

CAPTIVE WOMEN IN THE PRISONS OF SYRIA

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FEBRUARY 2019



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The women and children are the ones that have suffered the most, due to the crises that increasingly became chronic in all aspects of life in Syria.



Introduction

Wars that threaten human life and nature by definition lead to deaths, injuries, mass migration movements and collapse of society as a final result. The recent events in Syria represent the most tragic example in this respect. Disproportionate uses of force by the Syrian government against the civil commotion, which started with peaceful protests in March 2011, initially provoked the war and then caused the loss of hundred of thousands of lives and the displacement of millions of people. The intervention of international actors in the region, which is already in chaos, also intensified the current problems in Syria.

The women and children are the ones that have suffered the most, due to the crises that increasingly became chronic in all aspects of life in Syria, in terms of humanity, politics and economy. Within an environment in a country where human values, as well as all legal rules were disregarded entirely, violations, violence and rape against women expanded the magnitude of social collapse. Moreover, the suffering of millions of vulnerable women that died, injured, prisoned or became refugees, even if they did not have any active role in the war, inflicted deep and incurable wounds in the Syrian community. Saving the Syrian women and children from death does not seem sufficient enough for them to live an honorable and peaceful life. The tragic events in the past and the condition of thousands of women that are still doomed to live as captives, demonstrate sadly that no one is safe in the country.

This report narrates the conditions and experiences of the women that are detained in the Syrian prisons unlawfully.

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METHODOLOGY

One of the most negative consequences of the warfare in Syria is the challenges related to acquiring reliable information from the field. The primary data used to prepare this report were compiled by means of studying reports prepared by various human rights organizations. Among these, the field reports and observations of the following organizations have considerable weight:

- *United Nations Human Rights Council*
- *Human Rights Watch*
- *Amnesty International*
- *Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)*
- *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)*
- *Humanitarian and Social Research Center (INSAMER)*
- *Human Rights and Justice Movement (iHAK)*
- *IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation*

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killed in Syria.

Besides written materials, the interviews with the women that were detained in Syrian prisons and then released, also constitute important data. Much information was generated based on their statements. These interviews were given on a volunteer basis. The events told by the people who gave their consent for the interviews done during this field study were documented and recorded by means of voice recording and video shooting. The names of the interviewees have been changed and used in the reports accordingly, to ensure both their safety and the safety of their relatives living in Syria.

The interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings with previously captive women living in Syria and Turkey. The women were asked open ended questions and their responses and the case studies were consolidated with the literature reviews in psychology, political science and human rights and incorporated into this study as data.

CURRENT SITUATION AND HUMAN DIMENSION IN SYRIA

Peaceful demonstrations, that commenced in Syria during the spread of “The Arab Spring” action in Middle East in 2011, degenerated into a civil war upon increased violence inflicted by the Bashar al-Assad regime despite calls for reform from the international arena. Some countries and groups pursuing their own priorities and agendas took sides in the conflicts which deepened the crisis and led the war to become chronic.

Although there are complex alliances in flux since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, we can refer to three major blocs as of the current stage: The first major bloc is the bloc by the

Assad regime and its supporters Russia and Iran. This bloc has control of 60% of the country. The second major bloc was the bloc that was implemented under the leadership of USA since 2014 in the name of fight against ISIS, and led today by PYD/YPG as an extension of PKK in Syria. This block holds approximately 30% of the country. The third major bloc involves the regions under the control of Turkey and opposition groups that fall under Free Syrian Army (FSA) and this bloc represents approximately a 10% fraction of the country.



Some countries and groups pursuing their own priorities and agendas took sides in the conflicts which deepened the crisis and led the war to become chronic.



Despite several meetings between the representatives of the regime and the opposition in Geneva to bring a resolution to the war since 2012, no significant development could be attained. A similar peace process was initiated in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan, between Turkey, Russia, Iran and the opponents but this also could

not result in a radical outcome so far. Even though Turkey pursued a common diplomatic process with Russia and Iran during the summits in Astana, it dissociates from them with respect to the schemes about the future of the Assad regime. Following the call made after the quadrilateral summit (Turkey, Russia, France, Germany) held with the participation of major European countries in Istanbul on October 27, 2018, it is expected that the relevant committee will assemble to draft the constitution in 2019.

To put in numeric figures the human and pecuniary losses of the war that steal not only today but also the future of the country; approximately 450,000 civilians were killed in Syria since the beginning of the war.¹ More than 6 million Syrians were displaced in the country and more than 5 million people had to migrate outside of the country due to security concerns. Statistics derived from several studies reveal that 75% of the Syrians who became refugees are women and children. Based on UN data, it is estimated that there are still 540,000 people living in the regions under siege as of June 2017.² On the other hand, it is identified that there are currently more than 13.1 million people and 5.3 million children in need of help in Syria.³

85% of deaths in Syria are a direct consequence of the war and the remaining %15 resulted from the conditions such as famine, disease etc. due to the crisis situation in the region. It was highlighted that 77% deaths out of the 85% were directly related to the mortality rate of civilians living in the war territory and 8% was comprised of people who were displaced in the country. Women and children constitute the majority of people who lost their lives under circumstances such as famine, disease or deprivation led by the war.⁴

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VIOLETION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW IN SYRIA

The *UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry* published numerous reports and press releases up to the present day regarding the violation of rights in Syria.⁵ Several international organizations such as Amnesty International and International

Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) also prepared various reports during eight years of warfare. Considering these reports and in conclusion of one-to-one interviews with the victims in Syria, it is evident that Syrian people were subjected to all kinds of acts prohibited under international treaties during the war and under imprisonment.⁶

The violations during the Syrian civil war are considered to be “war crimes” due to breach of common Article 3 of Geneva Convention⁷ and its 2nd. Supplementary Protocol dated 1977 as well as La Haye Convention dated 1954 and “crimes against humanity” due to breach of Article 7 of ICC (International Criminal Court) Rome Statute.⁸

