

**Syria / Afrin: Communication to UN Special Rapporteurs
Concerning Systematic Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and
Enforced Disappearances**



**Documented Persisting Pattern of Violations between 2018
and the End of 2025**

June 2026

Syria / Afrin: Communication to UN Special Rapporteurs Concerning Systematic Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances

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To the attention of:

- Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances;
- Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons;
- Special Rapporteur on minority issues;
- Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence;
- Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences.

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) respectfully submits this complaint to your mandates, bringing to your attention a systematic and ongoing pattern of arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearance, financial extortion, and discrimination based on ethnic identity targeting, and continuing to target, the Kurdish population in Afrin and its surrounding areas in northwestern Syria since Turkish forces and Turkish-backed Syrian armed factions took control of the region in March 2018. These violations have continued up to the date of this submission, including documented abuses committed in 2024 and 2025 following the fall of the Assad regime and the formation of the Syrian transitional government.¹

This complaint is based on a body of direct field evidence comprising 41 testimonies collected in the second half of 2025, along with open-source materials, documents, and reports issued by UN bodies and international human rights organizations. Together, these sources demonstrate that the documented violations are not isolated incidents or disconnected abuses but are part of a recurring, interconnected policy whose methods evolve even as its repressive structure remains fundamentally unchanged.

The documented material shows that arbitrary detention in Afrin was not merely a standalone violation but rather the entry point into a broader cycle of interconnected abuses: detention without judicial basis, transfer to official or unofficial detention facilities, torture or degrading treatment, financial extortion in exchange for release, and, in many cases, denial of the victim's whereabouts or fate, amounting to enforced disappearance. The testimonies further show that these violations were frequently linked to the direct ethnic targeting of Kurds through a "ready-made accusation" based on alleged affiliation with the People's Protection Units (YPG), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), or the former Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East

¹ "Behind Closed Doors: Afrin's People Between Detention and Denial", STJ, 6 May 2026, <https://stj-sy.org/en/behind-closed-doors-afrins-people-between-detention-and-denial/> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

Syria (DAANES), as well as through discriminatory and degrading rhetoric used within detention facilities.²

The exceptional gravity of this complaint lies in the fact that these patterns were not confined to the period of armed conflict or to the era preceding the restructuring of the factions. Rather, they persisted after the political transition in Damascus, suggesting that the system of abuse was not dismantled but instead institutionally repurposed within new governing structures. This has occurred amid a persistent absence of accountability, the continued operation of unofficial detention facilities, and the ongoing detention or disappearance of some victims to this day.³

The gravity of this situation is further compounded by the fact that prior UN documentation was neither absent nor marginal. In its periodic reports issued in 2018,⁴ 2020,⁵ and 2022,⁶ the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI-Syria) documented violations related to Afrin and the conduct of Turkish-backed factions, including patterns of arbitrary deprivation of liberty, torture, and abuses against civilians and their property. This demonstrates that the relevant parties were aware of the nature of these violations and their recurring character.

Accordingly, this complaint is not being submitted to your mandates as a historical file documenting past violations, but rather as evidence of an ongoing pattern of grave abuses whose legal and humanitarian consequences persist to this day, including the continued disappearance of some victims, the ongoing impunity enjoyed by perpetrators, and the persistence of the security structures that enabled these violations and allowed them to continue. Furthermore, these violations are not encompassed within the current transitional justice framework, as Presidential Decree No. (20) of 2025, issued by the Syrian transitional government to establish the National Commission for Transitional Justice, is limited to “revealing the truth regarding gross violations committed by the former regime”⁷ only, thereby creating a serious risk that crimes committed by actors other than the Assad regime will remain outside any accountability process.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/39/65, 12 September 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

⁵ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/43/57, 2 March 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

⁶ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/77, 8 February 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

⁷ Text of Presidential Decree No. (20) Establishing the National Commission of Transitional Justice. <https://archive.sana.sy/رئاسة-الجمهورية-المرسوم-الرئاسي-رقم-20/>

In this context, the intervention of your mandates is no longer merely a matter of documentation or monitoring; it has become an urgent necessity to halt ongoing violations, protect victims and their families, and ensure a minimum level of accountability and redress.

1. Background and Contextual Framework

1.1. Military and political context

On 20 January 2018, the Turkish Armed Forces, supported by Syrian armed factions, launched a large-scale military operation known as Operation Olive Branch, targeting the predominantly Kurdish region of Afrin in northwestern Syria. The operation occurred within the context of the non-international armed conflict in Syria, with the direct involvement of a foreign state's ground forces, thereby imparting an international dimension to the nature of the subsequent control exercised over the area from the outset. The operation was accompanied by an intensive aerial and artillery bombardment campaign targeting villages and towns, resulting in civilian casualties and large-scale displacement of the original population, particularly among the Kurdish community. This contributed to an initial demographic change that preceded the consolidation of military control on the ground and directly affected the region's social fabric.⁸

By March 2018, military control over the city of Afrin and its surrounding areas had been consolidated amid the near-total collapse of the previous administrative structure and the absence of any independent local civilian authority. This created an institutional and security vacuum that was filled by Turkish-backed armed factions, which transitioned from a military role to de facto governing authority on the ground. In the aftermath, an ostensibly civilian administrative and security system was established, including local councils, civil and military police forces, and courts. However, documented testimonies indicate that these structures did not exercise independent authority but instead functioned as formal façades that conferred superficial legitimacy on the armed factions' effective military control. This gave rise to a duality between the institutional appearance of governance and the actual reality of power. This contradiction between form and substance significantly undermined the rule of law, as security and judicial decisions were not issued by independent institutions but by multiple military power centers. As a result, a legal environment emerged that lacked clear safeguards and enabled the widespread practice of arbitrary detention and torture without effective oversight or accountability.⁹

⁸ "Behind Closed Doors: Afrin's People Between Detention and Denial", STJ, 6 May 2026, <https://stj-sy.org/en/behind-closed-doors-afrins-people-between-detention-and-denial/> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

⁹ Ibid.

