappeared/>

(COI)<sup>6</sup> and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM),<sup>7</sup> with no serious efforts undertaken to ensure accountability or prevent recurrence.

On the other hand, human rights organizations, including STJ, have documented dozens of new cases of torture, ill-treatment, and humiliation committed under the current authorities, by individuals and armed groups affiliated with the transitional government.<sup>8</sup> These violations have included acts of torture and degradation targeting individuals based on their sectarian, religious, social, or political backgrounds. This report presents a number of such cases as indicators of the continued use of these practices, without claiming to be exhaustive or comprehensive.

For the purposes of this report, STJ conducted seven online in-depth interviews via secure communication platforms. All interviewees gave their informed consent after being briefed on the voluntary nature of the interview and the intended use of the information they provided, including for publication in this report. Five of the interviewees requested that their identities and any identifying details be withheld due to fears of potential reprisals against themselves or their families. Accordingly, pseudonyms have been used to refer to individuals whose testimonies are cited in the report.

### 3. Ongoing Torture After the Fall of the Assad Regime: Testimonies of Violations in the Streets and Inside Detention Centers

The following testimonies, documented by STJ, reveal several instances of grave violations committed against Syrian civilians after the fall of the regime. These abuses were perpetrated by groups affiliated with the transitional government, including General Security forces, armed factions, and military units under the Ministry of Defense. The violations include arbitrary arrest, psychological and physical torture, degrading treatment, and the denial of basic legal safeguards. Despite Syria's binding international obligations, the testimonies point to practices that are fundamentally inconsistent with international human rights law, particularly the absolute prohibition of torture, the protection against enforced disappearance, and the obligation to uphold the dignity of detainees.

These accounts tell the stories of individuals caught in the midst of violence and discrimination, and they underscore the responsibility of the new authorities to initiate impartial investigations, hold perpetrators accountable, and prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

<sup>6</sup> See for example: the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI). Web of Agony: Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Ill-Treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic. 27 January 2025. <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/web-agony-un-commissions-report-unveils-depths-former-governments-detention-crimes-during-first-decade-syrian-war-enar>. See also: the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI). No End in Sight: Torture and ill-treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic 2020-2023. 10 July 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/no-end-in-sight>

<sup>7</sup> See for example: The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM). The Syrian Government Detention System as a Tool of Violent Repression. June 2024. <https://iiim.un.org/the-syrian-government-detention-system-as-a-tool-of-violent-repression/>

<sup>8</sup> Daraj Media. Syria: The Perpetuation of Humiliation and the Violation of Dignity. 5 May 2025. <https://daraj.media/en/syria-the-perpetuation-of-humiliation-and-the-violation-of-dignity/>



### 3.1 “They Forced Us to Howl and Beat Us with Cables” – Testimony of Torture at the Police Station in Jubb al-Jarrah Town, Homs – June 2025

On the evening of 6 June 2025, General Security forces detained five young men from the town of Jubb al-Jarrah in Homs, including the witness “Nour,” a member of the Alawite community, approximately 25 years old. The officers searched their phones under the pretext of a security check, then proceeded to beat and insult them. Nour reports that the officers forced them to “howl like animals” in a humiliating and degrading scene, adding:

“They beat and tortured us, and forced us to howl, blatantly violating our human dignity.”

According to Nour, when one of the young men refused to comply, the officers beat him until he bled, using a metal object and the butt of a rifle to strike his head. The group was then forced to walk barefoot through the streets. Before being released, the officers ordered them not to leave the village until they had “physically recovered,” a clear attempt to humiliate them and prevent them from filing complaints or seeking documentation.

Two days later, on the morning of 8 June, another General Security group entered the village in black vehicles and raided Nour’s home, accusing him of being a “remnant” and hiding weapons. He was taken to the station, where he was subjected to severe torture with a thick electrical cable that was used to whip his feet and other parts of his body. Nour recounts:

“They beat me with the cable until I felt my feet were being torn apart. The pain was unbearable.”