International laws of war are regulated generally through Geneva Conventions (1949) and its Supplementary Protocols (1977) and La Haye Conventions (1899 and 1907). These conventions generally regulate armed conflicts between countries and have an international impact, in a sense. Common Article 3 of four separate Geneva Conventions stipulates the regulations with respect to the protection of civilians during conflicts which have various definitions such as “civil war” or “riot” and are considered not to have an international impact. Additionally, Supplementary Protocol No. 2 dated 1977 also addresses the aforementioned matter.⁹

On the other hand, “Crimes Against Humanity” are defined as “acts including widespread and systematic attacks against a civil population” in article 7 of Rome Statute which is the constituent document of International Criminal Court (ICC). Acts of crimes against humanity include homicide, rape, exile, mass killing, torture, enforced disappearance of people, unlawful imprisonment in violation of international rules of law and deliberate aggravation of living conditions.¹⁰

Despite the fact that armed conflicts in a country involving state and non-state actors are defined as “*non-international armed conflicts*” in terms of war laws, there is no detailed description in the relevant conventions. Taking Syria specifically into consideration, where conflicts involve multiple actors, it is a crystal clear fact that these concepts are open to dispute. Therefore, the conflict in Syria was defined as a “civil war”, although the warfare of eight years can be subject to different descriptions due to the intervention of several countries and groups and its widespread impact.

Soldiers of the regime, intelligence agency and Shabiha militia are the actors that commit crimes against humanity and numerous violations, within the scope of war crimes during the civil war in Syria since 2011. Certain terrorist organizations and opposition groups in the region, the extensions of ISIS and PKK in Syria in particular, also engage in activities contrary to international laws.¹¹

The world publicly witnessed countless violations of rights in Syria since the very beginning. People demonstrating peacefully with political and economic concerns suffered from the regime’s suppression of demonstrations through violence. The demands that can be considered as part of freedom of opinion and expression pursuant to article 18 and 19¹² of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were suppressed murderously. Homicides¹³, arbitrary detentions¹⁴, torture and inhuman conduct¹⁵ by the regime constitutes the clear violation of people’s fundamental rights such as life and freedom, who attended demonstrations. There are tens of reports prepared by Syrian human rights organizations about these incidents.¹⁴

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International laws of war are regulated generally through Geneva Conventions (1949) and its Supplementary Protocols (1977) and La Haye Conventions (1899 and 1907).

According to the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, people without any active role in the conflicts, including members of armed forces who laid down their arms, and people who cannot combat due to factors such as disease, injury, arrest, should be treated humanly under all circumstances regardless of any criteria such as race, religion and belief, gender etc. Offenses against the lives and physical integrity of aforementioned people, mutilation, all types of torture and persecution, abduction, taking hostage, degrading and dishonorable treatment, convictions made without a court that satisfies legal assurances deemed indispensable by civilized nations and implementation of such convictions are absolutely forbidden.

People who were detained and then released by the regime forces described in detail how they were subjected to violation of their rights in every way. As a consequence, the addresses indicated by the witnesses and the treatment inflicted there legally constitute important pieces of evidence for the lawsuits to be filed against the regime. Another important problem is that there are many detainees who disappeared without any further sight or sound of them. The regime does not share any information about the disappearances, and people investigating their missing relatives are hindered under the threats of the regime as well.

Enforced disappearance or abduction is one of the major violations in Syria. 95,056 people reported to be missing, according to the figures published by international organizations.¹⁷ It is stipulated in the “International Convention for Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance” of United Nations that no one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance.¹⁸

One of the most dramatic developments of “enforced disappearances” was from a defect military police with code name “Cesar”, who photographed cases of criminal offenses as a crime scene officer in Syria for 13 years, and delivered 55,000 photographs of 11,000 people in January 2014. The authenticity of the photographs were confirmed upon expert examinations which revealed that 11,000 people including women and children were murdered by means of several methods such as systematic torture, and starvation.¹⁹

The use of weapons and bombs by the Syrian regime against their own people constitutes one of the main violations in terms of war crimes. Cluster munitions which contain other explosives the size of a grenade to widen the impact have been used in Syria since 2012. More than 90 countries, except Syria and Russia, signed The Convention on Cluster Munitions in Oslo in 2008.

The barrel bombs, which were made by filling petroleum barrels and cooking vessels with glass shards, nails and explosives up to 1000 kilograms, were dropped by the regime in places densely populated by civilians such as schools, hospitals and market places. According to the reports of Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the regime declared that they killed 12,179 people with 5150 barrel bombs between 2012 and 2015 and 96% of casualties were civilians.²⁰

Chemical weapons causing instantaneous and drastic killing are prohibited by international law in the strongest of terms. The Assad regime proclaimed in 2012 that they had chemical and biological weapons but they would never use them as long as there was no foreign intervention. This is because they are a party to the “Geneva Protocol for the Pro-



12,179 people were killed with 5150 barrel bombs between 2012 and 2015 and 96% of casualties were civilians.



hibition of Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare” that was enacted in 1928 and the regime is forbidden to use such weapons. Moreover, the regime in Syria also signed on September 14, 2013 “Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction” dated 1992.²¹

During the autopsies conducted following the attack in Saraqib in 2013, *sarin gas* was detected in the blood of the deceased, which is included in the prohibited weapons list of UN as a kind of chemical weapon. The report presented to UN Security Council after the observations by UN confirms the use of chemical weapons and the report explains that “most probably” the Ba’ath Party was responsible for the attack.²²

As per articles 7, 10 and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is equal under the law and when incriminating a person, they should be judged in a public trial by unbiased and independent courts, allowing the defense of him/herself. While the Syrian judicial system already had structural defects, the judgement of civilians in military courts continued since the Hafez al-Assad period on the grounds of “threatening the national security”. People judged at military courts could not benefit from several basic rights, pursuant to “Governmental Decree no.109”. To list a few of these deprived rights include the right to an attorney, right of the detainee to see their family and attorney, the requirement of starting interrogation within 24 hours of detention. Due to secret trials, information about the fate of the judged could only be obtained after the sentence of the court was passed but sometimes their relatives could not get any information at all.²³

VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN IN SYRIA

Women suffer from various rights violation during armed conflicts in different parts of the world, despite the regulations for protection of civilians under international law. During the period between the years 1992 and 1995, thousands of Bosnian women were prisoned, inflicted physical and psychological torture and raped by Serbian soldiers.²⁴ Israel imprisoned more than 10,000 Palestinian women during the last 50 years and as of 2019, 52 women are still held in Israeli prisons.²⁵ 2,100²⁶ women in Egypt and more than 1,400 women²⁷ in Iraq are still in prisons- for being wives of ISIS members. The Chinese government held at least 2,500 Uyghur women captive and put in places called “training camps”.

