

Human Rights Violations of Arbitrary Detention, Torture, and Against Returning Refugees and Internally Displaced People

1. This report is submitted by Justice for Life, Access Center for Human Rights, Human Rights Guardians, The Day After and Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights. This submission aims to highlight the human rights violations to which internally displaced people and refugees are subjected to when returning to their areas of origin, including but not limited to arbitrary detention, torture, and violations of HLP rights. The impacts of these violations are often exacerbated by a systematic lack of and impossibility to access identity documents and other documentation.

I. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance.

2. In the previous UPR review cycle in 2016, Syria had accepted several recommendations regarding stopping arbitrary detention and releasing detainees and considered them under study.⁽¹⁾ However, the reality indicates the opposite. Since the previous UPR review cycle in 2016, males and females were arrested arbitrarily by the Syrian authorities. They were not informed of the reason for their detention. Females were often detained for their male relatives' real or perceived association with the opposition or defection from military service. Some were arrested along with other relatives. Many detainees were physically assaulted during the detention.⁽²⁾

3. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance have particularly affected Syrian refugees returning to Syria. As of 31 March 2021, 275.816 Syrian refugees have returned to Syria.⁽³⁾ Despite the Syrian government having accepted multiple recommendations since the last UPR cycle in 2016 regarding the adoption of policies that address the needs of migrants and refugees and provide for their safe return, as well as to halt and combat human rights abuses and the use of torture and enforced disappearances, Syria failed to implement these recommendations as refugees and internally displaced individuals continue to be systematically subjected to human rights abuses.⁽⁴⁾ Indeed, even though Syria accepted recommendations 109.97 and 109.84, numerous reports have documented cases of citizens being targeted when returning to their area of origin under Governmental control, as well as cases of detentions against those who returned to Syria through unofficial pathways.⁽⁵⁾ While human rights violations throughout the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be perpetrated by all parties on the ground, the targeting of refugees and internally displaced individuals has been most prevalent in areas under government control, notably the governorates of Tartous, Homs, Damascus, and their countryside.⁽⁶⁾

4. Despite Syria accepting recommendations 109.97, 109.146, 109.166 and 109.162,⁽⁷⁾ and in violation of Syria's obligations under the Convention against Torture CAT (1984), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ICCPR (1966), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights UDHR (1948), in 2019 Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) documented at least seven cases of deportation of Syrian refugees from Lebanon, who were subsequently detained and tortured by Syrian authorities.⁽⁸⁾ In one documented case, Lebanese authorities handed over the deportee to the Syrian authorities who subjected him to physical and psychological torture, detained him for 48 hours and prohibited him from returning to his place of origin.⁽⁹⁾ Similarly, ACHR documented a case where a Syrian woman was also handed over to the

Syrian authorities, detained for 10 days and subjected to physical and psychological torture. ⁽¹⁰⁾

5. Syria accepted recommendations 109.152, 109.97, 109.146, 109.166 and 109.162,⁽¹¹⁾ however, between January and September 2020, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented at least 156 cases of detentions against returnees, including 62 cases targeting returnees from outside Syria.⁽¹²⁾ This included documentation of cases where returnees were charged with terrorism under the pretext of having “dealt or had contact with smugglers wanted by the Syrian authorities”, many of whom were subjected to torture during detention. ⁽¹³⁾

6. Men of draft age have also faced arbitrary detentions upon return. A study conducted by the Refugee Protection Watch Coalition (RPW) reported cases of individuals being detained for previous actions of political dissent even after paying their exemption fees and fines for compulsory conscription, in addition to men of draft age or men who have evaded the draft reportedly being detained or harassed on the streets by security members in Homs and Rural Damascus after their return to Syria between 2018 and 2020. ⁽¹⁴⁾

7. Despite accepting recommendation 109.152 to put an end to enforced disappearance in all places of deprivation of liberty, enforced disappearance continues to be committed in Syria. ⁽¹⁵⁾ According to documentation by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, since the previous UPR review cycle in 2016, the number of forcibly disappeared persons has increased from 71,533 people to 98,371 individuals disappeared. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Since 2016, Human Rights Guardians has documented 4,450 cases of enforced disappearance. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Of those, 360 complaints were sent to the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances to clarify their cases per request of families. However, the Syrian government has so far refused to cooperate with the Working Group and to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the cases communicated to it by the Working Group. ⁽¹⁸⁾