This complexity is further compounded by the fact that the Syrian National Army (SNA) comprised approximately 41 factions organized into multiple formations, resulting in fragmented security decision-making centers and overlapping jurisdictions. This not only produced organizational disorder but also created a structure that enabled factions to exchange roles and responsibilities, obscuring legal accountability for violations.¹⁰

The overlap between local actors and the external sponsor gave rise to a hybrid system of control that combined factional fragmentation with external oversight. This contributed to the consolidation of a closed security environment operating outside the framework of the law, in which arbitrary detention, torture, and financial extortion became central tools for controlling the population. Over time, these practices evolved from isolated acts into a relatively stable pattern, with arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance becoming part of the everyday mechanisms of governance, reflecting a shift from the logic of “violation” to that of an “established security policy.”¹¹

In late 2024, Syria underwent a major political transformation marked by the fall of the Assad regime and the formation of a transitional government. This was followed by the announcement that the SNA would be dissolved and its factions integrated into the new Ministry of Defense, a step ostensibly intended to reorganize the security sector within a formal legal framework.¹²

However, this integration was not accompanied by accountability mechanisms or vetting of the factions’ records. Instead, the same actors were incorporated into official institutions without any meaningful change to their structures or practices, effectively reproducing the same system within a new institutional framework. Documented testimonies confirm the continuation of arbitrary arrests following this political transition, particularly targeting civilians returning to Afrin. Individuals were reportedly detained at checkpoints under the pretext of “security screening,” without judicial warrants or clear legal procedures, indicating the absence of genuine reform in security practices. Acts of torture and ill-treatment also continued inside detention facilities throughout 2024 and 2025, using the same methods documented in previous years, including beatings, electric shocks, and verbal abuse. This continuity demonstrates that the pattern of abuse remained unaffected by the political transition. The persistence of these violations confirms that abuses in Afrin were not tied to a specific period but became embedded within an enduring security structure that has been preserved and reproduced, constituting a serious indication of entrenched impunity within the new system.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

1.2. Previous UN documentation

The violations committed in Afrin have not gone unnoticed by the international community; rather, they have been systematically and repeatedly documented by the COI-Syria. The Commission has monitored the situation in areas under the control of Turkish-backed factions since 2018 and has reported patterns of recurring grave violations.

In its 2018 report (A/HRC/39/65), the Commission documented violations committed during military operations in Afrin, including attacks against civilians, arbitrary arrests, and ill-treatment, establishing an early temporal baseline for documenting these patterns.¹⁴ In its 2020 report (A/HRC/43/57), it confirmed that these violations did not cease with the end of military operations but continued into the phase of territorial control, including unlawful detention and torture in facilities run by armed factions, indicating the persistence of these abuses as an ongoing pattern.¹⁵ The 2022 report (A/HRC/49/77) further noted the continuation of these patterns within a broader context of violations linked to territorial control, including identity-based targeting, thereby reinforcing the systematic nature of these practices.¹⁶

In its most recent report (A/HRC/RES/58/25) in 2025, the Commission reaffirmed that violations continue in areas under the control of these factions, including arbitrary detention and torture, despite the political changes in Syria. This further indicates that these abuses are not tied to any specific political phase.¹⁷ This ongoing timeline demonstrates that the violations in Afrin are not isolated or exceptional incidents but a persistent pattern, repeatedly documented by an independent UN body, thereby lending them additional legal credibility.

Moreover, the persistence of these violations despite repeated UN documentation suggests that the relevant actors were aware of them yet failed to take effective measures to prevent them or hold perpetrators accountable, an element that is significant in assessing international responsibility. Accordingly, UN documentation not only corroborates the factual record but also helps establish that these violations

¹⁴ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/39/65, 12 September 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

¹⁵ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/43/57, 28 January 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

¹⁶ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/77, 8 February 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

¹⁷ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/58/25, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

occurred within a known and reported context, strengthening their characterization as a systematic policy rather than isolated or individual acts¹⁸.

2. Factual Findings: Systematic Patterns of Violations

2.1. Arbitrary detention as a structural entry point into cycles of abuse

Testimonies collected by STJ indicate that deprivation of liberty in Afrin was not applied as a lawful measure based on specific incidents or clearly substantiated individual suspicions. Rather, it served as a broad, systematic control mechanism deployed across the entire geographic area. Arrests were carried out at fixed and temporary military checkpoints, at the entrances to cities and towns, along internal roads, while moving between villages, at workplaces, and through late-night home raids. In all cases, no arrest warrants were presented, and individuals were not informed of the reasons for their detention, demonstrating that arrests were carried out outside any legal framework from the outset.

The arbitrary nature of these arrests is not limited to the absence of judicial warrants; it is also evident in the decision-making process itself. Vague and undefined justifications such as “security screening,” “verification,” or “identity check” are routinely used as a formal pretext for immediate detention, without objective criteria or genuine verification procedures. This transforms such terminology into open-ended tools that enable the expansion of targeting to include individuals against whom no specific or individualized suspicion exists, including ordinary civilians and persons returning from displacement.