Women suffer from various rights violation during armed conflicts in different parts of the world, despite the regulations for protection of civilians under international law.

22,823 civilian women were killed during a 5-year period between March 2011 and November 2016.

Instances of physical, psychological and especially sexual violence, which is used as a kind of war weapon by way of intending to insult people's identities, are regularly experienced in Syria. Cases of all types of violation happen during the raids by the forces of the regime and - most frequently - in prisons.

The resolution of UN Security Council (UNSC) no.1325, issued in 2000, regarding the actions of sexual violence that fall under the scope of both crimes against humanity and war crimes under international law, calls for the protection of women during conflicts and emphasizes the active participation of women in the resolution of conflicts.²⁸ The resolutions of the UNSC with numbers 1820, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122 in the following years also address the protection of women and prevention of sexual violence.²⁹

The alleged grounds for detention and imprisonment of women are based on completely unlawful reasons. Some of the captive women in Syria were detained on the grounds of taking part in peaceful demonstrations at any given time, in defiance of their rights to congregate and demonstrate. Another group of women were detained in order to put pressure on someone whose family members support the opposition or suspected to support anti-regime groups. A third group of women is comprised of paramedics. These women are health officers who were also accused to provide medical assistance to the opponents in any way.

The first reason given for the detention of women is on the contrary to the practices of universal law regulating the right to demonstrate and also contradicts with the current laws in Syria. The situation of women who were detained on the grounds of having a family member in support of the opponents complies with neither any international legal rule nor the principle of "individual criminal responsibility" stipulated in the laws of Syria in force. Moreover, the detention of health personnel is contrary to Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Protocol of Geneva Convention dated 1977 regulating "the conditions of medical staff under civil war". Article 9 refers to the requirement of protection for medical personnel and Article 10 stipulates that personnel shall not be penalized provided that medical ethics is observed, regardless of who uses medical intervention during warfare.

In brief, just as almost all of aforementioned international legal rules were breached in Bosnia, Iraq, Palestine and East Turkistan in the past, they are violated blatantly in Syria today as well. Women in particular became the number one target of the regime in Syria for the sake of silencing opposing voices in the country. Captivity, violence and rape against women were used as a weapon of war. Both field studies and interviews with previously imprisoned women revealed that thousands of women were victimized in various ways in Syria by the forces of the regime and several actors in the region supporting the regime.

For instance, 22,823 civilian women were killed during a 5-year period between March 2011 and November 2016. 12,164 of these women killed were adults above the age of 18 and the remaining 10,659 were girls under the age of 18.³⁰ According to the research conducted in 2015, 2,615 of 21,179 people killed were women. The Syrian regime is responsible for 15,748 of these deaths, 1,957 being women. It is known that 1,546 of these deceased were killed by means of torture.³¹ Based on a study done in 2016, 2,562 out of 16,913 killed by Syrian regime and other actors in the region were women. The Syrian regime is responsible for 8,736 of these massacred 1,237 being women and Russia is re-

1,536 out of 10,204 civilians slaughtered in Syria in 2017 comprise of women that have nothing to do with war.

sponsible for killing of 3,967 people out of which 684 were women.³² 1,536 out of 10,204 civilians slaughtered in Syria in 2017 comprise of women that had nothing to do with war. 4,148 of the deceased (of which 591 were women) were killed by Syrian regime and 1,436 (of which 284 were women) were killed by Russia. The number of civilians massacred in December of the same year is 569. 285 of them, 34 being women, were killed by the Syrian regime. It is known that the death of 211 people killed in 2017 were caused by infliction of tortures upon them.³³

A special report issued for International Women's Day mentions that it is the Syrian regime and their allies who were responsible for 91% of the 23,502 women killed during the first 6 years of war. It is known that 65% of these women were killed as a result of bombings in Syria.³⁴

The losses of war increase exponentially each day. A dramatic example in this respect can be that 976 people were killed by torture just in 2018.³⁵ It is also known that 1,361 women were killed by bombings and due to conflicts in the same year.³⁶ Additional research in 2018 stated that 13,084 out of 111,330 people which were killed by conflicting groups in Syria consisted of women.³⁷

Current violation of rights in Syria is not limited to these. Immediately after the eruption of anti-government protests against the Syrian regime in March 2011, Syrian authorities started mass arrests. According to the research, the number of people arrested since 2011 is approximately 117,000.³⁸ It is estimated that at least one tenth of these i.e. more than 11,000 people are captive women.³⁹

Many people lost their lives in detention during the arrests executed since 2011. For instance, it was noted that only in the year 2012, 865 people under arrest were killed by being exposed to violence.⁴⁰ The figure in this respect is 490, for the year 2013.⁴¹ In 2014, a dramatic increase occurred in the number of people who lost their lives in detention. During that year, 2,197 people died in detention, which indicates an increase of over 360%.⁴² According to Amnesty International, 13,000 prisoners were executed by hanging in Saydnaya Prison in the vicinity of Damascus.⁴³ According to the data obtained from SOHR, 30,000 people died in Saydnaya. The same research claims that more than 100,000 people who were arrested by Syrian regime died by being exposed to torture since March 2011.⁴⁴ The figures contain no information about execution of women, therefore the death rate of women captives could not be confirmed.

CAPTIVE WOMEN

It is reported by UN bodies and non-governmental organizations that violence and abuse inflicted on women are used as a war weapon in Syria, where the war has come into its 8th year. In Syria, male relatives of women and girls who were detained for being an opponent were killed in front of their eyes and many women and girls were raped and then immediately murdered since they witnessed the aforementioned executions.⁴⁵ Despite the fact that majority of detainees arrested by the Syrian forces between 2011-2017 were men older than 15 years of age, thousand of women and girls were also imprisoned in-

The majority of the captive women in Syrian prisons are aged between 18-45.

