

Schnellrecherche der SFH-Länderanalyse vom 25. Januar 2017 zu Syrien: Reflexverfolgung

Fragen an die SFH-Länderanalyse:

- Inwiefern sind Menschen in Syrien gegenwärtig von Reflexverfolgung betroffen?

Die Informationen beruhen auf einer zeitlich begrenzten Recherche (Schnellrecherche) in öffentlich zugänglichen Dokumenten, die uns derzeit zur Verfügung stehen.

1 Inwiefern sind Menschen gegenwärtig von Reflexverfolgung betroffen?

Reflexverfolgung ist ein vertrautes politisches Instrument. Das irische *Refugee Documentation Centre* veröffentlichte am 26. März 2013 eine Übersicht zur Reflexverfolgung in Syrien. Darin wird mit Verweis auf eine Reihe von verlässlichen Quellen von zahlreichen Fällen berichtet, in denen Personen aufgrund ihrer familiären Zugehörigkeit Opfer zielgerichteter Verfolgung wurden. Demnach setzten die syrischen Behörden Oppositionelle bereits vor dem Beginn der Unruhen im Jahr 2011 regelmässig unter Druck, indem sie ihre Familienangehörigen Repressionen und Schikanen aussetzten. Seit dem Ausbruch des Bürgerkriegs habe diese Strategie zusätzlich an Gewicht gewonnen.

Familienangehörige verhaftet und gefoltert. Im selben Bericht des irischen *Refugee Documentation Centre* (26. März 2013) wird von Familienangehörigen berichtet, die von den Sicherheitskräften verhaftet und gefoltert wurden, um Oppositionelle zu erpressen oder zur Aufgabe zu zwingen. Auch Kinder sollen von Massnahmen betroffen gewesen sein, die sich zum einen gegen Angehörige bewaffneter Gruppierungen, zum anderen aber auch gegen politische Aktivistinnen und Aktivisten, Regierungskritiker und -kritikerinnen, wie auch gegen Mitglieder von Menschenrechtsgruppen richteten. Die meisten Verhaftungen wurden im Geheimen und auf Befehl eines Sicherheitsapparates durchgeführt. Dabei fehlte in vielen Fällen eine offizielle Begründung für die Verhaftung und es handelte sich um willkürliches Vorgehen.

Reflexverfolgung durch verschiedene Konfliktparteien findet weiterhin statt. Sowohl das Assad-Regime wie auch andere Konfliktparteien wandten und wenden dieses Vorgehen weiterhin systematisch an, wie aus verschiedenen aktuellen Publikationen hervorgeht.

In den jüngsten Erwägungen von *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR) zum Schutz für Personen aus Syrien (November 2015) wird darauf hingewiesen, dass eine ganze Reihe von Bürgerkriegsparteien (z.B. Armee, regierungsfreundliche Milizen, regierungsfeindliche Gruppierungen, sowie ISIS) diese Strategie verfolgen. So werden ganze Familien, Stämme, religiöse und ethnische Gruppen, sowie Städte und Dörfer zum Ziel von Vergeltungsaktionen. Der UNHCR-

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Bericht hält explizit fest, dass die Dynamik der Reflexverfolgung eine ganz entscheidende Charakteristik des anhaltenden syrischen Konflikts darstellt. Betroffen sind demnach beispielsweise Familienangehörige von mutmasslichen Protestierenden, Aktivistinnen und Aktivisten, Mitgliedern von Oppositionsparteien und bewaffneten regierungsfeindlichen Gruppierungen, Dienstverweigerern und Überläufern. Laut *UNHCR* sind Fälle bekannt, in denen es durch Reflexverfolgung zu willkürlichen Festnahmen, Isolationshaft, Folter und anderen Misshandlungen, sexueller Gewalt, sowie standrechtlichen Hinrichtungen kam.

Reflexverfolgung durch das syrische Regime. Der Bericht von *Human Rights Watch* zur Menschenrechtssituation in Syrien vom 29. Januar 2015 weist ebenfalls darauf hin, dass die syrischen Sicherheitskräfte Familienangehörige von gesuchten Personen festnehmen, um diese dazu zu bewegen, sich den Behörden auszuliefern. Auch Kinder seien von diesen Massnahmen betroffen. Die Untersuchungskommission des *UNO Menschenrechtsrates* zu Syrien bestätigt diese Aussagen in ihrem Bericht vom 11. August 2016.