The testimonies indicate that the moment of return to Afrin, an event presumed to mark the beginning of restored stability, often serves as a direct entry point into the detention system. Returnees are frequently arrested upon arrival or at checkpoints and detained indefinitely without being brought before any judicial authority. This reflects the use of arrest to reassert control over the population and reorganize social space in line with the prevailing power structure. The testimonies further show that arrest is commonly accompanied from the outset by physical and verbal violence, including beatings during apprehension, insults, forced searches, and the confiscation of money, mobile phones, and personal belongings. This indicates that detention is not an isolated measure but part of a broader package of violations that begins immediately upon the exercise of control over the individual. It is also observed that detainees are swiftly transferred from the point of arrest to initial or temporary holding sites, and then to

¹⁸ “Everything is by the Power of the Weapon”, Human Rights Watch, 29 February 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/everything-power-weapon/abuses-and-impunity-turkish-occupied-northern-syria> (Last accessed: 14 May 2026); See also, Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, United Nations Human Rights Council, UN Doc. A/HRC/49/77., 8 February 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/documentation> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

other detention facilities, sometimes operated by different actors, without clear official records and without informing either the detainees or their families of their whereabouts. This fragmentation of the detention process further obscures accountability and severely undermines any possibility of legal tracing or challenge.¹⁹

The absence of judicial review, combined with the deprivation of detainees' access to lawyers or contact with their families, results in the complete suspension of their legal status. Detention thus becomes an open-ended condition, leaving detainees in absolute uncertainty about the duration of their confinement or their ultimate fate.

In this context, arbitrary detention is not a standalone violation but rather a gateway into a closed system of abuses. It marks the transition from freedom to total control, under which individuals are subjected to multiple forms of physical, psychological, and economic violence. As such, it constitutes the foundational element of the systematic pattern of violations in Afrin.²⁰

2.2. Torture and inhuman treatment as an operational tool within the detention system

Testimonies collected by STJ indicate that torture in detention facilities is not practiced as an exceptional measure tied to specific interrogation circumstances. Rather, it is part of the daily operational structure of these facilities, used repeatedly and systematically across multiple detention sites and through similar methods. This reflects stable behavioral patterns that are circulated and normalized within the detention system.

These methods include severe beatings with various implements, electric shocks, prolonged suspension (the *shabeh* position), burning, and food deprivation, in addition to verbal abuse that is degrading or ethnically derogatory. These practices recur across multiple testimonies in a consistent manner, reflecting a degree of standardization in torture methods rather than isolated or individual acts. Torture does not serve a single function; rather, it intersects with multiple objectives within the detention system. It is used to extract confessions, punish detainees, humiliate and psychologically break them, and exert pressure on them or their families to pay sums of money in exchange for release, thereby directly linking torture to mechanisms of financial extortion.

Testimonies further show that psychological torture is used extensively, including threats of harm or violence against family members and insults targeting identity. This expands the scope of harm beyond the physical body to include social and symbolic dimensions. These acts occur in harsh detention conditions, including overcrowding,

¹⁹ "Behind Closed Doors: Afrin's People Between Detention and Denial", STJ, 6 May 2026, <https://stj-sy.org/en/behind-closed-doors-afrins-people-between-detention-and-denial/> (Last accessed: 12 May 2026).

²⁰ Ibid.

poor ventilation, lack of medical care, and the denial of adequate sleep or food. These conditions, in themselves, constitute inhuman treatment and exacerbate suffering.

Some practices also extend beyond the interrogation context, such as forcing detainees to remain in painful physical positions for prolonged periods or compelling them to stand or move in a coercive manner. This indicates that torture is not a situational tool but part of the daily routine within the detention system.²¹ Taken together, these elements demonstrate that torture functions as a central operational mechanism within the detention regime, used to subjugate and control detainees rather than solely to extract information. It therefore constitutes a predictable stage within the broader cycle of violations that begins with arbitrary arrest.

2.3. Enforced disappearance as a structural mechanism of denial of responsibility

Testimonies collected by STJ indicate that enforced disappearance in Afrin is not an incidental outcome but a natural extension of the detention process. Individuals are held without acknowledgment of their fate or whereabouts, or are given contradictory information, effectively removing them from any legal protection framework.

In many cases, families are unable to obtain reliable information despite repeated visits to faction headquarters or security bodies, reflecting a deliberate pattern of withholding information rather than mere administrative failure. The evidence also points to the use of technical means to obscure detainees' legal identities, including registration under false names or the complete absence of formal records. This prevents tracing their whereabouts or submitting claims on their behalf, indicating organized practices designed to conceal responsibility.

This pattern is further complicated by the transfer of detainees among multiple detention facilities, sometimes across factions, without formal documentation. This results in the fragmentation of legal responsibility and the prolongation of detention outside any form of oversight.

Testimonies also indicate that some detainees are used as leverage or in informal arrangements, effectively turning them into instruments of the system of control and stripping them of any stable legal status²². Taken together, these practices show that enforced disappearance functions as a structural mechanism within the broader system of violations, designed to deny legal responsibility and sustain control over victims. It therefore represents one of the most severe and consequential stages in this cycle of abuse.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

2.4. Release for Ransom: Detention as an Extra-Judicial Extortion Mechanism

Testimonies collected by STJ reveal that, in a significant number of cases, deprivation of liberty in Afrin did not end through a written judicial decision or a clearly defined legal procedure. Instead, it was effectively managed through parallel financial negotiations with faction members or intermediaries linked to them. As a result, release shifted from a legal right to a conditional privilege dependent on payment, turning detention itself into an economic resource embedded within the broader system of abuse.

This pattern does not appear incidental or marginal. The testimonies reveal a consistent sequence: detention outside any judicial framework, followed by torture, threats, or initial incommunicado detention; the opening of “negotiations” with families or local intermediaries; and finally, the conditioning of release on the payment of sums that are neither officially documented nor processed through any recognized judicial or administrative authority. This effectively integrates ransom payments into the operational structure of detention, rather than treating them as an incidental by-product.