It is considered a valid reason to imprison thousands of women in Syria as their husbands or relatives are opponents to the regime.

cluding female lawyers and reporters expressing their anti-government opinions. The arrested female relatives of men, who were accused of supporting the opponents or to being a member of armed groups, were subjected to various exploitations during their detention.

The majority of the victims include women aged between 18-45. However, some studies documented that children younger than 9 years of age and elderly women were also exposed to all kinds of violations and humiliation including sexual assaults. Some witnesses noted that even women who were seven months pregnant were raped and also, some raped women in earlier stages of pregnancy had miscarriages due to said action.⁴⁶

Apart from the killings and rapes, women were subjected to many humiliating and dishonorable acts. For instance, women were forced to walk naked in front of the tanks on the streets of Karm al-Zeitoun (Homs) in March 2012. In an interview with a girl, the age of 16, from Karm al-Zeitoun during those dates, the girl told how two women were raped in front of her and the same girl also mentioned that she was forced to walk completely naked before the tanks for a couple of hours.⁴⁷

It is considered a valid reason to imprison thousands of women in Syria as their husbands or relatives are opponents to the regime. These women suffered from various physical, verbal and psychological violence during the raids to their homes, at check points or at the prisons they were detained, without any accusation or trial. For instance, in October 2012, a young woman were stopped at a checkpoint in rural areas of Damascus, then she was taken to a military vehicle and raped by an officer of Syrian army. The same officer burnt the unfortunate woman's hair.⁴⁸

Today, even though it is not possible to mention an exact number with respect to Syrian women who were subjected to numerous tortures and rape and are still in detention, it is estimated that the number is between 6,700 and 13,000 based on the testimonies by the relatives of these women and the reports of different human rights organizations.⁴⁹ Another report prepared in 2017 mentions the number of arrested women as 7,571.⁵⁰

According to the reports that are prepared based on the statements by women who were imprisoned in the prisons of Syria and then released somehow, women detained by Syrian regime are usually kept in the following prisons:

- Adra Prison
- Kefer Suse Prison
- Hama 4. Military Intelligence Unit
- Al Suwaida Military Security Unit
- National Security Organization 251. Department
- Leş Beloni (Homs)
- Palestine Military Intelligence Unit (Damascus)
- Al Khatib Branch (Damascus)
- Military Interrogation Center in Damascus (Mezze)
- National Security Unit in Aleppo
- Saydnaya Prison
- Air Intelligence Units in Homs, Hama and Aleppo

- Unit 215 of Syrian Military Intelligence
- Hama and Homs Prisons
- Military Intelligence Unit No.235 in Kefer Suse
- Atana Prison
- Duma Prison
- Tedmur Prison
- Palmira Prison
- Banon Prison
- Damascus Prison
- Aleppo Central Prison⁵¹

It is estimated that the number of captive women in Syrian prisons is between 6,700 and 13,000.

According to local sources, there are many underground prisons which were built by converting the basements of some buildings in Syria, in addition to the aforementioned prisons. There also hospitals in region where the Syrian regime transformed into prisons to keep hundreds of people unlawfully.⁵²

Some of previously imprisoned women, who were subjected to various dishonorable acts such as threats, blackmail, insults, verbal and physical violence, personally described the maltreatment inflicted upon them in these prisons, and their devastation caused by these treatment. Moreover, most of these imprisoned women lost their lives in these prisons due to reasons such as torture, starvation, unhygienic conditions etc.

Taking into consideration the fact that the most vulnerable individuals in the regions of war and conflict are women and children, women are both war victims and become a political blackmailing instrument and they are subjected to countless traumas. The most commonly known among these are physical violence, sexual violence and psychological violence which are also considered war crimes. Many captive women were exposed to various tortures, injuries and sexual harassment in some way.⁵³

However, another point that misses attention is that the tragedy of these captive women does not remain limited to what they experience during detention. Many Syrian women who were detained unlawfully are wrongly labeled upon return. As they were raped in the prisons, this situation causes them to be excluded by their families or from the society, to be condemned, to leave from their homes, to be left by their husbands if married. Due to all these social realities, many women who escaped somehow from Syrian prisons do not report these tragic events they experienced and remain silent. Therefore, most of the women could not even receive a treatment to recover from traumatic events they were subjected to and they have to struggle with those tragic events alone.⁵⁴

A major part of these women are known to be people who still live in Syria or whose some of family members stay in Syria. To put in other words, the reason why they remain silent is the fear to be arrested again and/or the fear for their families to be harmed by the Syrian regime due to their own expressions or pursuit of justice, apart from aforementioned reasons.



Most of these imprisoned women lost their lives in these prisons due to reasons such as torture, starvation, unhygienic conditions etc.



On the other hand, a minority of women who were held in Syrian prisons for several reasons decided to share what they have gone through and to make their voices heard, despite everything. In this section of the study, some parts of face to face interviews conducted with Syrian women are included. Women who were imprisoned for various reasons and exposed to torture, demonstrated the courage to share their tragedies, for their life stories to be narrated. As a result of drastic events they experienced, many individuals developed physical, behavioral, cognitive, psychological and social reactions. The following are those traumatic reactions commonly encountered almost in every interviewee:

- ✦ Shock, numbness, shivers, crying, nervousness, anxiety
- ✦ Fainting, confusion, disorientation, depression
- ✦ Trembling, nausea, vomit
- ✦ Insomnia, hypersomnia, nightmares
- ✦ Lack of appetite and consequential weight loss, overeating and weight gain as a result
- ✦ Lack of energy or excessive energy, increased alertness, weakness, loss of control
- ✦ Physical pain, cardiovascular disorders, gastrointestinal disturbances
- ✦ Overreaction to sudden noise and motion, hypersensitivity to noise
- ✦ Re-experiencing feelings of the rape
- ✦ Obsession with the assault, anger, desire for vengeance, fear
- ✦ Inconsistency, difficulty in problem solving, concentration issues
- ✦ Self-accusatory, fear of loneliness, isolation
- ✦ Being nervous and aggressive, having a quick temper, withdrawn from society
- ✦ Divorce, changes at home, work, school or relationships
- ✦ Sudden changes in emotional state, shame, guilt, feeling dirty
- ✦ Loss of enthusiasm for life, attempt to commit suicide, grief and loss
- ✦ Loss of self respect⁵⁵

The reason why they remain silent is the fear to be arrested again and/or the fear for their families to be harmed by Syrian regime.