Der *Finnish Immigration Service* (FIS) beschreibt in seinem Bericht vom 23. August 2016 die Konsequenzen die eine Desertion oder Wehrdienstverweigerung auf Familienangehörige haben kann. Demnach werden oftmals männliche, teilweise aber auch weibliche Familienmitglieder inhaftiert bis der Deserteur zum Dienst zurückkehrt. Zudem wird durch Plünderung des Besitzes oder Ausschluss aus der Gemeinschaft massiver Druck auf die Familie ausgeübt damit sie den Aufenthaltsort des Flüchtigen bekannt gibt. Männliche Verwandte werden dabei teilweise anstelle des Deserteurs in den Militär-oder Reservedienst einberufen. Im Falle dass ein ziviler Angestellter des Militärs aus dem Dienst ausscheidet, können seiner Familie laut FIS die gleichen Konsequenzen drohen.

Amnesty International führt in seinem Bericht vom 5. November 2015 in diesem Zusammenhang konkrete Beispiele von Familienmitgliedern von Regimegegnern oder Deserteuren auf, die inhaftiert und in Haft vermutlich verstorben sind. In seinem Bericht über die Menschenrechtspraxis in Syrien im Jahr 2015 (13. April 2016) schreibt das *US Department of State* (USDOS), dass die Regierung und ihre Milizen weiterhin in Misshandlungen und Folter von Oppositionsmitgliedern und Zivilpersonen sowie deren Angehörigen verstrickt sind. USDOS nimmt dabei auch Bezug auf Berichte, nach denen Regierungsbeamte inhaftierte sowie verletzte und kranke Personen misshandelten und als Kriegstaktik Frauen und Männer vergewaltigten.

Ireland: Refugee Documentation Centre, 26. März 2013:

«A report published by the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies, in a section titled "Enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions", states:

"Over the past decades and in particular in the 1980's and 1990's, security bodies carried out waves of arrests, detaining hundreds of suspects and their relatives for long periods of time. Cases of enforced disappearances could last a few months, or several years. According to the information received, on occasion, some suspects were even unlawfully executed." (Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (2010) *Alternative Report to the Syrian Government's Initial Report*

on Measures taken to Fulfil its Commitments under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, p.22)

In a section titled "Unexplained deaths under torture and deterrence of families to look for truth" this report states: "The number of people who have died in Syria under torture is unknown, first and foremost due to the difficulty of accessing such information, but also because the security apparatus threatens the detainee's family, telling them they will meet the same fate if they speak of the torture." (ibid, p.24)

A Human Rights Watch report on the arrest of the wives of detained suspected Islamists states: "On July 31, State Security, one of Syria's numerous security agencies, seized Yusra al-Husayn at her house and took her into detention. She is the wife of Jihad Diab, a detainee at the US military base at Guantanamo Bay. Four days later, State Security detained Raw'a al-Kilani from her house. Raw'a is married to Ziad al-Kilani, who was detained by Syrian Air Force Intelligence in April 2004 and is currently facing trial before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), a special court that is exempt from standard rules of criminal procedure and evidence, on charges of membership in an association 'created to change the economic or social structure of the state' through terrorist acts. Ziad is currently detained in Sednaya prison. Around the time Raw'a was arrested, State Security also detained Bayan, the wife of Ahmad Saleh `Ali, from her house. Security services arrested Ahmad in June 2005." (Human Rights Watch (17 August 2008) Syria: Wives of Islamist Suspects Detained, Whereabouts Unknown)

*In an article published by the Institute for War & Peace Reporting an exiled opposition activist states: "The Assad regime has a **long history of targeting the families of opposition activists as a way of pressuring them to stop their activities, and this tactic has become even more crucial since the start of the uprising.**" (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (9 September 2011) Syria Activist Fears Family Targeted)*

*The author of this article also states: "There are a number of instances of **family members being arrested and tortured in order to blackmail opposition activists**, especially in places like Hama, where we believe children as young as a year old have been held hostage by security forces." (ibid)*