The testimonies further show that ransom amounts were neither symbolic nor fixed but varied significantly across cases, often ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000 and, in other instances, reaching \$75,000 or even \$100,000. This wide disparity does not reflect any legal or administrative standard but rather coercive bargaining shaped by the victim’s or family’s ability to pay and social status.

The significance of these amounts extends beyond their scale, revealing a clear economic logic in the management of detention. The transformation of personal liberty into a commodified asset subject to pricing and negotiation indicates that arrest is no longer merely a tool of repression or suspicion but has become, in itself, an activity that generates direct financial gain for factions, individual actors, and intermediaries.

The evidence also indicates that these ransom payments were not made from families’ surplus resources. In many cases, households were forced to sell essential assets, such as olive trees, gold, or other property, to raise the required sums. In one reported instance, a victim was told to sell a kidney to secure the money, illustrating that the objective extended beyond securing release to pushing families into extreme economic and psychological exhaustion. The coercive nature of this pattern is further reinforced by the fact that negotiations over release do not occur in any context of genuine free choice. Instead, they occur under conditions in which torture, enforced disappearance, continued detention, or even threats of death remain real and immediate possibilities. Under such circumstances, any “consent” to pay cannot be considered legally

meaningful, as it is obtained under severe coercion and within fundamentally unequal conditions.²³

The testimonies further reveal that ransom payments were not always the end of the process. In some cases, detainees or their families paid the demanded sums, only to face additional pressure, including renewed financial demands, the confiscation of property during raids or detention, or the continued risk of re-arrest. This indicates that payment did not serve as a legal closure of the case but rather as part of an open-ended system of recurring extortion.²⁴

This pattern is closely linked to torture itself, as the use of torture, the threat of it, or the display of its physical consequences on detainees served a direct bargaining function; either accelerating payment, increasing the amount demanded, or convincing families that refusal would result in the permanent loss of the victim. In this sense, ransom is not an alternative to torture but rather its financial extension.

Most importantly, this practice produced no meaningful judicial effect. Releases were carried out without written decisions, without official receipts, and without any clear legal closure of the initial grounds for detention. This shows that the entity effectively controlling entry into and exit from detention was not the court system but the faction or its affiliated network, while the judiciary, at best, played a marginal or delayed role that did not genuinely govern the deprivation of liberty.²⁵ Taken together, these elements show that ransom was not merely an incidental byproduct of specific arrests but a core function of the detention system. Personal liberty was commodified as a financial asset, with torture, enforced disappearance, and intimidation used to inflate its price. Families were coerced into liquidating their assets to secure the release of loved ones, effectively transforming detention into a systematic mechanism for economic extortion rather than a security or judicial process.²⁶

2.5. Pre-fabricated charges targeting Kurds on the basis of ethnic identity

The facts indicate that Kurdish identity in Afrin was not merely a social or cultural characteristic present in the background of violations, but was effectively transformed into a direct determinant of arrest decisions, the treatment of detainees, and the nature of the discourse directed at them. Ethnic affiliation itself thus became a ground for suspicion, punishment, and humiliation. The testimonies collected by STJ confirm that the most common accusations were not based on specific individual conduct but on standardized, pre-fabricated labels, such as purported affiliation with the YPG, Asayish,

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

communes, the DAANES, or the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). These accusations were systematically used as ready-made justifications for arrest, rather than allegations that must be supported by evidence and examined before an independent judiciary.

The gravity of this pattern becomes evident in that ethnic identity did not merely serve as a pretext for arrest but persisted during detention as a central axis of humiliation and dehumanization. Testimonies describe insults and derogatory language directed at Kurds as a collective, rather than at specific individuals, using abusive and discriminatory expressions that framed them as a “domestic enemy” or as inherently affiliated with a hostile party solely on the basis of ethnic belonging.

The evidence also shows that discrimination was not limited to language or rhetoric but extended into daily life inside detention facilities. This included prohibiting the use of the Kurdish language, as well as discriminatory treatment in practical aspects such as access to toilets and visitation conditions. This indicates that the targeting was not confined to the moment of arrest or interrogation but was embedded in the very daily structure of detention itself.

This pattern is particularly significant because a substantial share of documented cases was linked to this form of identity-based suspicion. The structural analysis indicates that 28 of 41 documented cases involved what was described as a “pre-fabricated charge” of affiliation with Kurdish entities or the former DAANES. This figure cannot be dismissed as coincidental or exceptional; rather, it serves as a quantitative indicator of the pattern’s systematic nature.²⁷

The evidence further shows that this ethnic framing was not separate from other violations but served a clear operational function within the system: it justified pre-emptive arrest, conferred internal legitimacy on torture, enabled financial extortion, and transformed the victim from an individual whose responsibility should be assessed individually into a member of a group whose mere affiliation was treated as incriminating.

This pattern cannot be separated from the broader regional context after 2018, in which military control was accompanied by the large-scale displacement of Kurdish residents and other patterns of control over property and social space. This situates identity-based targeting within detention as part of a wider policy aimed at reshaping the demographic and political landscape of Afrin, rather than as an individual bias in the language or conduct of certain actors.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that ethnic discrimination was not a peripheral by-product of a violent detention environment but a structural component of it. Kurdish

²⁷ Ibid.

identity was effectively used as a trigger for arrest, as a framework to justify violence, and as a tool to redefine relations between armed actors and the local population on the basis of exclusion and humiliation. This gives the pattern particular weight in any subsequent legal qualification concerning persecution and systematic discrimination.²⁸

2.6. Women in the detention system: dual gender-based targeting

The evidence shows that women in Afrin were not peripheral to the detention system but were incorporated into it through two interlinked forms of harm: as direct victims of arrest, torture, and degrading treatment, and as indirect instruments of pressure against husbands, sons, or other male relatives. This results in a compounded form of targeting in both its modality and impact.