At the same time, the officers searched and ransacked his home, stealing a sum of money and gold jewelry belonging to his wife, without presenting any legal warrant or following due process.

### 3.2 “They Beat Us Until We Lost Our Dignity” – Testimony of Torture at a Police Station in Aleppo – 1 June 2025

The witness, “Ismail” —a man in his forties who had recently returned to Syria to visit his family—described being arrested and severely beaten on 1 June 2025, in the city of Aleppo by individuals wearing General Security uniforms, following a minor altercation on a street near the Radio Building. The incident escalated when a group of armed men —some of whom were in a vehicle bearing Idlib license plates— was called to the scene. According to the witness, the group later revealed their affiliation with a security agency.

One of the men demanded that Ismail present his ID, which was immediately followed by a violent assault on him and his brother. The assault included direct threats with firearms; one officer pointed a rifle at the witness’s head and said:

“We’ll send him to Idlib, and he won’t come back.”

Ismail and his brother were then forced to switch vehicles during the transfer and were subjected to brutal beatings using rifle butts. They were also insulted with degrading slurs, such as:

**"You're Shabiha (pro-Assad paramilitary forces) and pigs."**

The beatings continued inside the vehicle, where the two were forced to lie face down on the floor of the car. They were repeatedly beaten whenever they attempted to lift their heads or speak. Ismail recalls:

**"They beat us more viciously than anything I've seen in videos of Assad's Shabiha arresting people."**

Later, the brothers were transferred to a police station near the Hasan Mosque, where they were charged with fabricated accusations, including "assaulting a security officer" and "insulting the dignity of the state." There, they were subjected to further beatings and verbal abuse. Their IDs and personal belongings were confiscated, and they were placed in an overcrowded detention room.

Despite denying all charges and stating that he had worked as a media activist documenting violations since 2015, Ismail's testimony was met with mockery and threats. One interrogator told him:

**"Shut up. That's your duty, don't act like you're doing us a favor. If I had been in that car, I would've smashed the weapon over your head."**

When Ismail demanded to be brought before an impartial judge for a fair trial, the response was:

**"The only thing your kind understands is being trampled underfoot."**

The witness and his brother were later released after enduring a series of degrading and violent abuses, following the intervention of a family acquaintance. At the end of his testimony, Ismail said:

**"My eyes were filled with tears, like they could drown all of Syria. My mouth was full of blood, and my entire body was in pain."**

He told the interrogator that he intended to leave Syria immediately upon release, adding:

**"What's the difference between how the previous regime treated us and how you do? Now that you consider us pigs and Shabiha, how can we ever come back?"**

One of the officers responded with a clear threat:

**"You think your departure saddens us? Go to hell. Leave and don't come back. If you do come, I'll deal with you myself."**

### 3.3 “They Want Us to Confess to Anything” – Testimony of Torture and Abuse in Qurfays Village, Jableh – April 2025

Documentation by STJ reveals that in April 2025, a military faction affiliated with General Security committed serious violations against civilians in the village of Qurfays, located in the countryside of Latakia. These violations included physical and psychological torture targeting men and young males with no connections to any military or political activity. This faction, known as “**Division 400**,” had established its headquarters in the “Jar al-Qamar” Hotel and several other residential buildings in the village.

According to “Ziyad,” a local resident in his mid-forties, the abuses began on April 17<sup>9</sup> when members of Division 400, driving a vehicle belonging to the faction, arrested a civilian young man. He was taken to the faction’s headquarters at the Jar al-Qamar Hotel, where he was subjected to brutal torture for hours:

**“They wanted him to confess that he was one of the remnants, or to name those who were, or who had carried weapons... He was tortured from around 3:00 p.m. until 11:00 a.m. the next morning.”**

Despite having no ties to any armed group, the victim was later transferred to another faction facility within the Naval Academy in Jableh city, where his torture continued. He was eventually found in the Al-Asaliyyeh area, handcuffed, showing severe signs of physical abuse, and in a deeply deteriorated physical and psychological state.

