



# **A GLANCE AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SYRIA**

## **IN THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

## Report Summary

### A Glance at the Human Rights Situation in Syria

#### In Light of the Universal Periodic Review

On January 24, 2022, Syria's human rights file was subjected to evaluation and review for the third time before the Human Rights Council, as part of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the universal periodic review mechanism. During the session, the government received 287 recommendations from 91 member states of the Council aiming at improving the human rights situation within it. The majority of the recommendations submitted during the session have focused on the widespread cases of enforced disappearance across Syria, the lack of humanitarian aid reaching citizens in need, the continuation of military attacks on civilian infrastructure and the ensuing physical damage, not to mention the growing phenomenon of child recruitment and the deterioration of the economic and social situation of citizens. On the other hand, the Syrian government has denied some of these recommendations, basing its claims on a number of factors that contributed to the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country, including the unilateral coercive economic measures imposed by the major powers, as well as the exacerbation of terrorism and the military occupation of part of its territory by a multi-power led by Turkey, Israel and the United States of America, according to the description of the Syrian delegation. On January 28, 2022, Syria's report was approved, and it indicated that it will study 276 out of 287 recommendations, and take note of the remaining 11.

The Syrian government accepted 158 out of 232 recommendations and suspended 74 others in its second periodic review in November 2016. However, during its presentation of human rights progress during the period from November 2016 to January 2022, it ignored many facts that confirm the continuation of violations and war crimes inside Syrian territory. Maat's estimates indicate that more than 350,290 people have been killed, including 27,827 women and 29,700 children, since the beginning of the Syrian conflict until the end of 2021, with 22,964 people during the period between

January 2017 to December 2021. This comes in parallel with the arrest of more than 149,862 people since the beginning of the Syrian conflict until the end of 2021, including 26,133 people from January 2017 to November 2021, of whom about 1,603 citizens were killed as a result of systematic torture in detention centers. In the meanwhile, 102,657 people have reportedly disappeared, including 2,405 children and 5,801 women, since the beginning of the conflict until the end of 2021.

In this way, all parties to the conflict committed 1,421 violations of media freedoms from the beginning of the conflict until the end of December 2021. These violations varied between killing, arresting and arbitrarily detaining media professionals, not to mention assaulting them while doing their work. The targeting of homes and civilian service infrastructure by military operations continued resulting in a large-scale destruction of the Syrian civil infrastructure, especially educational and medical buildings. More than 1,593 educational buildings and more than 602 medical and health care facilities were destroyed during the conflict period and until the end of 2021. However, the phenomenon of demographic change, which some countries have indirectly touched upon during the review session, has continued. This phenomenon is associated with various goals, topped by the attempts to eliminate ethnic and religious minorities. Moreover, the siege policies imposed on many Syrian areas continued to serve as a collective punishment for them for their behavior in opposition to the militarily dominant parties, in addition to the continuation of unilateral economic sanctions imposed on Syria by the major countries. Therefore, all of the above-mentioned factors have severely undermined the economic and social rights of citizens, which resulted in the suffering of 12.4 million Syrian citizens from malnutrition.

In this context, children, women, the disabled, as well as the internally displaced, remain the most vulnerable groups in the conflict. Armed militias and terrorist groups continue to recruit children in armed conflicts. On the other hand, women and children still suffer from systematic violence and reported cases of early marriage. Many internally displaced persons and refugees face unspeakable

humanitarian conditions in the various camps in which they reside, in light of absence of the roles for the international community and specialized human rights organizations.

In the midst of the Syrian government's universal periodic review process, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights is working to draw attention to the human rights crisis in Syria through its follow-up to the Syrian human rights file in the period between the second and third periodic review of the Syrian government which extends between November 2016 to January 2022, in light of the recommendations and observations that were discussed in the third universal periodic review session. Therefore, this study comes to assess the human rights situation in the period between the second and third review of Syria, and based on the findings of the study, Maat recommends all parties to the conflict of the following:-

#### **The Syrian Government:**

- To consider joining international treaties to which it is not yet a party, such as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.
- To establish an internal independent human rights institution that closely monitors the human rights situation.
- To allow the independent UN Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian situation to enter the Syrian territory and carry out its work.
- To submit various reports to the various treaty committees, especially the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, while being subjected to the continuous periodic review in light of these committees.
- To accept pending visit requests of the Special Rapporteurs to the Syrian territories, and show intention to cooperate with them on a larger scale.