*The 2013 Human Rights Watch report on Syria, in a section titled "Arbitrary Arrests, Enforced Disappearances, Torture, and Deaths in Custody", states: "In some instances activists reported that **security forces detained their family members, including children, to pressure them to turn themselves in.**" (Human Rights Watch (31 January 2013) World Report 2013 – Syria)*

*The 2012 US Department of State country report on Syria, in a section titled "Arbitrary Arrest", states: "In effect until April 19, the Emergency Law authorized the government to conduct preventive arrests and overrode constitutional and penal code provisions against arbitrary arrest and detention, including the need to obtain warrants. After the Emergency Law was technically lifted, security forces continued their previous practices and, in fact, arrested more individuals arbitrarily. There were also several reports that **the security services would arrest relatives of a***

wanted person to pressure that individual to surrender. Warrants and court orders were rarely issued or presented before an arrest. Most detentions were made secretly at the order of one of the security branches. Arbitrary and false arrests were common, and detainees had no legal redress. Often the authorities cited no reasons for arresting civilians.” (US Department of State (24 May 2012) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011 – Syria, p.8)

*In a section titled “Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence” this report states: “**The government actively targeted and arbitrarily arrested the family members of government critics and human rights groups.** On August 30, air force intelligence agents seized Yassin Ziadeh, the brother of exiled activist Radwan Ziadeh. Activists reported that the government targeted Yassin due to his brother’s criticisms of the regime. At year’s end Yassin continued to be held incommunicado at an unknown location and had not been charged. Composer Malek Jandali’s parents were killed in their home in Homs in retaliation for Jandali’s activities in the United States. There were unconfirmed reports that security personnel forced prisoners to watch relatives being tortured to extract confessions.” (ibid, pp.11-12)*

*An Amnesty International briefing document, in a section titled “From Shooting Peaceful Demonstrators to Air Bombardments and Ballistic Missiles Strikes Against Civilians”, states: “As the conflict spread, **Syrian armed forces and pro-government militias carried out destructive incursions in town and villages, where they extrajudicially executed captured opposition fighters, their relatives and other civilian residents, and burned and vandalized residents’ homes and businesses.**” (Amnesty International (14 March 2013) Syria: Government Bombs Rain on Civilians, p.2)*

*A UN Human Rights Council report, in a section titled “Enforced disappearance” (paragraph 80), states: “There were multiple reports of enforced disappearance committed by Government forces and affiliated militia. No information was provided to families who enquired about their relatives’ whereabouts. **Relatives of some detainees who approached officials were themselves arrested, justifying a fear in others who might undertake similar enquiries.**” (UN Human Rights Council (5 February 2013) Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, p.14)*

*An Amnesty International urgent action alert on the arrest of a mother and her children states: “Mahmoud Hamada, aged 10 and Osama Hamada, aged 8, were arrested from their home in Aqraba, in the suburbs of Damascus on 15 May 2012, along with their mother Malika al-Khateeb who is six months pregnant. Five other family members present in the house at the time were also arrested: they are the children’s grandfather Mahmoud Rida Hamada; grandmother Samiya al-Jad; uncle Mohamed Hamada; aunt Noor al-Habyan; and cousin Adam Hamada, aged 3. Following the arrests, several of the town’s elders went to ask for their release at the Air Force Intelligence branch in al-Mezzeh neighbourhood of Damascus, but were told **the family would only be released if Malika al-Khateeb’s husband, Said Mahmoud Hamada, hands himself in to the authorities.** Said Mahmoud Hamada is reportedly accused by the Syrian authorities of ‘belonging to a terrorist group’,*

and is currently in hiding.” (Amnesty International (1 June 2012) Mother And Children Held Incommunicado)

An urgent appeal from the World Organisation Against Torture on the arrest of a human rights activist states: “The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention of Mr. Mazen Naji, a college student also known as Abu Hamza al-Shami, a member of the Syrian Network for Human Rights and an activist in the Syrian peace movement who has been monitoring human rights violations occurring within the country, as well as four of his relatives.” (World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (18 February 2013) Syrian Arab Republic: Incommunicado detention of Mr. Mazen Naji)

This appeal also states: “The agents also put pressure on Mr. Naji’s family members, trying to get them to make contact with other activists. Mr. Naji’s father and sister Ms. Islam Naji were also arrested for questioning and have not since returned home. On January 21, 2013, Ms. Naji’s husband and his father went to the security branch to find out what had happened to their relatives and have also not returned since then.” (ibid)» Quelle: Ireland: Refugee Documentation Centre, Syria: Information Regarding the Government Targeting of Family Members of Persons Who Have Been Arrested and Tortured or Who Have Been Killed Due to Their Opposition to the Government, 26. März 2013: www.refworld.org/docid/51825b694.html.