Later, the village’s school principal was abducted for two hours by the same faction, despite having no military involvement. During his detention, he was severely beaten and interrogated with questions such as:

**“What do you know about Miqdad Fatihah? What do you know about the remnants?”**

In another incident documented in the same testimony, faction members detained a man and his son —a third-grade child— questioning them separately and threatening them during the interrogation. They were told:

**“If you don’t speak, we’ll kill your son.”**

**“Which of your neighbors carried a gun?”**

**“Where are the Shabiha?”**

**“Did your father carry a weapon?”**

**“Are you Sunni or Alawite?”**

Moreover, on 27 April 2025, Hassan Abdul Hadi Yousef —a young man who worked in motorcycle repair— was abducted. He was last seen near the faction’s headquarters at around 7:00 p.m. [His body was discovered](#) the following day, just 500 meters from the faction’s

<sup>9</sup> The witness was not certain about the exact date and mentioned it may have been 18 April 2025.



location, bearing signs of severe torture. According to the witness, the forensic doctor stated that the cause of death was either strangulation or pain-induced shock:

**“His eyes were swollen and teary, blood was coming from his mouth and nose, his head was bloodied, and he had been dragged. He had bitten his tongue so hard it was protruding from his mouth.”**

Despite his family's efforts to search for him immediately after his disappearance, faction members stopped them. One of the commanders reportedly said:

**“No... you're not allowed to move around at night.”**

The forensic report indicated that the time of death occurred between 1:30 and 2:00 a.m., suggesting that the victim had been tortured continuously for nearly six hours.

### **3.4 “They Beat Me Until I Thought I Wouldn’t Make It Out Alive” – Testimony of the Torture of a Political Delegation from a General Security Checkpoint in Homs to Harem Prison in Idlib – 5 April 2025**

In an interview with STJ, Raja al-Damaqsi,<sup>10</sup> Secretary-General of the Syrian Democratic Affiliation Party, recounted the details of his arrest alongside a political delegation of **21** individuals—including several women—while en route to northeastern Syria to conduct a training. He affirmed that the group was engaged in a purely civil activity, with no military or political affiliations.

**“Our arrest was not politically motivated. They didn’t ask about our party, our affiliations, or confiscate anything related to our work... We were arrested simply for being Druze and Alawites heading toward the Kurds, as though our sectarian makeup itself was the crime.”**

The delegation was stopped at a checkpoint in Homs, where a series of violations began—most notably, the prolonged and severe physical torture endured by al-Damaqsi over more than nine hours:

**“The beatings started the moment we were stopped at the checkpoint and continued all the way to Harem Prison in Idlib. It was torture to the brink of death, severe beatings and constant humiliation... Every group that received us along the way initiated a new round of abuse.”**

Al-Damaqsi confirmed that there is [visual documentation](#) of some of the torture he endured, including photos and video clips showing physical injuries:

**“The beatings were so intense that the pain became unbearable. I took the brunt of it because I tried to shield the women in the group from the harshest assaults.”**

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<sup>10</sup> The witness, Raja al-Damaqsi, confirmed during the interview that he had no objection to having his full name used in this report.

According to his account, the women were subjected to verbal abuse and psychological and physical pressure, particularly during the forced transfers between detention facilities.

He also described the interrogation at the Idlib prison. Blindfolded, he was brought before an interrogator who asked him to speak “in his capacity as a politician.” Al-Damaqsi initially refused, citing the degrading circumstances of his detention, but was eventually coerced into recording a video praising the “good treatment” he had received —after being issued veiled threats, despite repeated attempts to delay or reshoot the video.