8. Syrian refugees returning to Syria are also subjected to enforced disappearance. Out of the 156 cases of returnees documented by SNHR in 2020, 37 were still detained or forcibly disappeared within the Syrian authorities’ detention centres, while others were forcibly conscripted into the military, at the time of the publication of the report. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Similarly, cases of detentions and disappearance against at least 312 returnees were documented in 2017 and at least 719 were documented in 2018. ⁽²⁰⁾ To this regard, several media reports and investigations have been conducted as well. In 2018, the Irish Times reported the imprisonment of three young Syrian returnees to government-held areas from Europe who died two to four months after their detention in military prisons. ⁽²¹⁾ The Foreign Policy reported in 2019 a case of a returnee from Germany who was detained two weeks after arrival and another who was detained near the Lebanese Syrian border and was forcibly disappeared. ⁽²²⁾

9. Arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance have also been systematically committed against internally displaced individuals returning to their areas of origin, and in the context of forced displacement. Since the previous UPR review cycle in 2016, the last four years witnessed a military escalation by the Syrian government against Syrian civilians. This escalation represented a policy of besieging cities and towns that oppose the government, accompanied by violent bombardment targeting civilians and civilian objects. The impact of this violent method of warfare in dealing with Syrian civilians has resulted in new waves of forced displacement, the most recent of which was the displacement of 900,000 civilians from areas in Idlib governorate in 2019. ⁽²³⁾

10. The situation following the recapture of these areas by the Syrian government were marked by several instances of arbitrary detentions, detention and enforced disappearance, including death under torture. Indeed, as government forces recaptured these territories, thousands of civilians fleeing these besieged areas were subject to internment in so-called IDPs shelters. (24) Continuing arbitrary detention has also been documented in recaptured areas following truces or reconciliation agreements. Human Rights Watch documented 11 cases of arbitrary detention and disappearance in Daraa, Eastern Ghouta and southern Damascus. In all cases, the people targeted had signed reconciliation agreements with the government after their decision not to be forcibly displaced to opposition-held areas. (25)

11. Displaced individuals returning to their areas of origin had to undergo a process of settlement/reconciliation with the Syrian government. Despite the assurances that this process would prevent further persecution, several cases have been documented of people being detained after returning to their area of origin. According to documentation collected by Justice for Life (JFL), hundreds of civilians who returned to Deir Ezzor were subjected to detention and financial extortion by the Syrian security forces. (26)

II. Torture and inhumane and degrading treatment of detainees.

12. Ex-detainees interviewed by LDHR reported being subjected to conditions of detention amounting to cruel and inhumane treatment, despite the Syrian Arab Republic having accepted recommendations to stop the use of all kinds of inhumane or degrading treatment in the previous review cycle. (27) The Syrian Arab Republic also accepted recommendations regarding the prohibition of the use of torture in all detention facilities. (28) However, detainees, including children, (29) continued to be systematically mistreated and tortured. Religious or sexual insults, physical abuses, threats, and humiliation were commonplace.

13. Detainees were subjected to various forms of physical and psychological torture, including sleep deprivation; beating on the head, the mouth and the ears; whipping; beating with plumbing pipes; beating the soles of the feet (or “falaqa”); stabbing; suspension from the wrists; squeezing into a tire so that their head and knees were forced together; and other torture techniques like the “flying carpet” (where a person is tied to a wooden board that can be folded, moving the feet towards the head) and the “German chair” (where a person is laid underneath a chair with their back pulled upwards on the back of the chair and their hands tied behind the chair back). Other forms of torture included placing detainees in stress positions, constraining their movements for prolonged periods of time, burning them with cigarettes, heated objects, or hot food, electrocuting and asphyxiating them. One man had his fingernails pulled out. Another reported that salt was put on his wounds to increase his suffering.

14. Detainees were also threatened with torture. Several reported witnessing torture and sexual violence or even the death or killing of other detainees. One woman was forced to torture her friend who was detained with her. A few were forced to ingest medication or other substances. A woman forcefully received injections of painkillers that can have addictive effects. (30)

15. Additionally, despite having accepted recommendations to protect women and girls from sexual violence, (31) both males and females were subjected to one or more forms of sexual violence. Detainees reported being subjected to partial or complete forced nudity. A man was electrocuted on his genitals. Another was forced to strip and perform sexual gestures in front of female detainees. A female was

touched on her genitals, breasts and buttocks. She was raped with a penis and with objects. Her rape resulted in pregnancy while in detention. Some detainees were threatened with rape or other forms of sexual violence. Many witnessed sexual violence committed against other detainees. ⁽³²⁾

16. Months or years after their release, former detainees still suffer from physical and psychological impacts, including reproductive and sexual health sequelae, as well as important social and economic consequences. ⁽³³⁾

III. Violations linked to housing land and property rights and to the lack of access to identification and personal status documents.

