

Paris, France: Fared al-Madhhan “Caesar” Receives the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights



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Mr. Fareed al-Madhhan, known by his alias “Caesar,” received the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights at an official Franco-German ceremony in Paris, France, on International Human Rights Day, 10 December 2024. This award recognized his remarkable efforts in documenting serious violations committed during the era of the former Syrian regime.

The award ceremony, held at the headquarters of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was attended by Mr. Jean-Noël Barrot, France’s Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Gunther Krichbaum, Germany’s Minister of State for European Affairs, who presented the prize to al- Madhhan. Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) was honored to attend, represented by its Executive Director, Bassam al-Ahmad, along with representatives from several other Syrian civil society organizations active in human rights and transitional justice.

Al- Madhhan, a former Syrian military officer with the rank of Warrant Officer First Class, served as the head of the Judicial Evidence Department within the Military Police in Damascus. He is originally from Al Sheikh Maskin in Daraa Governorate, southern Syria. He used the alias “Caesar” to conceal his identity and protect his family, remaining in hiding for many years.

Background

Following the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in March 2011, al- Madhhan’s work shifted as he was tasked with photographing the bodies of civilians who had been killed through torture or execution by regime forces. He managed to smuggle out approximately [55,000](#) photographs of torture victims from Syrian regime security branches, with about four images per body, exposing the extent of the horrific abuses inside Syrian detention centers.

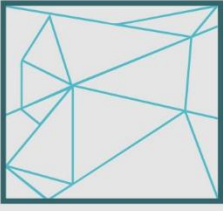
These photographs were [verified and analyzed by legal authorities and judicial entities](#), helping Syrian families discover the fate of their detained or forcibly disappeared loved ones. They have also been utilized by human rights groups, the United Nations, and international courts in report preparation and efforts to pursue accountability for war crimes.

Al- Madhhan defected from the regime in late 2013 and [left Syria for Jordan, then Qatar and Türkiye](#), before eventually settling in France under tight security. In January 2014, the [first international report](#) based on the Caesar photographs was published, and in August of the same year, he testified before the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs. In December 2019, the U.S. Congress passed the [Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act](#), which imposes strong economic sanctions on the Syrian regime and its allies. His testimonies also helped lead to the issuance of [international arrest warrants](#)

against several regime officials and security officers, some of whom were later arrested and tried in Europe.

Following the fall of the Syrian regime on 8 December 2024, [al-Madhhan revealed his true name](#), emphasizing that truth and justice can only be achieved by holding those responsible for the crimes accountable in fair courts.

The [Franco-German Prize for Human Rights](#), launched in 2016 and awarded annually to individuals or institutions that have made outstanding contributions to defending human rights and the rule of law, symbolizes international recognition of the remarkable courage shown by Fareed al-Madhhan in pursuing justice and exposing the truth to the world.



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.

STJ's beginnings were more than humble; initially, it only reported stories of Syrians who experienced arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or torture. Planted in fertile soil, the seed of this project grew into an established human rights organization licensed in the Middle East and the European Union. STJ today undertakes to detect and uncover violations of all types committed in all Syrian parts by the various parties to the conflict.

Convinced that Syria's diversity is a wealth, our researchers and volunteers serve with unfailing dedication to monitor, expose, and document human rights violations that continue unabated in Syria since 2011, regardless of the affiliation of the victims or perpetrators.