WITNESSES

The names of the witnesses are changed to ensure both their safety of life and also the safety of their relatives still living in Syria. Their voices were also recorded by changing the tone of voices during the interviews as well as their real names.

RANIYE HALEBI

Raniye Halebi (RH), from Homs. Married and mother of three. When RH was arrested at one of the check points in Homs in May 2015, she entrusted her infants to their aunt since she was told that the interrogation would take 1 to 2 hours. Then, RH was taken to another place accompanied by the soldiers. She was interrogated there about her deceased brother and her husband who were members of Free Syrian Army (FSA). At the

end of the procedure, RH was labeled as a terrorist and she was accused for many accusations including complicity and association with the opponents. She was subjected to severe torture when she refused to admit to these crimes that she did not commit at all. She describes the torture and interrogation as follows:

“They told me that they would kill me if I do not answer their questions. In fact, they tied my hands back and hung me from by the ceiling. When I was hanging, they repeated continuously the same questions and asked me to reply and of course beat me; they hit my back, my arms, my belly and my head with plastic pipes and all they wanted from me was to answer their questions and accusations in the way they expected, regardless of whether or not I was guilty. They intensified the torture when I resisted to all these and I fainted due to heavy torturing... The place we were staying was very cold. Sewer rats were passing by our side. I was hearing the sounds of torture from where I sat. I saw young people, all of them with their underwear and hung by their hands, who were tortured in the places where we passed by, when going to the toilet or being taken to somewhere else. I was more terrified after seeing that scene, when they interrogated me again. Also, they gave us meals with bugs inside... We were more than 15 people under the ground and it was so dark. There were screams of the tortured all around all the time... This situation continued for 2 months Then, I was sent to a unit called Leş Beloni in Homs. I was subjected to the most torture in that unit. They forced us to listen to the sounds of one of our friends being raped, she was severely beaten. I heard insults that I was not aware of and I cannot even imagine, I suffered from sexual harassment, I was dishonored. It was the first time in my life that I saw such violent human beings; if they can be called human, of course. They hung me from the ceiling putting my head and my legs into a tire and started to beat me using a torturing tool called Dulab. Neither men nor women were shown mercy. Both men and women were subjected to similar treatment. We all suffered from many things such as insults, violence, battery, swearing, torture, being racked, being forced to walk on blood, being left in the cold, being shocked with electricity.”

After being kept there for 1 month, RH was sent to Military Intelligence Palestine Unit in Damascus and interrogated here again, where she was stripped and completely naked. She stayed together with 15 to 20 people in this unit which has 8 floors according to her statement and is well known for its torturing. She also saw many children and women in each room of this place with 8 rooms on each floor. RH mentioned that she also saw orphan children and that most of them were at the ages of 2 to 5. RH stayed there together with many elderly women suffering from diabetes and hypertension and she was detained there unquestioned for 4 months. She was subjected countless crimes against humanity in this place where law does not apply in any manner. RH burst into tears when mentioning those humiliating events she experienced and she continues as follows:

“We heard so many screams of torture here as well. We smelled the stench of dead bodies. Everyone already expected it was their turn to be killed at

any time. We all thought that we would die under torture unbeknown to us. I even forgot what sleeping was like. We all lost sense of night and day.”

After 1 month, RH was taken to Kefer Suse district and kept there for 14 days. Then, she was taken to a court trial for the first time. RH was sent to Adra Prison after that and she finally succeeded in being emancipated thanks to an attorney sent by her family in return for a considerable amount of money.

HAYA EL-RAI

Haya el-Rai (HR) 32 years old, from Hama, married and a mother of 4 kids. Today, she barely makes her living with donations in Reyhanli. HR was imprisoned in September 2012 after her husband was arrested as a result of the complaints by the informants during the times of war and he indicated HR as a supporter of the opponents during the interrogation although she had nothing to do with it. HR was hauled into a armored vehicle, taken to the intelligence unit of 4. Army and interrogated completely naked with her eyes blindfolded. HR was affronted during the interrogation and she mentions that the soldiers beat her with plastic pipes to the extent she fainted when they could not receive the answers they wanted. HR, after being released from the prison where she was kept for 1 month, took refuge in Turkey with her children when she was left by her husband. The following is her own expression:

“We were forced to walk over the blood accumulated on the floor after torturing. I, and many women like me, and young girls, were raped again and again. No matter how hard we resisted and tried to protect ourselves, they never stopped torturing, beating, insulting and, worst of all, raping us. No one could hear our voice. We could not even sleep due to screams of the tortured. Many of our friends got pregnant because of the rapes. In fact, some of them gave birth to 2-3 children. Everything was so horrible and inhuman. It is very hard for me even to remember those days. I attempted to commit suicide 4 times after that day. I cannot be considered to have recovered from most of what I experienced. I received psychological support but the fact that I am breathing does not mean that I am alive. I feel like a dead body that was dishonored and lost its soul.”