17. Syrian citizens returning to their areas of origin, whether from outside or inside Syria, face several structural problems in their enjoyment of their rights, leading to the de facto deprivation and violation of their rights to recognition of person before the law, and their housing, land, and property rights.

18. Challenges to claim property remain in government-held areas. This includes cases of expropriation by the Government, as returnees continue to face challenges in accessing their property, amid incapacitating restrictions, discriminatory laws and property seizing from the Syrian authorities, which are in violation of international standards of adequate housing such as legal protection from forced eviction, due process, non-discriminatory application of the law and legal remedy.

19. According to investigations conducted by the Commission of Inquiry between July 2018 and January 2019 and July 2019 and January 2020, housing land and property legislation in Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Rif Damascus and Suwayda' Governorates, were used to punish individuals broadly perceived to be associated with opposition groups, including activists who documented violations by government forces. Individuals willing to return to their area of origin were refused evidence of ownership without any clear reason or not in writing, which prevented them from exercising their right to appeal. ⁽³⁴⁾ During the same timeframe, the displaced and refugees who returned to Qusayr (Homs Governorate) found their properties occupied by relatives of the Syrian security forces or armed groups. ⁽³⁵⁾

20. Since 2016, several pieces of legislation have been put in place, which, together with the ongoing implementation of the Counter-Terrorism Law (Law No. 19) enacted in 2012, create a series of obstacles for Syrian returnees in recovering or transferring property records, further disabling them from exercising their housing, land and property rights. Examples include Law No. 10 of 2018, which designates "redevelopment zones" in government-held areas, where previous residents must prove ownership, or else authorities may confiscate their properties, and Law No. 35 of 2017, which allows for the confiscation of properties of individuals who fail to perform the mandatory military service. ⁽³⁶⁾

21. Law No. 10 allows the authorities to designate areas as new urban zones, take possession of these areas and evict residents. The law provides property owners with stocks in the new zone as compensation, and some residents are eligible to have their rent paid until receiving substitute housing, or a maximum compensation of two years' rent for those without formal residency. However, conditions to prove eligibility are very difficult to meet, especially for those who are displaced, those wanted by the regime and the many who lived in informal, unregistered housing in these areas. ⁽³⁷⁾

22. The ability for returnees, whether refugees and IDPs, to exercise and enjoy their housing, land and property rights is also affected by the loss of documents that affects hundreds of thousands of Syrians. For example, according to a survey conducted by JFL on the loss of documentation in Syria in April 2020, more than 22% of the respondents to the survey stated that they do not own any document proving their ownership of their house and land. ⁽³⁸⁾

23. Loss of documentation does not concern only property deeds, but also essential identification documents. Through the questionnaire conducted by JFL, it was found that 13% of respondents do not own a personal identity card, while 29% do not own a family book, which are considered to be priority documents in terms of identification by the respondents and the legal framework in Syria. The situation worsens in regard to the birth registration of children: 33% said that their children do not have birth certificates, while 49% stated that only some of their children owned a birth certificates. Within the context of ongoing cases of statelessness in Syria, this situation puts a huge number of Syrian kids at the risk of statelessness, most of all in cases in which the father may be disappeared or deceased. In terms of passports, more than 81% of respondents said not to own a passport. ⁽³⁹⁾

24. Difficulties in accessing and obtaining identification documents for civilians returning to government-held areas are exacerbated by lack of documentation to formally recognize family and property-related developments which occurred when they lived under the authority of non-state actors. In Deir Ezzor, during the three years in which ISIS controlled most of Deir Ezzor governorate, thousands of transactions and civil status updates were not adequately documented for several reasons, including ISIS preventing civilians from moving to government-held areas of the city of Deir Ezzor to register their transactions and civil status updates. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

25. Discriminatory policies put in place or informally existing towards certain communities suspected of being loyal to non-state actors are another factor preventing certain communities from obtaining identity documents. In the case of Deir Ezzor, as documented by JFL, civilians of Deir-Ezzor are suspected of being loyal to ISIS. This puts them at high level risk of being detained when approaching government institutions and prevents them from travelling to Damascus to solve issues related to their documentation. Within this context, the counter-terrorism-focused settlement/reconciliation process put in place by the Syrian government to settle the status of returnees in newly government-controlled areas is unable and inadequate to allow thousands of Syrians to have access to and obtain their documents since it usually leads to further persecution against individuals suspected of affiliation with non-state actors. ⁽⁴¹⁾