UNHCR, November 2015:

«Impact of Conflict and Violence on the Civilian Population within Syria

A particular and deepening feature of the conflict is that different parties to the conflict frequently impute a political opinion to larger groups of people, including families, tribes, religious or ethnic groups or whole towns, villages or neighbourhoods, by association. As such, members of a larger entity, without individually being singled out, become the targets for repercussions by different actors, including government forces, ISIS, and antigovernment armed groups, for reason of real or perceived support to another party to the conflict. According to consistent reports, whole communities which are perceived to be holding a particular political opinion or affiliation in relation to the conflict are targeted by aerial bombardments, shelling, siege tactics, suicide attacks and car bombs, arbitrary arrest, hostage-taking, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and extra-judicial executions. The perception of sharing a political opinion or affiliation in relation to the conflict is often based on little more than an individual’s physical presence in a particular area (or the fact that he/she originates from a particular area), or his/her ethnic, religious or tribal background. The risk of being harmed is serious and real, and in no way diminished by the fact that the person concerned may not be targeted on an individual basis.» S. 11-12.

«74. Reports consistently describe the targeting of family members and other persons affiliated with those who are opposing or are perceived to be opposing the government. As such, family members (including spouses, children including minor children, siblings, parents and also members of the extended family) of,

for example, (real or perceived) protestors, activists, members of opposition parties or armed opposition groups, defectors and draft evaders, have reportedly been targeted for arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including sexual violence, as well as summary execution. Neighbours, colleagues and friends have also reportedly been targeted. In cases in which a wanted government opponent, or person perceived to be a government opponent, cannot be found, security forces reportedly turn to arresting and/or abusing members of his/her family, including children, either as a form of retribution for the wanted person's opposition activities or defection, to obtain information about his/her whereabouts, or as a means to force the wanted person to turn him/herself in or to confess to the charges brought against him/her. In particularly grave instances, entire families related to members of the opposition or defectors have reportedly been arrested or extra-judicially executed, for example during house searches; (... see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, 13 August 2015, paras 41, 50, 51, 55; US Department of State, 2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Syria, 25 June 2015, p. 8; HRW, World Report 2015 - Syria, 29 January 2015, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54cf837c15.html>. Likewise, anti-government armed groups have reportedly singled out family members of government supporters or perceived government supporters, including, for example, members of the government, government forces, or political parties affiliated with the government, commonly for execution or kidnapping for ransom, to pursue a prisoner exchange or as a form of retribution; see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 5 February 2015, Annex II, para. 17; UN Human Rights Council, Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 18 March 2014, para. 28, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/537605144.html>. Reports also indicate that ISIS has targeted family members of persons perceived to be opposing the group for arrest and punishment, including execution. Accounts from ISIS-held areas in Syria also suggest that fathers, brothers and husbands are at risk of arrest and flogging if their female relatives do not adhere to ISIS' strict dress code.» Seite 11, Fussnote 74.

«Risk Profiles

*Where claims of asylum-seekers who have fled Syria are considered on an individual basis in accordance with established asylum or refugee status determination procedures, UNHCR considers that persons with any of the profiles below, or a combination thereof, and depending on the particular circumstances of the individual case, are likely to be in need of international protection in the sense of the 1951 Convention, unless, of course, exclusion clauses were to apply (see para 39). **Family members or persons otherwise closely associated with persons in any of the profiles below are, depending on the individual circumstances of the case, also likely to be in need of international refugee protection. (...)***

*- **Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the government, including, but not limited to, members of political opposition parties; protestors, activists and others perceived to be sympathizing with the opposition; members of anti-government armed groups, or persons perceived to be members of anti-government***

armed groups; draft evaders and deserters from the Armed Forces; Government and Ba'ath Party officials who abandoned their positions; family members and others who are associated with persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the government; and civilian inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods, towns and villages perceived to be opposing the government.