ALA EL SUVEYDI

Ala el Suveydi (AS), 32 years old, married and a mother of 3 children from Aleppo. As, who lived a simple and normal life with her husband and children before the war, was detained by soldiers of intelligence in 2013 who raided the place in Hamdaniye where she and her family stayed. She was detained by the intelligence for almost 10 days and she was released afterwards whereas her husband lost his life in prison as a result of the torturing. 3 months later, AS was detained again and interrogated at the intelligence unit in Damascus for 3 months and then she was transferred to Adra Prison. She was taken to a court

trial on 17th day of her imprisonment there and she stayed in the prison for approximately 1 year as a consequence of her conviction by the judge at that court. Afterwards, the court decided on her acquittal but she was taken under interrogation again by another intelligence unit at the very date she would be released and she was exposed again to several tortures and inhuman treatment at Adra Prison. AS was exposed to questions about her husband in particular and she describes her experiences as follows:

“We, 32 women, stayed at a ward there. It was not possible to turn from one side to another; because there was no room. We were monitored 24/7 by surveillance cameras. We were forbidden to pray and read Quran. We prayed in an implied way. We were allowed to go to the toilet only 3 times a day. There were old aunties at the age of 50 to 70 with diabetes and renal failure at the place where we stayed. Apart from these, dietary conditions were also really terrible. We found cut nails, bugs etc. within the wheat pilaf they served. The prison was extremely dark and cold. On the blankets that they gave to us to get warm, there was blood of people killed during torture or maggots growing on the dead bodies since they were left unattended for a long time. They took us to torture room at certain hours and beat us with cables and then gave the electric shock. They tied our hands and hung us from the ceiling by means of a rack so that we stand up with our feet a centimeter away from the floor. Women witnessed the torturing of men and heard their screams and vice versa. Sometimes we were subjected to solitary confinement in a cell for one. The cell was barely at the size of 1 square meter. It was too dark and there was a tap dripping all the time in the cell. Nothing in particular was put in the cell. That worked also arbitrarily as usual. You could be tortured at 5 o'clock in the morning. There were no specific rules or principles for anything... a lot of women and girls were raped there. For instance, a female companion got pregnant exactly 5 months after being raped.... Too many childbirths happened in Adra. Some women were also imprisoned regardless of their pregnancy and were forced to deliver under hard conditions. Sexual harassment, abuse or rape were conducted in a single room. We were insulted and beaten all the time. Cholera disease was also very common in the prison...”

AS was released in 2016 and she went first to Idlib and then to Turkey taking her children who were looked after by her mother-in-law when she was in prison. She tries to make her living there working with her eldest child and forget about what she has been through.

HILAL EL DARI

Hilal el Dari (HD), 34 years old, from Damascus. Married and mother of 2 children, a former teacher. In May 2014, she was arrested and sent to the basement of a hospital that serves as a prison. She was sent there on the grounds of attending anti regime demonstrations despite the fact that she was not involved in anyway. HD stayed there with her paralyzed mother and her sister under tough conditions for a year. She

states that the reason of their detention is to put pressure on the men of her family. HD mentioned that she could not even take a bath for 6 months during her imprisonment there and she could not also take care of her old and wheelchair-stricken mother sufficiently. The mother also struggled for her life under difficult conditions, having pressure sores at one side of her body due to being seated all the time.

At the end of their stay there, HD was sent to Al Khatib branch and she spent another 8 months with her mother and sister there. She mentions that there were 52 more women there and she stayed at a underground ward together with 19 women. HD was not subjected to any sexual harassment or abuse but she was forced during the interrogation to accept the crimes she did not commit and then she was sent to Adra prison upon her resistance to this. HD was released on April 15, 2016 after being held in Adra prison for 5 months and she immigrated to Reyhanlı taking her children and mother with her.

HIBA ŞAMI

Hiba Şami (HŞ), 50 years old, married and a mother of 3 children, from Aleppo. She was detained a few months after the events started in 2011. She was interrogated naked at a prison in Aleppo for 10 days. HŞ was asked to provide information on her activities and she had a heart attack at the 2nd day of her detention in Aleppo. After her treatment, the continuation of her detention was decided and she was punished by being beaten by the interrogation officer, since her replies to his questions did not satisfy him. HŞ was tortured at National Security Unit in Aleppo and she was exposed to several tragic events such as being violently beaten after being seated in a tire, being electroshocked, being beaten by sticks, being humiliated and threatened etc. She also mentions that there were 14 year old young girls there besides adult women. The torturing repeated every 15 minutes since she did not admit to the unsubstantiated claims against her... She was taken to Kefer Suse in Damascus, after being held there for 10 days. During her detention in Damascus, the commanders told HŞ that they could save her but mockingly they asked her to have sex with them in return. Those soldiers staining the honor of women with such indecent proposals, also committed crimes against humanity such as tearing the beards of male detainees and torturing them in a completely naked state. After staying at this prison for 18 days, HŞ was transferred to Adra Prison. She stayed in Adra for 2 days. When she was taken back to Aleppo, she was kept in a prison in Homs for 1 week due to the conflicts between the opponents and the regime. She was convicted at the court in Idlib. She was acquitted and released from the prison once she passed 3 months there. But, she lost 18 kg.s in total during that period due to severe conditions of the prison. She faced what many Syrian captive women experienced and she was excluded from society after she was released from the prison:

“Unfortunately, even if physical tortures ended after being released from the prison, social torturing continues. Imprisoned people are a source of disgrace in the eyes of the supporters of the regime and prevailing opinion of the society about them is that they were dishonored due to the things they experienced in prison. Therefore, an imprisoned person, regardless of its lawfulness,

is forced to immigrate somewhere else after being released from the prison since she is excluded and rejected by the society, even by her family and husband and she could not hold on to life. The fear of being arrested again is also another reason that forces people to immigrate. Those who could not immigrate continue to live in Syria, provided that they remain silent.”

RENA VERD

Rena Verd (RV), 38 years old and a mother of 4 children, from Hama. She was detained at a check point at the entrance of Hama in 2014 with allegations of being a member of the Free Syrian Army because her husband was trapped and killed on his way from Idlib to rural areas of Hama in 2012. She started to be interrogated at the military security unit in Hama. She was interrogated from 6 o'clock in the evening until the next morning for 3 days. She was subjected to various insults, humiliations and violence during the interrogation. She suffered from significant physical and psychological violence following the questions particularly about her husband. After the end of interrogation, she was completely unclothed and taken to a cell and held there naked. 8 days later, she was referred to homicide unit. She was interrogated there also. She was convicted to be an arms smuggler after this interrogation. RV lost 17 kgs during this period and she witnessed many prisoners, among them 13 year old imprisoned boys and captive girls older than 20 years, being tortured. RV was released after a month and took refuge in Turkey in October 2015.