Testimonies collected by STJ indicate that the detention of women was not an exceptional or rare occurrence. Rather, detention facilities included designated cells for civilian women held without legal basis or judicial orders, often in overcrowded conditions lacking privacy and adequate healthcare.

The treatment of women inside these facilities was marked by severe gendered humiliation, including insults, threats, hearing the screams of others during interrogations, and, in some cases, being brought into courtyards in their undergarments. This indicates that humiliation was not limited to breaking individual resistance but extended to the deliberate targeting of women's bodily and social dignity.²⁹

This pattern becomes even more severe when detention extends over several years through a network of successive detention facilities. Some women were transferred among four or five different detention sites over prolonged periods, during which they were subjected to beatings, humiliation, repeated interrogations, poor nutrition, cold, and deprivation, without trial and without any legal certainty about the duration or end of their detention. This effectively turns the entire experience into a prolonged form of extrajudicial punishment.

The evidence also shows that women were, at times, used as a direct means of pressure against detained men, either by arresting them to force husbands or relatives to surrender or pay ransom, or by exposing them to torture in the presence of their children, or vice versa. This transforms the family relationship itself into a space of psychological and social coercion, whose impact extends beyond the immediate victim to the family unit as a whole.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

What most clearly reveals the gendered dimension of these violations is that violence was not limited to women held in detention facilities but also extended into homes. Abuse reached women in extremely vulnerable health conditions, including those who had recently given birth, as well as infants, indicating that control was exercised not only over “suspected individuals” but also over the most physically vulnerable and least able to protect themselves. This system takes its most severe form in cases involving pregnant women and mothers. In a documented case, a woman was detained in an advanced stage of pregnancy, transferred among multiple detention facilities without clear charges or trial, then transferred to a hospital for childbirth, and returned to detention a week later with her newborn. The child spent the early months of life in a harsh detention environment lacking adequate food, care, and medical support, while the mother herself was denied any specialized care appropriate to her health condition.

The gravity of this situation lies not only in the violation of women’s rights but also in the fact that the child was born into a closed punitive system and lived from the earliest days of life under conditions of detention, including food shortages and inadequate care. This expands the scope of harm to include the child as an independent victim, rather than merely an extension of the detained mother.

Furthermore, families were often denied information about the whereabouts of detained women for prolonged periods, and visitation was either severely restricted or permitted only at very late stages. This demonstrates that gender-based targeting was not separate from enforced disappearance, extortion, or isolation, but was part of the same structural framework governing detention practices.³⁰

Taken together, these elements show that women were not targeted solely because of their social proximity to detainees, but also because their bodies, family roles, and positions of vulnerability were deliberately instrumentalized as tools of coercion, punishment, and humiliation. This confirms that the gendered dimension is not incidental but structurally embedded within the broader system of violations.

3. International Legal Framework Violated

The documented facts set out in this complaint demonstrate that the violations committed in Afrin are not isolated breaches of fundamental rights but a systematic, multi-layered attack on the very structure of international protection, whether under international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL), or international criminal law (ICL). These frameworks operate not in isolation or succession but in parallel and mutually reinforcing ways, given that the violations occurred in the context of a protracted non-international armed conflict, in an environment where armed actors exercised effective control over the population, territory, and places of

³⁰ Ibid.

detention, and where some of these acts have continued even after recent political transitions and the formal integration of factions into new state structures. Accordingly, a proper legal analysis cannot be limited to characterizing each act individually as a violation of a specific treaty provision. Rather, these acts must be assessed as part of an overarching pattern defined by scale, continuity, internal repetition, and a unified repressive function, which also brings them within the scope of international crimes, not merely isolated human rights violations. Moreover, the continuing nature of the violations, their commission by actors exercising *de facto* authority, and their occurrence in a territory subject to a complex security-military control regime mean that legal responsibility is not limited to refraining from committing the acts themselves. It extends to positive obligations of prevention, investigation, accountability, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition.

3.1. The absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The prohibition of torture holds a distinct and elevated place in the international legal order. It is not a routine treaty obligation subject to limitation, derogation, or balancing against other interests, but rather a peremptory norm of international law (*jus cogens*) from which no derogation is permitted under any circumstances, including public emergencies, armed conflict, or considerations of national security. From this perspective, any attempt to justify torture or mitigate responsibility on the basis of security or a military context is legally invalid from the outset.³¹

When the documented facts in this complaint are assessed in light of this principle, it becomes clear that the methods used inside detention facilities; prolonged suspension in painful positions, electric shocks, burning, sustained beatings with hard objects, deliberate starvation, denial of medical care, torture of relatives in the presence of detainees, and threats aimed at breaking the victim's will, forcing confessions, or extracting money, do not fall at the margins of the definition of torture but squarely within its core. These acts involve the intentional infliction of severe physical or psychological pain, are carried out by individuals exercising effective control over the victim, and are aimed at obtaining information or confessions, punishment, intimidation, or coercion, meeting the essential elements of the definition of torture under the Convention against Torture. The violations extend beyond the material acts themselves to breaches of the Convention's positive obligations to prevent torture, ensure oversight and accountability, and exclude any statements obtained under coercion. Moreover, the facts do not reveal isolated or sporadic instances of torture but rather repeated and consistent practices in both methods and functions. This elevates

³¹ Convention against Torture (CAT), art. 2(2); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), art. 4(2); Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 20.

them from the level of individual violations to that of an operational tool embedded within the detention system itself.³²

In this sense, these acts constitute violations of Articles 1, 2, and 15 of the Convention against Torture (CAT), Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). They also amount to a direct breach of Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions and of Rules 90 and 91 of customary international humanitarian law (customary IHL).³³ Given the widespread and systematic nature of these practices, they may further amount to crimes against humanity, insofar as they constitute torture committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, and to war crimes, insofar as they constitute cruel treatment in the context of a non-international armed conflict³⁴.