- To stop targeting civilian areas with indiscriminate military attacks, especially those carried out with internationally prohibited weapons.
- To immediately disclose the fate of the missing and forcibly disappeared during the Syrian conflict, with the preparation of a list that includes their names.
- To benefit from previous international experiences in which enforced disappearances occurred on a large scale during conflicts, such as the historical incidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- To stop the various arbitrary arrests carried out by the Syrian government against opposition figures who dare to speak against the government, especially if this person represents a threat to President Bashar al-Assad, in a clear indication that any attempt to undermine the authority of the president will severely punished.
- The security forces must put an end to all practices of torture carried out systematically in detention centers, and prosecute all perpetrators.
- To respect freedom of opinion and expression and promote the rights of human rights defenders, while allowing peaceful assemblies and prohibit dealing with them by brute force.
- To stop targeting medical buildings with indiscriminate military attacks, and to rehabilitate what was destroyed during the past years of conflict.
- To ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians from all agencies as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations that work in this context without condition or restriction.
- To end the economic blockade imposed by the Syrian government to collectively punish civilians.
- To stop bombing the infrastructure that provides water and sanitation services to citizens, in addition to ensuring all citizens' access to water.
- To stop targeting various educational buildings with military attacks, developing an urgent plan to provide services in educational buildings suffering from lack of services such as electricity and water, and finding a solution to the problem of children who are still lacking access to basic education.

- To stop the confiscation of the property of the opposition, especially residential units, according to baseless laws.
- To put an end to the ongoing recruitment of children, in addition to allowing survivors to get access to rehabilitation programs so that they can rejoin society.
- To promote the situation of children in the various refugee and displaced camps, as well as ensuring access to medical and educational services.
- To combat violence against women, and put an end to human trafficking.
- To work to create a peaceful environment guaranteeing the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

### **Turkey and its affiliated armed factions in northern Syria:**

To hold accountable all those involved in the killing of civilians during military operations in northeastern Syria.

To stop targeting civilian facilities with indiscriminate and arbitrary military attacks.

To stop the enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests carried out by the armed factions of the Turkish government in northern Syria with the aim of obtaining money from the families of the kidnapped or forcing them to accept the process of demographic change and Turkification.

To stop the practice of torture in places of detention affiliated with the Turkish-backed armed factions, especially in Al-Uqab prisons, Idlib Central Prison and Al-Kahf.

The Turkish government must stop lowering the water level of the Euphrates River by controlling the various dams, which directly undermines the water rights of people and affects the lives of citizens and indirectly threatens of food insecurity.

To stop weaponizing water in political conflicts, whether through targeting water infrastructure with militarily operations or by cutting off water, especially from the Allouk station in northeastern Syria.

To stop all practices of demographic change carried out by the Turkish-backed armed factions.

To stop the recruitment of children by the Turkish-backed armed factions in northern Syria.

To put an end to the trafficking of girls and women by the Turkish-backed armed factions across the Turkish border with Syria, under the watch of Turkish government.

### **Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham:**

- To stop targeting civilians with direct military attacks.
- To stop arresting or forcibly disappearing opposing figures or whoever dares to talk about the violations committed by the government, with the need to reveal the fate of 2,000 forcibly disappeared persons.
- To stop the systematic torture in the state's prisons, especially the secret ones.
- Stop targeting media professionals and journalists with arbitrary arrests aimed at silencing their mouths so that they remain silent in the face of human rights crimes committed by the state in its places of control.
- To stop the recruitment of children in the context of armed conflict.

### **The Russian, Iranian, and the Israeli occupation government:**

- To stop targeting Syrian territory with various military attacks, especially those carried out against civilian targets, in violation of many international legal rules.

### **Western countries and the United States of America**

- To stop the use of unilateral coercive measures imposed against Syria due to their direct impacts on civilians, as it undermines their economic rights and affect them directly.
- To stop using the veto power in the context of the Syrian conflict, which would negatively impact the human rights situation in many issues, especially with regard to the delivery of medical equipment and foodstuffs through the crossings.

### **The international bodies and organizations:**

- The need to follow up on the fate of 8,648 people, including 319 children and 255 women, who are still subject to enforced disappearance at the hands of ISIS despite its collapse.
- The need to continue providing humanitarian aid to civilians and to overcome all relevant logistical challenges.
- The necessity of providing education for children in the various Syrian refugee and displacement camps.
- The need for relief organizations to assume their responsibility in preparing the Syrian refugee and displaced camps in order to address the manifestations of extreme climatic changes.