The group was eventually released thanks to pressure and mediation by individuals familiar with al-Damaqsi across various provinces —contacts he had developed through his prior political work. It is likely that these efforts prevented the continued detention or escalation of abuse. He added:

**“Nothing was left for us, not our money, not our medications, not even a single bottle of water. They stole our clothes, our belongings and even my glasses and my father’s watch, which I inherited.”**

During the return journey from Idlib to Damascus, the group struggled to travel and relied on friends for fuel and small amounts of money. According to al-Damaqsi, the psychological and physical effects of the torture lingered, especially given the threats they received during detention —some of which he interpreted as sectarian death threats:

**“They said: ‘We’ll kill the Druze at 6 a.m., and the Alawites at 4:30...’ When they summoned me at 1:15 a.m., I thought they were going to execute me.”**

Later, members of the delegation met with Suwayda Governor Mustafa al-Bakkour, where they gave public testimony about the abuse, torture, and theft they endured. Their accounts were documented and circulated on [social media platforms](#). In the same context, activist Ghada Raslan al-Shaarani —one of the delegation members— [reported](#) that civil society organizations filed a lawsuit in the Suwayda court and that the victims underwent forensic medical examinations to document the torture they endured. However, as of the time this report was prepared, no official findings or public reports had been issued, and there were no indications of follow-up steps such as referrals for accountability or formal legal action.

### **3.5 “Brutal Beatings with Rifle Butts, Bamboo Sticks, and Belts” – Police Station in Salhab and Detention Center in al- Saqliyah, Hama – 7 March 2025**

STJ spoke with the witness “Baha,” a 25-year-old civilian from Hama, who recounted that on 7 March 2025, General Security forces and fighters from armed factions [entered the city of Salhab](#) while en route to the village of Daliyah. Upon arrival, they immediately launched a weapons search campaign. According to the testimony, more than 200 cases of arbitrary arrest took place during the operation, in addition to the extrajudicial killing of dozens. The witness described the arrests as accompanied by “**insults, beatings, dragging, and kicking**” —all within a context of widespread violence and public humiliation.

Among those arrested was Baha's cousin, who was transferred to a detention facility in the village of al-Saqliyah in Hama. There, he was subjected to severe beatings targeting his head and body, abuse that Baha described as "brutal."

Baha added that after the detainees were released, he learned more details about the arrest conditions. The detainees had been held at the Salhab police station, a five-story building, where they remained for five days and were subjected to intense torture. The methods used included beatings with rifle butts, bamboo sticks, and belts before they were released. The witness stated:

**"When my cousin returned, he could barely walk from how badly he had been beaten."**

### **3.6 "They Beat Him Until He Could No Longer Walk" – Testimony of Torture in Damascus Against a Man and His Underage Son – December 2024**

On 24 December 2024, "Hussein," a civilian residing in the al-Qadam neighborhood of Damascus and a member of the Alawite community, was subjected to a violent and arbitrary arrest by an armed group that included individuals wearing General Security uniforms. According to a source close to the detainee, Hussein's family had rented a home in al-Anazy/al-Anazah Quarter within the al-Qadam neighborhood and had never experienced any previous issues with the landlord. According to the source, the incident began when the landlord arrived accompanied by an armed group that stormed the house and began hurling insults and sectarian slurs at the residents, accusing the family of being "Alawite Shabiha." The officers then violently beat Hussein, forced him into a vehicle, and placed him in the trunk.

The source confirmed that one of those involved in the arrest wore an olive-green military uniform, while others were dressed in General Security attire. The source also reported that Hussein's 16-year-old son was detained as well at the al-Muhajireen police station in Damascus. He was released later that same day but showed clear signs of torture:

**"He returned barefoot, frightened, and in shock. He said they beat him with a rifle butt and threatened to kill him."**

According to the source, when Hussein's family saw him at the al-Muhajireen police station, he showed clear signs of severe physical abuse:

**"He could barely stand from the beatings. His face was so swollen it was hard to recognize him."**

The source added that Hussein was later transferred to another detention facility located inside a building previously used by the Political Security Branch. However, the facility's administration denied that he was being held there, suggesting that he had been subjected to enforced disappearance.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For more details on similar incidents in the al-Qadam neighborhood of Damascus, see: Syrians for Truth and Justice. Syria: Documentation of Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Arrests in the al-Qadam Neighborhood