3.2. The prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention outside the framework of law

Personal liberty under international law is protected not merely as an individual interest but as a foundational condition for any legal system based on the rule of law. For this reason, the ICCPR's prohibition on arbitrary arrest is not merely a general principle; it is enforced through specific procedural safeguards. These safeguards include the right to be promptly informed of the reasons for arrest, the right to be brought before a judge without delay, and the right to challenge the lawfulness of the detention.³⁵ The facts presented in this complaint demonstrate a complete breakdown of this safeguards-based framework in Afrin.

Individuals were arrested at checkpoints, during return journeys, in night raids, or at places of work, without judicial warrants, without clear reasons, and without being placed in a lawful detention system subject to judicial review. Instead, they were transferred to informal or hybrid facilities that are not effectively subject to independent judicial oversight. In this context, arbitrariness is not merely a procedural deficiency but an inherent characteristic of the detention itself, as the decision to deprive individuals of liberty is made by security bodies or factional actors exercising *de facto* power, rather than by an independent legal authority. The continuation of detention for weeks or months without charges, judicial review, or access to family members or legal counsel transforms deprivation of liberty into an instrument of coercion and control, rather than a legitimate preventive measure. This violation is further aggravated when combined with other practices such as torture, extortion, or

³² Convention against Torture (CAT), arts. 2, 12, and 15; Committee against Torture, General Comment No. 2.

³³ Geneva Conventions, common art. 3; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rules 90 and 91.

³⁴ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 7(1)(f) and 8(2)(c)(i).

³⁵ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), art. 9(1)–(4); Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 35 (2014).

withholding of information, as arbitrary detention becomes the structural entry point for subsequent abuses.³⁶

Accordingly, these practices constitute a direct violation of Article 9 of the ICCPR, Article 9 of the UDHR, and Rule 99 of customary IHL. When such acts are carried out in the context of an armed conflict, by an armed actor exercising de facto authority, and in a systematic manner, they may also constitute the crime of severe deprivation of liberty, violating fundamental rules of international law and potentially falling within the scope of Article 7(1)(e) of the Rome Statute.³⁷

3.3. The absolute prohibition of enforced disappearance

Enforced disappearance is distinguished from other violations in that it is not a momentary act that ends upon its commission, but a continuing violation that persists as long as the person's fate or whereabouts remain unknown and the detaining authority refuses to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or conceals the individual from legal protection. From this perspective, the seriousness of enforced disappearance in Afrin lies not only in its character as a covert deprivation of liberty, but also in its function as a composite mechanism that removes the victim entirely from the legal sphere, prevents families from accessing the truth, obstructs accountability, and enables invisible torture and indefinite detention.³⁸

The documented facts clearly reveal the constituent elements of this violation: refusing to acknowledge the existence of detainees, providing families with contradictory or incomplete information, deliberately manipulating records or names, and transferring detainees among multiple facilities without documentation, thereby entrapping families in cycles of searching and denial. These are not merely administrative irregularities but deliberate techniques aimed at erasing individuals, both legally and in practice.

Accordingly, these acts fall squarely within the scope of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), which obligates States to prevent, criminalize, investigate, and prosecute enforced

³⁶ UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, jurisprudence; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 35.

³⁷ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), art. 9; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 99.

³⁸ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), art. 2; United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances, General Comment on the Continuous Nature of Enforced Disappearance.

disappearance and to guarantee families' right to the truth. Customary IHL Rule 98 likewise affirms this prohibition in situations of armed conflict.³⁹

From the perspective of international criminal law, these facts may amount to a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(i) of the Rome Statute when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. This is further supported by the pattern's coherence, repetition, and interconnection with other mechanisms of control, including arrest, torture, and extortion.⁴⁰

3.4. Prohibition of discrimination on the basis of ethnic identity and persecution on the grounds of belonging

The principle of non-discrimination is a cornerstone of IHRL. It prohibits not only formal and direct discrimination but also practical patterns that result in the targeting of a specific group based on identity. In the facts presented in this complaint, Kurdish identity does not appear merely as a social background characteristic of victims but rather as an operational factor influencing decisions about suspicion, arrest, and treatment in detention.⁴¹

The documented material shows the use of a pre-fabricated charge linked to the DAANES or former Kurdish entities against a large number of victims, accompanied by ethnically charged insults, a ban on speaking Kurdish in detention facilities, and discriminatory treatment in certain aspects of daily life. This indicates that the violation is not limited to deprivation of liberty or acts of torture but also includes targeting individuals based on their ethnic affiliation, transforming identity from a legally protected characteristic into a basis for punishment, stigma, and humiliation. Such conduct breaches Article 27 of the ICCPR, which guarantees minorities the right to enjoy their own culture and language, and is inconsistent with Article 20 of the same Covenant, which prohibits advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. It also engages the standards set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, which imposes positive obligations to protect such groups from discrimination and violence.⁴²

³⁹ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), arts. 1, 12, and 24; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 98.

⁴⁰ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 7(1)(i).

⁴¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), arts. 2(1) and 26; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 18 (Non-Discrimination).

⁴² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), arts. 20 and 27; Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, UN General Assembly Resolution 47/135 (1992).