26. The issue of lack of identity documentation and the challenges faced by IDPs and returnees are exacerbated in the context of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. Criminal legislation allows the authorities to confiscate the properties of those facing terrorism charges, which are frequently brought against anyone involved in civil, political, or humanitarian work. ⁽⁴²⁾ Family members of individuals detained and disappeared are also de facto deprived of their housing, land and property rights because of the absence of the man of the family. In the absence of their male family members, women face difficulties in claiming their properties, which are usually lost to male in-laws or to the Syrian government. ⁽⁴³⁾

Recommendations:

1. Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, without delay and without reservations, while recognizing the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearance to receive individual communications.
2. Ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture.
3. Criminalize enforced disappearance into the Syrian Penal Code and Syrian Criminal Code, according to the standards provided by the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in regard to the definition of the crime and its adequate penalties.

4. Take concrete measures to implement Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Articles 7-8 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
5. Allow the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to conduct impartial investigations into the tens of thousands of cases of enforced disappearance since 2011.
6. Cooperate with the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances and allow the Working Group to enter Syria.
7. Disclose the locations of all official and unofficial places of detention and provide complete lists of names of people still in detention, with full and comprehensive information about their status, and the judgments issued against them.
8. Ensure all detainees have regular and frequent access to their lawyers and contact with their families.
9. Allow unconditional, unrestricted, and unfettered access to international monitors, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Commission on Syria, health care professionals and sexual violence experts to any location where any person is being deprived of their liberty.
10. Ensure that no further executions of human rights defenders take place and stop their trials before any military courts, including the counter-terrorism court.
11. Take effective and concrete measures to ensure that participants in the search for victims of enforced disappearance, especially family members and relatives of the victims, are safe and protected from ill-treatment, reprisals, and violations of their fundamental human rights.
12. Establish a DNA database for all families of the missing and take appropriate measures to protect potential mass graves to preserve information that may be vital in any future truth-seeking process.
13. Provide serious and clear guarantees that refugee returnees and internally displaced individuals of drafting age will not face detention, enforced disappearance, and forced conscription.
14. Immediately and unconditionally release political detainees regardless of any political solution to the conflict.
15. Immediately cease the targeting and arbitrary detention of women and girls, including the detention of females to force the surrender or put pressure on their male relatives.
16. Immediately release detained children, especially those detained in the backdrop of the armed conflict.
17. Ensure that the survivors of enforced disappearance, and arbitrary detention who have been released, and the families of the deceased victims obtain justice, truth, and reparations, including in the forms of financial compensation, rehabilitation, restitution and guarantees of non-recurrence.
18. Remove immunities and thoroughly and impartially investigate and prosecute all those responsible for such violations.
20. Adopt efficient, accessible, and affordable legal and administrative mechanisms to address housing, land and property issues, in compliance with international human rights law, and repeal the existing laws that contradict international human rights standards, such as Law No. 35 (2017), Law No. 10 (2018), and Law No. 19 (2012), including due process, the provision of legal remedies, equal and non-discriminatory application of law.

21. Coordinate with the UNHRC to take concrete measures to improve access to documentation for IDPS, including by setting up mobile courts to obtain documents and replace temporary documents with permanent ones, to verify their authenticity and to facilitate the appointment of lawyers on behalf of IDPs in any further legal process.
22. Set concrete measures to eliminate discriminatory policies against internally displaced people in access to documentation.
23. Set up channels to obtain identification documents and facilitate access to such channels for refugees and IDPs without imposing unreasonable conditions, including their physical presence in Syria.