### 3.7 “Kill Me and Be Done with It” – Torture of a Man in His Fifties in al-Raml al-Shamali, Latakia – 7 March 2025

"Basel," a man in his fifties from the al-Raml al-Shamali neighbourhood in Latakia, reported being subjected to torture by members of the General Security while heading out on the morning of 7 March 2025 to buy essential household items. Basel recounted:

**"As soon as I was about 200 meters away from my house, someone shouted at me, 'Come here, you pig.' I turned and saw four vehicles filled with armed men who ordered me to lie on the ground. They started beating me with the butts of their rifles on my back, shoulders, and head without stopping."**

Basel explained that they tore off his shirt during the beating and saw a surgical scar on his back from a previous operation. Assuming he was a former combatant, he said:

**"They intensified the blows on the surgical site and started yelling and cursing Alawites"**

During the assault, the men debated his execution with their commander, whom they referred to as "the Sheikh." According to Basel:

**"One of them asked, 'Shall we finish him off, Sheikh?' I immediately responded, 'Kill me and be done with it.'"**

Later, they took him to his house to search for weapons. They beat him in front of his wife and son and stole 200,000 Syrian pounds. However, they found nothing.

Two days after the incident, Basel visited a doctor and was found to be suffering from three fractures in the left ribs, a fracture on the right side, and a shoulder injury that caused joint calcification and tendon inflammation—all resulting from the severe beating he endured.

**The testimonies presented in this report point to alarming signs of violations taking place inside certain official detention centers under the control of military or security bodies. These violations include arrests without legal warrants, physical and psychological torture, enforced disappearances, and the detention of minors under inhumane conditions. In addition, attempts have been made to manipulate the narrative through coerced or dubious video recordings. These practices occur in the absence of judicial oversight and required legal safeguards, in clear violation of Syrian law and Syria's obligations under the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The continued occurrence of torture cases after the fall of the former regime raises serious questions regarding respect for justice and human dignity. It underscores the urgent need for an independent and transparent investigation to ensure accountability, especially given that some of the implicated entities are reportedly affiliated with the Ministry of Defense or General Security structures.**

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of Damascus. 23 June 2025. <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-documentation-of-enforced-disappearances-and-arbitrary-arrests-in-the-al-qadam-neighborhood-of-damascus/>

## 4. Open-Source Confirmation of Torture Practices by General Security and Military Factions

In addition to the direct testimonies documented by STJ, dozens of videos have circulated on social media platforms in recent months, depicting detainees being beaten, tortured, and subjected to degrading treatment in various parts of Syria. These incidents constitute alarming indicators of the continued use of humiliation and torture, whether by General Security officers or groups affiliated with the Ministry of Defense. Accordingly, STJ presents below a number of additional examples based on open-source material, with the idea that these do not reflect the full scope of the violations nor capture all cases. Conducting serious and transparent investigations into these incidents and holding those responsible to account is both a legal and moral obligation —crucial for ending impunity and restoring public trust in state institutions.

On 5 June 2025, a young man named Hafez Youssef al-Tawil, originally from the village of Barouha in the Talkalakh area of rural Homs, died just five days after being detained by security forces affiliated with the Syrian government. According to local sources,<sup>12</sup> al-Tawil was subjected to torture during his detention, which led to his death in custody. His body was later returned to his family under heavy security restrictions that included preventing family members and neighbors from sharing any details about the circumstances of his death or speaking to the media, further reinforcing an atmosphere of fear and suggesting an attempt to conceal the crime and deprive the family of their right to truth and justice.