When this pattern is read alongside other serious violations, including arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, and extortion, it takes on an international criminal dimension. It may amount to persecution as a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute,⁴³ provided the targeting is not purely individual but is linked to the victim's membership in a particular group and is accompanied by a grave deprivation of other fundamental rights.

3.5. Special protection of women and children

The facts demonstrate that women and children were not incidental or secondary victims within this system but were affected in a distinct and compounded manner, whether as women directly detained and subjected to degrading and inhuman conditions, as instruments of pressure against husbands and sons, or as children directly exposed to the same punitive environment. In this context, the general prohibitions on torture and arbitrary detention are insufficient on their own. They must be read alongside the specific protective rules established under international law for these categories, recognizing their particular vulnerability and the heightened duty of care owed to them.⁴⁴

The detention of a pregnant woman, followed by childbirth within an inhuman detention system, and the months-long confinement of her infant in conditions lacking adequate care, nutrition, and basic health standards, cannot be regarded as a mere failure of detention management. Rather, it constitutes a serious breach of specific obligations relating to the protection of women during pregnancy and the postnatal period, the best interests of the child, and the child's rights to life, development, and care.⁴⁵

Similarly, the conditions under which women are detained in inadequate facilities, marked by a lack of privacy and the absence of appropriate medical care, contravene customary rules requiring the separation of women from men and the provision of treatment tailored to their specific needs.⁴⁶ Accordingly, these facts constitute violations of Article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Rules 119 and 120 of customary IHL, and Articles 6 and 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), particularly when

⁴³ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 7(1)(h).

⁴⁴ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), art. 12; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), art. 3; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 24.

⁴⁵ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), art. 12; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), art. 6; Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 (Best Interests of the Child).

⁴⁶ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rules 119 and 120.

a child is detained or effectively raised in an inhuman detention environment.⁴⁷ This special protection is not merely ancillary to the general prohibition of ill-treatment; it constitutes an independent legal layer that increases the gravity of the violation when it affects a pregnant woman, a mother, or an infant. In such cases, the harm extends beyond the direct victim to the most vulnerable groups, who are entitled to the highest degree of protection under international law.⁴⁸

3.6. Prohibition of financial extortion and ransom-based detention

The facts demonstrate that deprivation of liberty in Afrin was not always aimed solely at interrogation or political subjugation. In a significant number of cases, it was transformed into a systematic mechanism of financial extortion. The release of detainees was made conditional on payment of sums ranging from modest amounts to tens of thousands of US dollars. This distinction is crucial from a legal standpoint, as the issue does not concern mere corruption or isolated acts of bribery within detention settings. Rather, it reflects the transformation of personal liberty itself into a negotiable commodity and the exploitation of suffering and uncertainty over a victim's fate as a means of extracting money from families.⁴⁹

This means that detention was no longer merely a violation of the right to liberty but, in many cases, amounted to hostage-taking or ransom-based detention. Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions expressly prohibits the taking of hostages, and customary IHL Rule 96 reinforces this prohibition in all armed conflicts.⁵⁰ When a person is unlawfully detained, and their release is conditioned on payment of money through intermediaries or faction-linked actors, without any judicial order or legal process, this pattern engages both Article 9 of the ICCPR and the international prohibition on hostage-taking.⁵¹

The gravity of this practice is further heightened when ransom demands are accompanied by torture, threats, or enforced disappearance to intensify pressure on families and accelerate payment, thereby linking extortion directly to the mechanics of ill-treatment rather than treating it as a separate phenomenon.⁵² The wide variation in sums demanded and the resort to selling assets, gold, or property to meet these demands further reveal an internal economic logic within the detention system itself.

⁴⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), arts. 6 and 37; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), art. 12.

⁴⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), art. 3; Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 24.

⁴⁹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), art. 9; UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, principles and jurisprudence.

⁵⁰ Geneva Conventions, common art. 3; International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Study, Rule 96.

⁵¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), art. 9; Geneva Conventions.

⁵² Convention against Torture (CAT), art. 1; Committee against Torture, General Comment No. 2.

This reinforces its characterization as a structured mechanism of financial exploitation, layered onto arbitrary deprivation of liberty and amplifying its harm.

3.7. State obligations of prevention, investigation, accountability, and non-recurrence

International responsibility is not limited to refraining from direct violations; it also encompasses the State's duty to adopt effective measures to prevent serious abuses, investigate them, hold perpetrators accountable, ensure effective remedies for victims, and implement institutional safeguards to prevent recurrence⁵³. This dimension is particularly significant in the present case, as the facts indicate not only the continuation of violations but also the reintegration of some implicated actors or commanders into newly formed official structures. Such developments transform failures in accountability into a reinforcement of impunity, rather than its dismantling.⁵⁴

The Human Rights Committee has confirmed in its General Comment No. 31 that a State's failure to investigate and prosecute serious violations may itself constitute an independent breach of the ICCPR.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the appointment or retention of individuals for whom there are reasonable grounds to believe they were involved in serious violations, whether in official or security positions, without independent investigations or interim measures such as suspension or removal pending review, cannot be treated as a mere administrative shortcoming. Rather, it is part of a broader legal and political environment that enables recurrence, signals protection to perpetrators, and conveys abandonment to victims. This dimension carries particular weight in the present case, as the evidence indicates that violations did not cease with the change in political authority but continued within a restructured institutional framework that includes previously implicated actors or integrated armed groups. This demonstrates that the issue is not confined to past conduct but concerns an ongoing legal situation. Accordingly, the obligations of prevention, investigation, accountability, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence are immediate and continuing duties. Failure to comply with them results in the persistence of international responsibility rather than its termination.⁵⁶

3.8. The continuing nature of the violations and its legal implications

One of the key findings of this complaint is that the violations it documents do not belong to a closed past that can be treated merely as historical evidence. Rather, they form part of an ongoing pattern that continues to produce legal and human consequences to the present day. This is not a political characterization but one with

⁵³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), arts. 2(1) and 2(3).