End Notes

1. This information refers to recommendation number 109.168 made by Spain (“Stop arbitrary detention and release all those unfairly and indiscriminately detained, as previously recommended”), and recommendation number 109.175 by Brazil (“Publish a list of all detainees in places under its control, together with information on the grounds for their detention”). See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, p.7, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>
2. This information is extracted from confidential medico-legal assessments conducted by LDHR’s medical experts with survivors detained since 2016. For more information on the arbitrary detention and detention of women detained between 2009 and 2017, see Synergy for Justice and LDHR, *Lacking Legal Basis: An Analysis of Arbitrary Arrest and Detention of Women in Syria*, May 2021, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/12dvLQxBaN_IHi7PIkxYcrY-F0NgtFDw/view?usp=sharing.
3. UN Refugee Agency, *Operational Portal: Syria Regional Refugee Response: Durable Solutions*, available at https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions (Accessed on 30 April 2021)
4. This information refers to recommendation number 109.97 made by Holy See (“Reinforce policies to address the needs of migrants and refugees by providing for the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes and ensuring the rehabilitation of affected areas in accordance with international law”), and recommendation number 109.84 made by Ecuador (“Strengthen the deployment of specific measures to foster the rights of vulnerable social groups, including children, adolescents, women, refugees and internally displaced people, as well as persons with disabilities”). See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>
5. Ibid
6. United Nations Human Rights Council, *21st report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 15 September 2020, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/45/31>
7. This information refers to recommendation number 109.97 (see above), recommendation number 109.146 made by Portugal (“Ensure accountability for the systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights violations of international humanitarian law that are being committed on a large scale throughout the Syrian Arab Republic by all parties, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity”), recommendation number 109.162 made by Switzerland (“Take legislative and concrete measures to prevent the use of torture and bring to justice those responsible for such violations”), and recommendation number 109.166 made by Holy See (“Make every effort to impede the use of torture, to assure humane conditions for prisoners in conformity with international standards and to abide by international humanitarian law”). See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>
8. Access Center for Human Rights, *Arbitrary Deportation of Syrian Refugees*, August 2019, page 15, available at: <https://www.achrighs.org/en/2019/08/09/9829>
9. Ibid, page 15
10. Ibid, page 16
11. This information refers to recommendations number 109.97, 109.146, 109.162, 109.166 (see above) and recommendation number 109.152 made by Luxembourg (“Put an end to enforced disappearance and torture in all places of deprivation of liberty, as well as extrajudicial executions”). See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations*,

voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, 13 March 2017, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>

12. Syrian Network for Human Rights, *The Syrian Regime Prevents Hundreds of Syrians From Returning from Lebanon to Their Homeland*, 9 September 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3eH6n7T>

13. Ibid, page 9

14. Refugee Protection Watch, *Trapped In Between Lebanon And Syria*, October 2020, page 17, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gQfdTg>

15. This information refers to recommendation number 109.152 made by XX (“”). See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>

16. These numbers are extracted from the Annual Reports published by the Syrian Network for Human Rights between 2017 and 2020: “The ninth annual report on enforced disappearance in Syria on the international day of victims of enforced disappearance”, 30 August 2020, available at: <https://sn4hr.org/arabic/2020/08/30/12620/>; “At least 95000 people have been forcibly disappeared in Syria since March 2011”, 30 August 2018, available at: <https://sn4hr.org/arabic/2018/08/30/10347/>; “At least 98000 people have been forcibly disappeared in Syria since March 2011”, 30 August 2019, available at: <https://sn4hr.org/arabic/2019/08/30/11487/>; “Enforced disappearance as weapon of war in Syria, at least 85000 forcibly disappeared”, 30 August 2017, available at: <https://sn4hr.org/arabic/2017/08/30/8607/>

17. For further details, see the following press releases made by the Human Rights Guardians: “More enforced disappearances reported to the United Nations Working Group Geneva”, (02 December 2020), available at: <http://www.hrguardians.org/archives/3075>; “The disappearance of two men from one family by the hands of the military security in Hama”, 15 June 2020, available at: <http://www.hrguardians.org/archives/2704>; “An employee of a water company has been disappeared after being kidnapped by military intelligence”, 13 November 2018, available at: <http://www.hrguardians.org/archives/1948>. Additionally cases filed to the Working Group can be found at the following link: <http://www.hrguardians.org/joint-cases>

18. Ibid

19. Syrian Network for Human Rights, *The Syrian Regime Prevents Hundreds of Syrians From Returning from Lebanon to Their Homeland*, 9 September 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3eH6n7T>

20. Ibid, page 9

21. Irish Times, *Detentions and torture of Syrian refugees returning home reported*, 17 March 2018. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3blsBWq>

22. Foreign Policy, ‘A deadly welcome awaits Syria’s returning refugees’, 6 February 2019, para. 4-5,8, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ow4MGt>

23. The Day After, Orient Policy Center & Syrian Legal Development Programme, *In the Absence of the Choice to Remain or Return: Mass Forced Displacement & its Consequences under a “Reconciliation Agreement”, Survey Study including 10,000 IDPs in North-Western Syria*, March 2020, available at: <https://tda-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Forced-Displacement.pdf>