HAMIDE EL HALEBI

Hamide el Halebi (HH) was detained in Homs and taken to prison with allegations of terrorism and she was detained there for 12 days. She passed 6 days of that period in a small cell with rats and the remaining 6 days at the prison. She was subjected to extreme physical violence during the 12 days after her first detention. She suffered from continuous humiliation and verbal violence at the cell. 12 days may sound a short period of time but HH describes below the events she witnessed during those days:

“Women were subjected to unimaginable tortures. We witnessed countless inhuman violence such as hanging from hands by the ceiling as if being hanged on a rack, frequent raping, poking, forcing to walk on the blood as a kind of psychological violence. There were young girls and boys at the age of 14 to 15 under detention. We witnessed them being raped and I saw at least two of them give birth. It is really very hard to forget what happened.”

MERYEM EL ASKERI

Meryem el Askeri (MA), 35 years old, mother of 3, from Damascus. Not long after the start of the conflict, she was detained and sent to prison together with her 14-month baby. She

was imprisoned for a full 1.5 years and was exposed to both physical and sexual violence in the meantime. She was raped several times in front of her baby. MA lives in Reyhanlı now.

“My baby could not bear anymore the conditions of the prison and got seriously ill in the 10th month. The soldiers got tired of my baby’s crying spells and delivered it to its grandmother. Even if I was happy that my child was released, the violence, starvation and rape that I was exposed to became unbearable. I was released after 1.5 years when my health worsened further. I was brought to Turkey right after my release due to my bleeding. I had 12 surgeries there because of my deteriorating health...”

REYHAN EL RAŞIDI

Reyhan El Raşidi (RR), married, mother of 3 children, 28 years old, a nurse. She was detained since she treated injured people during the protests in early 2011. With allegations about her husband having participated in the demonstrations, both husband and wife were sent to prison. She was under interrogation for more than two weeks but her husband was detained longer. They somehow took refuge in Turkey after both being released.

“I was exposed to violence in the prison based on allegations that I helped the opponents. I sometimes fainted when subjected to severe insults and humiliation. This the interrogations were repeated every 2 days. We were raped first and then beaten until we fainted almost at every interrogation. When I regained my consciousness, I found myself naked on the floor with pain and scars of battery. I was released after spending full 17 days under those conditions... I was taken to emergency with heavy bleeding right after my release and had 3 surgeries in total due to the infection I had...”

WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR CAPTIVE WOMEN?

IN TERMS OF LAW

- The Syrian regime should make a satisfactory statement about women and children in official and unofficial prisons, and inform their families about individual statuses.
- Women and children who are still imprisoned the number of whom is still not officially disclosed, should be released immediately.
- Women and children who are still on trial and accused should be allowed to use their rights to attorney, and to see their families.
- People responsible for violation of rights during Syrian war should be judged by International Criminal Court.

IN TERMS OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

- ▶ Syrian captive women should receive support for healing the psychological disorders and difficulties in sustaining life that developed as a result of the trauma they experienced.
- ▶ Awareness of families and community should be raised with respect to psychological and social support and necessary precautions should be taken for captive women not to be excluded after being released.
- ▶ The required channels of support should be established especially for many women who could not receive any social support due to the physical violence and sexual assault that they were subjected to and who were excluded and isolated in Syrian community.
- ▶ Therapy, treatment and employment processes should be promoted within this period to ensure that those individuals engage their minds with more positive interests and they participate actively into life again by building new skills.

IN TERMS OF HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY

- ▶ Channels of civil diplomacy should be activated for the release of captive women. In this respect, negotiations should be held with all relevant parties for the release of captive women.
- ▶ Even if release of captive women and children in the hands of the regime cannot be ensured in the near future, at least the regime should be forced to take steps to improve their current conditions. For this purpose, international observers should be given access to the places where they are detained.
- ▶ Meetings should be arranged with the countries where released women took refuge in regarding the protection of their rights and follow-up of their rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

Syria has been going through a rare humanitarian crisis for the last eight years. During this crisis, women and children are the ones who are affected the most, both physically and psychologically. Women have increasingly become targeted by the Syrian regime since the beginning of the war. Moreover, other conflicting groups also committed substantial violations with respect to victimization of women.

There are thousands of imprisoned women used both as an instrument of psychological stress against Syrian opponents and also for negotiations. The Syrian regime detains most of these women based on allegations of being opponents without any concrete evidence in this respect, tortures them and forces them unlaw-

fully to testify against their relatives. If those women do not provide such confessions, then they are subjected to all sorts of torture and abuse in the places where they were detained.

Syrian women are deprived of not only their human rights but also sanitary and hygienic conditions in those places where the right to live, being one of the most fundamental rights, is directly threatened. Many women still suffer from serious health problems due to the conditions they were exposed to in the prisons.



Syrian women are deprived of not only their human rights but also sanitary and hygienic conditions in those places where the right to life.



Interrogated captive women were threatened that they would be killed if they attempt to take legal action for recovery of physical and psychological scars they experienced during their times in the prison.

An imprisoned woman is excluded and simply left to her fate by everyone around her, particularly by her husband and her family due to some social codes. Today, most of those women are left alone with or separated from their children and they struggle so hard to make their living and to survive.

Putting women in captivity does not only cause social revenge to be intensified but also it disrupts the dynamics of the Syrian community. This remains a serious source of concern that can hinder the efforts for peace in the country.

It is sadly observed that the international community conducts very weak studies on this situation when Syria is experiencing all this. Whereas the Assad regime should be forced to change such reckless and devilish conduct, especially towards women, the silence of global actors leads to victimization of more women each day. In this sense, the international society including the UN Security Council and ruling elites should take more concrete steps to fight against the violation of women's rights in Syria.