- **Persons supporting or perceived to be supporting the government**, including, but not limited to, government officials and members of government-affiliated parties; members and perceived members of government forces and civilians perceived to be collaborating with government forces; family members of persons supporting or perceived to be supporting the government; and civilian inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods, towns and villages perceived to be supporting the government.

- **Persons opposing, or believed to oppose, ISIS in areas under its de facto control or influence.**

- **Persons opposing, or believed to oppose, anti-government armed groups in areas under their de facto control.**

- **Persons opposing, or believed to be opposing, the PYD/YPG in areas under their de facto control.**

- **Certain professionals**, in particular journalists and other media professionals, citizen journalists; doctors and other health professionals; human rights defenders; humanitarian workers; artists; and businessmen and other people (perceived to be) of means or influence.

- **Members of religious groups**, including Sunnis, Alawites, Ismailis, Twelver Shi'ites, Druze, Christians, and Yezidis.

- **Persons perceived as contravening Shari'a Law in areas under the control or influence of extremist Islamist groups.**

- **Members of minority ethnic groups**, including Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Circassians, and Armenians.

- **Women**, in particular women without male protection, women who are victims of or at risk of sexual violence, early and forced marriage, domestic violence, "honour crimes" or trafficking.

- **Children**, in particular children who are at risk of detention or have previously been detained; children victims of or at risk of underage and forced recruitment, sexual and domestic violence, child labour, trafficking, and systematic denial of access to education.

- **Individuals of diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity.**

- **Palestinian refugees**» Quelle: UNHCR, International Protection Considerations with Regard to People Fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic Update IV, November 2015, S. 11-12, 22-23: www.refworld.org/pdfid/5641ef894.pdf.

Human Rights Watch, 29. Januar 2015:

*«Syrian security forces continue to detain people arbitrarily, regularly subjecting them to ill-treatment and torture, and often disappearing them using an extensive network of detention facilities throughout Syria. Many detainees were young men in their 20s or 30s; but children, women, and elderly people were also detained. In some instances, individuals reported that **security forces detained their family members, including children, to pressure them to turn themselves in.** On August 30, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, a local monitoring group, estimated that **85,000 people were currently being held by the government in conditions that amount to enforced disappearance.**»* Quelle: Human Rights Watch, World Report 2015 - Syria, 29. Januar 2015: www.refworld.org/docid/54cf837c15.html.

UN Human Rights Council, 11. August 2016:

*«**Government forces arrested or abducted family members of men believed to be fighting against the Government. Those detained in such circumstances are effectively held hostage and are released only when their male relative hands himself in.** »* Quelle: HRC - UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights): Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, 11. August 2016, S. 14: www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1474461066_g1617860.pdf.

Finnish Immigration Service, 23. August 2016:

*«**Possible consequences of evasion or desertion for family members.** There would be some consequences for the deserter's family, though a European diplomat is not certain what the consequences would be. **The regime might pressure the family more if it believes that the deserter can be found. According to Hanafi, the brothers can be arrested until the draft evader or deserter returns. Female family members can also be arrested. If one works as a civilian in the army but decides to leave, the consequences would be the same for the family. According to HBS, family members will face consequences if one of them defects from the army. The father is often detained, but it can also be the mother. They may be imprisoned for a few months. The family would be at least pressured for some time. Family members can be in danger also in neighboring countries. Family members can, in addition to getting arrested and having their homes pillaged, be excluded from the community. The consequences depend on the area. The father or brothers of a deserter maybe recruited to the army to replace the deserter. If the draft evader or deserter has family, the army can ask them about the whereabouts of the deserter. If the family members do not know the person's whereabouts, they do not face consequences. If one deserts from the army with guns, the family members are arrested if they are still in Syria. If they are not in the country, they are put on the wanted persons' list. The father or brother would not be recruited to the army, because they would not be trusted. Instead, they would be imprisoned.** »* Quelle: Finnish Immigration Service, Fact-Finding Mission Report Syria: Military Service, National Defense Forces, Armed Groups Supporting Syrian Regime and Armed Opposition, 23. August 2016, S. 11, 13: https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/finland/PLib/Report_Military-Service_-Final.pdf.