In another incident, Rabee' al-Sha'sha'<sup>13</sup> and Mahran al-Salami<sup>14</sup> were killed under torture in May 2025 following their arrest in the town of Sahnaya, rural Damascus, by members of the security services affiliated with the transitional Syrian authorities. According to local and human rights sources, the two men were transferred to an undisclosed detention facility, where they were subjected to severe abuse and torture that led to their deaths. No legal procedures preceded their arrest, nor were their families notified of their whereabouts or the reasons for their detention. This case stands out as one of the most recent examples of ongoing impunity and the use of torture as a tool for intimidation and extrajudicial execution.

In another context, Syrian activist Abdulrahman Kaheel was arbitrarily arrested on 2 May 2025, by members of the General Security and Criminal Security branches while he was with his fiancée on Khalid bin al-Walid Street in the city of Homs. The unlawful arrest was accompanied

<sup>12</sup> Journalist Waheed Yazbek. Facebook Post. 5 June 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/alahteatea/posts/-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%83%D9%84%D8%AE-%D9%88%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%8A%D8%B2%D8%A8%D9%83%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8-%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%88%D9%8A%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%83%D9%84/1289369793188962/>

See also: Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Amid accusations of torturing him | Young man from Tel Kalakh countryside dies nearly a week after having been arrested. 5 June 2025. <https://www.syriahr.com/en/363472/>

<sup>13</sup> Rojava Information Center. Over 137 Killed in Ten Days Amid Direct Targeting of the Druze Community. 15 May 2025. <https://rojavainformationcenter.org/>

<sup>14</sup> Suwayda 24. Post on platform X. 21 May 2025. <https://x.com/suwayda24/status/1925210948052107594>

by physical and psychological abuse that amounted to torture, under the pretext that he lacked documents proving the nature of his relationship with the woman. The assault resulted in serious injuries, including a perforated eardrum and bruises on his face and hands, in addition to degrading insults directed at the woman.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, another video published in early May 2025 showed a masked General Security officer forcing a civilian to mimic sheep sounds while using degrading phrases. This incident occurred in the context of documented abuses targeting members of the Druze community in Damascus and its countryside, in clear violation of their dignity and protection against inhuman or degrading treatment.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, on 24 April 2025, Jamil al-Hasaan —a media figure known for his close ties to the transitional Syrian authorities— published a video on the X platform in which he interrogates a detainee named Abu Mohammad Taysir, accused of previous violations against civilians. The detainee appeared with visible signs of physical torture, raising serious concerns about the conditions of his detention and the lawfulness of the procedures used. This incident suggests a high likelihood of ill-treatment during arrest or interrogation.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, a video recorded in the city of Mhardeh in Hama province on 30 April 2025, shows General Security officers shaving the heads of several young Christian men while directing sectarian insults at them —including calling them “Christian pigs”— allegedly for interacting with women.<sup>18</sup> Media sources, including the [al-Modon](#) website, reported that this incident was not isolated but part of a broader pattern of similar abuses. These included cases in Damascus, where young men were detained merely for being seen with women in public, without any formal legal justification. According to al-Modon, other documented cases involved teenage boys having their hair forcibly shaved in the street for allegedly harassing girls in the Rukn al-Din neighborhood. Meanwhile, posters were circulated at the Faculty of Medicine at Damascus University urging male students to avoid mixing or shaking hands with women.

Moreover, in March 2025, STJ verified a video documenting sectarian humiliation during the coastal events on March 8, 2025. The footage showed individuals —believed to be affiliated with transitional authorities— forcing detainees to imitate dog sounds, curse the Alawite sect, and repeat degrading sectarian slogans such as “The Umayyads are our masters,” in acts that clearly constituted sectarian degradation and a gross violation of human dignity.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Facebook post. 7 May 2025.

[https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=10171850531895232&id=802160231&rdid=SPz0pusnklitNVtDP](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10171850531895232&id=802160231&rdid=SPz0pusnklitNVtDP)

<sup>16</sup> Facebook Reel, accessed on 9 May 2025. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/671390225784004>

<sup>17</sup> Jamil Alhasaan (@Jamil\_Alhasaan), post on X (formerly Twitter), 24 April 2025.