24. Human Rights Council, *23rd Report of the Commission of Inquiry of the Syrian Arab Republic – A decade of detention and imprisonment*, Un Doc. A/HRC/46/55, 11 March 2021, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIICISyria/Pages/Detention-report.aspx>

25. Human Rights Watch, *Syria: Detention, Harassment in Retaken Areas. Media, Aid Workers, Activists and Families Targeted*, 21 May 2019, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/21/syria-detention-harassment-retaken-areas>

26. Justice for Life, *The Main Reasons Behind Unwillingness of People Displaced from Deir Ezzor to Return to the Areas under Control of the Syrian Regime in the Province*, February 2019, available at: <https://jfl.ngo/en/the-main-reasons-behind-unwillingness-of-people-displaced-from-deir-ezzor-to-return-to-the-areas-of-control-of-the-syrian-regime-in-the-province/>

27. For example Recommendation 109.169 (Sweden), a recommendation accepted and the implementation of which was ongoing. See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, p. 7, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>

28. See, for example, recommendation 109.152 to “put an end to enforced disappearances and torture in all places of deprivation of liberty” (Luxembourg) and recommendation 109.162 to “take legislative and concrete measures to prevent the use of torture and bring to justice those responsible for such violations” (Switzerland), both of which were accepted by the Syrian Arab Republic. See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, p. 4 and 7, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>

29. For more specific information on the detention and mistreatment of children detained between 2011 and 2016 by the Syrian authorities, please refer to LDHR’s report *No Silent Witnesses: Violations Against Children in Syrian Detention Centers*, December 2019, available at: <http://ldhrights.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NO-SILENT-WITNESSES.pdf>

30. This information is extracted from confidential medico-legal assessments conducted by LDHR’s medical experts with survivors detained since 2016.

31. Recommendations 177 and 178 (Protect women from sexual violence and abuse (Pakistan) and Take concrete steps to stop sexual violence against women and girls and ensure that victims are given protection and assistance with their recovery (Singapore)) were accepted and their implementation was ongoing. See Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Syrian Arab Republic, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 13 March 2017, p.7, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/055/86/PDF/G1705586.pdf?OpenElement>

32. This information is extracted from confidential medico-legal assessments conducted by LDHR’s medical experts with survivors detained since 2016. For more information on male sexual violence (survivors detained between 2011 and 2017), please refer to LDHR’s report “*The Soul Has Died*”: *Typology, Patterns, Prevalence and the Devastating Impact of Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in Syrian Detention*, March 2019, available at: <http://ldhrights.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-Soul-Has-Died-Male-Sexual-Violence-Report-English-for-release-copy.pdf>; For information on female survivors of torture and sexual violence committed in detention between 2011 and 2016, refer to LDHR’s reports *Voices From the Dark, Torture and Sexual Violence Against Women in Assad’s Detention Centres*, July 2017, available at: <http://ldhrights.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Voices-from-the-Dark.pdf>; and “*The Whole World Has Let Me Down*”: *Understanding What Syrian Women Face During And After Detention* (detained between 2009 and 2017), May 2021, available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JBgc1UDtzKfqi65QKpMXIOTFjxly8qXO/view?usp=sharing>

33. For some examples of the impacts of torture and inhumane detention conditions on Syrian women, refer to Synergy for Justice and LDHR, “*The Whole World Has Let Me Down*”: *Understanding What Syrian Women Face During And After Detention* (detained between 2009 and 2017), May 2021, available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JBgc1UDtzKfqi65QKpMXIOTFjxly8qXO/view?usp=sharing>

34. Human Rights Council, 19th Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 2 March 2020, available at: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/43/57>

35. Ibid

36. See *Legal Obstacles to Housing, Land and Property Rights in Syria*, available at: <https://www.paxforpeace.nl/publications/allpublications/legal-obstacles-to-housing-land-and-property-rights-in-syria>

37. Human Rights Watch, *Q&A Syria's New Property Law, 29 May 2018*, available at:
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/29/qa-syrias-new-property-law>

38. Justice for Life, *Loss of Evidentiary Documents in Syria Awaiting Fundamental Solutions*, 21 April 2020, available at:
<https://jfl.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Loss-of-Evidentiary-Documents-in-Syria-Final.pdf>

39. Ibid

40. Ibid

41. Ibid

42. See note 36

43. Ibid