It is not just the responsibility of captive's families and some legal experts to end current crimes against humanity and to free Syrian women, but of all global communities and administrators.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1067002018ENGLISH.PDF>. It is also estimated that a similar number of civilians were killed and the number of casualties is at least doubled, but this could not be documented due to prevailing conditions in Syria.
- ² *World Report*, 2018, Human Rights Watch, p. 525.
- ³ "Syria Crisis July 2018 Humanitarian Results", UNICEF, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Syria%20Crisis%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20-%20July%202018.pdf>
- ⁴ "Forced Dispersion: A Demographic Report on Human Status in Syria", 2016, *Syrian Centre for Policy Research*, p. 61-62.
- ⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICISyria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx>.
- ⁶ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria>; https://insamer.com/tr/suriye-li-mahkm-kadinlar-kapali-kapilar-ardindaki-sessiz-cigliklar_1579.html
- ⁷ Articles 4 and 19 of La Haye Convention entitled "convention regarding the protection of cultural treasures in case of an armed conflict" and dated May 14, 1954 incorporate provisions on protection of cultural heritage during civil warfare.
- ⁸ *World Report*, 2018, HRW, p. 527-28.
- ⁹ Merve Aksoy Ercümen, "Savaşın Değişen Doğası ve Cenevre Sözleşmeleri", İNSAMER, 22.08.2016, https://insamer.com/tr/savasin-degisen-dogasi-ve-cenevre-sozlesmeleri_346.html
- ¹⁰ For further information, please refer to: International Criminal Court Rome Statute, <http://sorular.rightsagenda.org/Uploads/UCM%20MEV/Roma%20Stat%C3%BCs%C3%BC.pdf>
- ¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICISyria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx>; *World Report*, 2018, HRW, p. 530.
- ¹² Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes personal freedom to change religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Please refer to <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights>.
Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
- ¹³ Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- ¹⁴ Article 9: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.
- ¹⁵ Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- ¹⁶ For some of them, please refer to: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/category/report/annual-reports>.
- ¹⁷ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2018/09/24/record-of-enforced-disappearances1>.
- ¹⁸ <http://www.un.org.tr/humanrights/images/pdf/butun-kisilerin-zorla-kaybedilmeden-korunmasina-dair-uluslararası-sozlesme.pdf>
- ¹⁹ Yavuz Güçtürk, *The Loss of Humanity: The Human Rights Dimension of the Civil War in Syria*, SETA, 2014, p. 35-37.
- ²⁰ *Suriye'de İhlaller ve Halep Raporu*, UMHD&İNSAMER, January 2017, p. 7.
- ²¹ Güçtürk, p. 73.
- ²² *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, UN Human Rights Council, (A/HRC/23/58), <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/156/20/PDF/G1315620.pdf?OpenElement>
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- ²⁴ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/50/plenary/a50-329.htm>; For different reports, please refer to: <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/conflicts/bosnia>.
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- ²⁶ Emre Yıldırım, "2018'de İnsan Haklarının Görünümü", İNSAMER, 10.12.2018, https://insamer.com/tr/2018de-insan-haklarinin-gorunumu_1841.html

- ²⁷ “Exclusive: Iraq holding 1,400 foreign wives, children of suspected Islamic State fighters”, *Reuters*, 10.09.2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-families-exclusiv/exclusive-iraq-holding-1400-foreign-wives-children-of-suspected-islamic-state-fighters-idUSKCN1BLOSFF?utm_source=applenews
- ²⁸ UNSC, Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, S/RES/1325, 2000, <http://www.un-documents.net/sr1325.htm>
- ²⁹ Tuğçe Kelleci, “Gendered Nationalism and the Use of Sexual Violence in Wars: The Case of Bosnia”, *Alternatif Politika*, 2017, 9 (3): 409-441, <http://alternatifpolitika.com/site/cilt/9/sayi/3/6-Tugce-Kelleci-Cinsiyet-ci-Milliyetcilik-Cinsel-Siddet-Bosna.pdf>
- ³⁰ “22,823 Women Killed in Syria Since March 2011 Living in Deprivation”, 2016, SNHR, http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/22823_Woman_killed_in_Syria_since_March_2011_en.pdf
- ³¹ “21,179 Civilians Killed In Syria In 2015”, SNHR, <http://www.iam Syria.org/syrian-conflict-in-2015.html>
- ³² “The Yearly Reports for 2016”, SNHR, p.6, https://web.archive.org/web/20170128181217/http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/The_Yearly_Report_for_2016_en.pdf
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- ³⁴ “International Women’s Day, a Comment From Syria”, SNHR, 2017, p. 1, http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/International_Womens_Day_comment_from_Syria_en.pdf
- ³⁵ “Death Toll Due To Torture”, SNHR, <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2018/12/31/toll-of-deaths-due-to-torture-2/>
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- ³⁷ In about 93 months... about 560,000 were killed in Syria since the day of claiming rights to the international human rights day”, *SOHR*, <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/?p=108723>
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- ⁴² *World Report*, 2015, HRW, p. 517.
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- ⁴⁴ “In about 93 months...”
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- ⁴⁹ Ayşe Hümeýra Kutluođlu Karayel, “Syria’s Prisoner Women: Silent Screams Behind Closed Doors”, Observation/Field 11, İNSAMER, August 2018, p. 2.
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- ⁵¹ The names of above mentioned prisons are based on the data received during the interviews with previously imprisoned women between the dates 05.12.2017-12.12.2018. For another report about this subject, please refer to: “Detention of Women in Syria: A weapon of war and terror”, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, 2015, p. 32-44, https://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/EMHRN_Womenindetention_EN.pdf
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The women and children are the ones that have suffered the most, due to the crises that increasingly became chronic in all aspects of life in Syria, in terms of humanity, politics and economy. Within an environment in a country where human values, as well as all legal rules were disregarded entirely, violations, violence and rape against women expanded the magnitude of social collapse. Moreover, the suffering of millions of vulnerable women that died, injured, prisoned or became refugees, even if they did not have any active role in the war, inflicted deep and incurable wounds in the Syrian community. Saving the Syrian women and children from death does not seem sufficient enough for them to live an honorable and peaceful life. The tragic events in the past and the condition of thousands of women that are still doomed to live as captives, demonstrate sadly that no one is safe in the country.

This report report narrates the conditions and experiences of the women that are detained in the Syrian prisons unlawfully.

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