[https://x.com/Jamil\\_Alhasaan/status/1915176341298626734](https://x.com/Jamil_Alhasaan/status/1915176341298626734)

<sup>18</sup> Ivan Hassib, video posted on Facebook, 30 April 2025.

<https://www.facebook.com/Ivan.Hassib/videos/665312246112058/>

<sup>19</sup> Kabos Tel Rifat Telegram Channel. 8 March 2025. <https://t.me/KabosTelRifat/22208>



## 5. STJ's Experience in Documenting Torture and Supporting Victims

Since 2021, STJ has placed particular focus on documenting torture, one of the most severe human rights violations and a crime that, under international law, is not subject to a statute of limitations. As of mid-2025, the organization has documented nearly 340 cases of physical and psychological torture committed by various parties to the Syrian conflict, including the former government, opposition armed groups, and de facto authorities. These figures reflect the widespread and systematic nature of this crime across different regions and lines of control.

STJ does not view documentation merely as a process of digital archiving, but rather as a human and ethical endeavor aimed at preserving the memory of victims, safeguarding their narratives against denial and erasure, and laying the foundation for any serious path toward accountability, reparation, and transitional justice. The resulting database from this documentation work serves as a central tool that can be used in legal advocacy and in support of both national and international litigation efforts.

### 5.1. Strict Adherence to International Documentation Standards

STJ follows a rigorous policy in its documentation of torture, grounded in the United Nations' guiding principles for documenting grave human rights violations. The team adheres to the "do no harm" principle as a core standard, and all researchers undergo specialized training on safe interviewing techniques, data protection, and risk assessment. Every piece of documentation undergoes a multi-layered review and verification process before being included in the central database.

Victims are interviewed on a voluntary and confidential basis, in accordance with informed consent protocols that respect their dignity and choices at all times. At every stage, the personal and social context of the survivor is considered, including gender, religious or ethnic background, and the psychological impacts of the experience.

### 5.2. From Documentation to Holistic Response

Guided by the belief that justice is incomplete without healing, STJ works to provide a comprehensive response to survivors of torture. The support offered addresses various dimensions of the harm suffered. Medical support is provided through careful assessment of each survivor's health needs, including referrals to specialists and full coverage of treatment costs, ranging from chronic care to physiotherapy and dental care.

Psychological support is delivered through both individual and group sessions conducted by trained counselors, with the option to refer survivors to psychiatrists when needed. On the legal front, assistance is provided to help survivors retrieve civil documents lost due to detention or displacement, enabling them to regain their legal status and access basic rights.

Additionally, STJ offers social and financial support to help survivors meet essential living needs in a dignified manner, easing the daily burdens of recovery. Vocational training opportunities are also provided, equipping survivors with new skills that facilitate entry into the job market and foster economic independence.

This support is delivered based on a thorough individual assessment, with full consideration for the sensitivity and specificity of each case, to ensure a safe, adaptable, and effective response.

## 6. The Prohibition of Torture in the Constitutional Declaration

The [Constitutional Declaration](#) issued by the Syrian Transitional Government on 13 March 2025 affirms, in Article 18, the State's duty to uphold human dignity, protect bodily integrity, and prohibit torture. It further stipulates that acts of torture are not subject to a statute of limitations. Article 49 reiterates this by confirming that war crimes and crimes against humanity—including torture—committed by the former regime are not time-barred.

While these provisions represent an initial step toward acknowledging the gravity of torture, they remain legally insufficient. The text lacks essential procedural guarantees, such as the right to remedy, the exclusion of evidence obtained under torture, and preventive safeguards during detention. Moreover, limiting the non-applicability of statutory limitations to crimes committed solely by the former regime raises serious concerns about the potential impunity of perpetrators affiliated with the current authorities. It may also result in discrimination against certain victims, in contradiction with core principles of international law, which prohibit selective justice and affirm that such crimes are imprescriptible regardless of the perpetrator's identity.