⁵⁴ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 31, paras. 15–18.

⁵⁵ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 31.

⁵⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), art. 2; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 31.

direct legal significance. The continued deprivation of liberty, the continued uncertainty among families about the fate of their relatives, the ongoing impunity, and the persistence of the same structural apparatus within newly formed institutions all indicate that relevant international obligations remain engaged and are subject to immediate application.⁵⁷

The testimonies collected in 2025, which confirm that arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, and extortion continued after the fall of the Assad regime, demonstrate that the repressive apparatus was not dismantled, but rather preserved, repurposed, or incorporated into new governing structures that include individuals previously implicated in such violations. In this context, characterizing these violations as “ongoing” rather than merely “historical” carries significant legal implications for the work of the UN Special Procedures. It shifts the matter from retrospective monitoring to one requiring urgent intervention, and transforms the response from a purely moral or political concern into a legal obligation to engage with the authorities currently exercising power and to demand immediate measures of disclosure, release, investigation, suspension from office, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Accordingly, the continuing nature of the violations not only increases their gravity but also provides a strong legal basis for urgent international action, particularly where the violations remain ongoing, or their consequences have yet to be remedied.

From the Perspective of Syrian Legislation

The documented violations constitute a clear and serious breach of the provisions of the 2025 Syrian Constitutional Declaration and of the applicable Syrian legislation that remains in force under it. Article 18 of the Constitutional Declaration affirms that,

“1. The State shall protect human dignity and the sanctity of the body and shall prohibit enforced disappearance and physical and moral torture. Torture crimes shall not be subject to a statute of limitations.

2. Except in the case of a flagrante delicto, no person may be arrested, detained, or have his freedom restricted except by a judicial decision.” Article 10 further enshrines the principle of equality and non-discrimination.

However, field testimonies demonstrate a complete collapse of these guarantees in areas under the control of the SNA factions.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 31; Committee on Enforced Disappearances, General Comment on the Continuous Nature of Enforced Disappearance.

⁵⁸ Syrian Arab Republic, Constitutional Declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic (2025), <https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/2025.03.13%20-%20Constitutional%20declaration%20%28English%29.pdf> (Last accessed 12 May 2026).

From a Criminal Law Perspective under Syrian Legislation

Syrian legislation does not expressly define “enforced disappearance” as an autonomous offense incorporating the internationally recognized legal elements set out in the ICPPED. Nevertheless, Syrian law contains several stringent provisions that, in substance, address elements of this violation. Article 358 prohibits arrest or detention without a lawful judicial warrant and penalizes prison officials who accept the detention of a person in the absence of such a warrant. Articles 555–556 criminalize unlawful deprivation of liberty, with aggravated penalties when the deprivation exceeds one month or is accompanied by torture. Article 391 criminalizes the use of force or violence against detainees. Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2013 criminalizes kidnapping for ransom and punishes it with life imprisonment with hard labor. Law No. 16 of 2022 expressly criminalizes torture, prohibits reliance on confessions obtained under torture, and requires compensation for victims. Article 425 of the Code of Criminal Procedure further obligates the public prosecutor to proceed immediately to any place of unlawful detention and order the release of the detainee. According to documented cases, this measure has not been implemented in practice.⁵⁹ Moreover, statements attributed to faction members referring to the “spoils of the liberation of Afrin” and asserting that “Kurds should not live” reveal a mindset that substitutes de facto authority for state authority and openly rejects compliance with any legal framework. Such statements amount to an implicit acknowledgment of violations of both constitutional and criminal law provisions, reinforcing the conclusion that the applicable domestic legal order has been systematically disregarded.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Immediate and Urgent Measures

- Issue urgent joint communications to the Syrian transitional government and Türkiye, calling for the immediate cessation of all arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances in Afrin.
- Demand the immediate release of all individuals held in unofficial detention facilities and ensure that all places of detention are placed under independent judicial oversight, with full access granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- Call for the establishment of an independent national register of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons, and guarantee families’ right to know the fate and whereabouts of their relatives in accordance with Article 17 of the ICPPED.
- Urge Syria to accede to the ICPPED and to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

⁵⁹ Syrian Penal Code, arts. 358, 391, and 555–556; Legislative Decree No. 20 of 2013; Law No. 16 of 2022; Syrian Code of Criminal Procedure, art. 425.

4.2. Monitoring and Oversight Measures

- Include documented facts in periodic reports as part of a systematic, ongoing pattern rather than isolated incidents, explicitly noting their continuation after the change in authority.
- Call for the opening of independent investigations that include all armed groups integrated into the Ministry of Defence, without exception or exemption.
- Issue a joint appeal from relevant Special Rapporteurs to amend Legislative Decree No. 20 on the Transitional Justice Commission's authority so that it covers violations committed by all parties, not solely those of the former regime.
- Monitor the translation of the transitional government's commitments before the Human Rights Council into concrete, measurable actions on the ground in Afrin.

4.3. Accountability Measures

- Refer the documented facts to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the COI-Syria as potential evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes, and support efforts to ensure these bodies have the necessary mandate and access to operate in Syria.
- Send urgent communications to Türkiye, the State exercising effective control on the ground, reminding it of its obligations under IHL, irrespective of changes in the Syrian governmental structure.
- Call on the transitional government to establish an independent reparations fund for victims of torture, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance.

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.