Therefore, any constitutional framework addressing torture must include comprehensive and clearly defined commitments to prevention, accountability, and the absolute prohibition of impunity, free of political or temporal selectivity.

Article 49 of the Declaration also mandates the creation of a special body on transitional justice to oversee truth-seeking, accountability, and reparations. In this context, Interim President Ahmad al-Shar' issued [Decree No. 20](#) on 17 May 2025, establishing the "National Commission for Transitional Justice." However, this move appears largely symbolic rather than substantive. The Commission was formed without any participatory process, and lacks guarantees for independence and effective authority. Furthermore, no national strategy or roadmap accompanied its establishment, undermining its potential to serve as a credible institution for justice and accountability.

STJ emphasizes that creating such a body under the executive branch, without meaningful inclusion of victims and civil society, exacerbates fears of reducing transitional justice to a political instrument. These concerns have only intensified with the Commission's failure to meet the deadline set in the decree for adopting its internal regulations.

Similarly, although the criminalization of "glorifying the Assad regime" or denying its crimes within the Declaration reflects a shift in legal discourse, the exclusive focus on the crimes of the former regime—without addressing violations by other parties—entrenches a selective approach that fundamentally undermines the principles of comprehensive justice.

In addition, the Declaration explicitly states that existing legislation remains in force unless amended or repealed. Consequently, the Anti-Torture Law No. 16 of 2022 is still applicable, placing a clear legal obligation on the current government to implement its provisions. However, the failure to take any concrete measures toward enforcement—alongside ongoing widespread

violations— clearly reflects a lack of genuine political will to combat torture and bring these practices to an end.

## 7. Recommendations

The testimonies and documented material presented in this report indicate alarming signs of the continued use of torture, necessitating urgent action by local authorities and relevant international bodies. In this context, Syrians for Truth and Justice puts forward the following recommendations:

- **Launch prompt, independent, and transparent investigations** into all violations detailed in this report, with a particular focus on acts of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. **An independent investigative mechanism should be established** to examine all abuses committed since 8 December 2024.
- **Ensure unconditional and immediate compliance with the absolute prohibition of torture**, by implementing Law No. 16 of 2022, fulfilling obligations under all relevant international treaties prohibiting torture, and aligning national legislation accordingly, including by **acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture**.
- **Guarantee accountability and end impunity** by prosecuting those responsible for serious human rights violations, including torture, before fair and competent courts. All forms of protection or shielding of perpetrators must cease, including the appointment of individuals involved in such violations to official or leadership positions.
- **Immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of all detainees and forcibly disappeared persons**, particularly in cases of arbitrary arrest, and ensure that all detainees are brought promptly before a court and **afforded their right to a fair trial**.
- **Take effective measures to protect private property** during security operations and detention, including the prevention of theft or vandalism. **Violations documented in this regard must be investigated, perpetrators held accountable, and victims compensated accordingly.**
- **Guarantee the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced people**, by creating a legal and humanitarian environment free of threats and discrimination. This must be consistent with Article 8 of the Constitutional Declaration, which affirms the State's duty to take practical steps to remove obstacles to return.
- **Ensure full and unimpeded access for independent human rights organizations and relevant international mechanisms** to places of detention, allowing them to assess conditions and meet with victims. In particular, **the UN Special Rapporteur on torture should be formally invited to visit Syria** to conduct an on-the-ground assessment and provide recommendations, as a necessary step toward improving transparency and accountability.



## ABOUT STJ

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) started as an idea in a co-founder's mind while attending the U.S. Middle-East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF) in 2015. The idea became a reality and flourished into an independent, non-profit, impartial, non-governmental human rights organization.



## ABOUT Ceasefire

The Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights aims to empower civilians in situations of armed conflict or prevailing insecurity to document violations of their rights; to seek justice and accountability for violations of civilian rights; and to develop the practice of civilian rights protection and raise public support for the promotion of civilian rights.

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