Amnesty International, 5. November 2015:

« FAMILY MEMBERS OF WANTED INDIVIDUALS

Since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, the Syrian government has also arrested and forcibly disappeared the family members of individuals who were wanted by the Syrian authorities. Relatives of these disappeared detainees have said to Amnesty International that they believe the abductions were usually aimed at either dissuading the wanted individuals from continuing their political activism or military activities, or at attempting to force those who were wanted to surrender themselves to the security forces. On some occasions, these family members were arrested during home or office raids. The following cases provide examples of individuals who were likely forcibly disappeared because they were the family members of individuals who were wanted by the Syrian government.

Mousa Suleiman Haj Hamad is a farmer from a village north of al-Raqqa city. At the time of his arrest, on 10 April 2012, he was also a peaceful political activist. He was arrested at the house of a friend in Damascus, where he had travelled to meet with fellow activists. According to detainees who were with Mousa in prison and then released, he was first brought to the al-Khateeb branch of General Intelligence in Damascus and later transferred to Palestine Branch 235 of Military Intelligence in Damascus. **Mahmoud, Mousa's brother, a former official in the Syrian Defence Ministry, defected from the government three months before his brother's arrest. He told Amnesty International that the security forces used his brother as a way to pressure him to return to his former post. "They were sending threats to me," he explains. "They sent me lots of messages, on Skype, Facebook and on my phone. They said the UN and even the embassies of the whole world would not protect my brother. But if I came back, there would be no problems."**Mousa says the family worked through several unofficial channels to locate his brother. According to the last report his family received from a released detainee in March 2015, Mousa was detained at Branch 248 of Military Intelligence in Damascus. The detainee told Mahmoud that Mousa was suffering from a stomach infection as well as an infection that covered his skin in sores. Mousa is the father of two boys and a daughter who was born after his arrest. When asked how the family been affected by Mousa's enforced disappearance, Mahmoud responded: My life was turned upside down, and his family's lives as well. His wife is homeless now. She is moving between houses in al-Raqqa. The pain is different for me. **I feel responsible for his arrest. Every day I am free, I know that my brother is paying for this in detention. I am living my life on his account. Guilt is the worst of all emotions. It's very difficult to describe how terrible I feel... They keep my brother hidden just to get their revenge on me.**

AMIN AND FARES Amin and Fares were arrested in January 2013 at their home in Deir al-Zour. A neighbour who witnessed the arrest reported to the family that around 15 men from Military Intelligence carried it out. Amin and Fares's brother and uncle told Amnesty International that they were unable to visit any branches to inquire about their relatives' whereabouts, as they feared they would be arrested. "They will finish off the entire family, no question, if we had gone there," said the brothers' uncle. As a result, the family tried to locate the brothers through intermediaries or other unofficial means. However, the uncle explained, "We didn't have enough money to find them.

We tried so many things, but nothing worked.” **According to their uncle, the brothers were targeted because their father was a leading figure in an opposition brigade. “They wanted to take revenge on their father... They arrested the sons to get to him. He was a sheikh and a big supporter of the opposition in Deir al-Zour.” Their brother left Syria after their arrest, out of fear that he too would be arrested. He told Amnesty International: “The problem is that they have vanished. They have completely disappeared. God knows, I think they have been killed. We tried so hard to find them, but nobody found any information about them after their arrest.”**

Yamen Hasan is a computer specialist from Jdaidet al-Fadl, a town in the suburbs of Damascus. He was arrested at his home on 29 June 2013. **His brother, Amer, is a journalist who is wanted by the government for his media activism. “They showed up at the house, looking for me, but they didn’t find me. Instead, they found my brother,” he explained.** His brother’s family, who witnessed the arrest, said it was carried out by around 20 men from the government-affiliated National Defence Forces. A released detainee informed the family soon after the arrest that he has posted Yamen in Military Intelligence Branch 215. **When his mother arrived at Branch 215, the authorities gave her Yamen’s identification card and informed her that her son had died of a heart attack while in prison.** However, the authorities refused to hand over Yamen’s remains, and the family does not believe he is actually dead. Amer explained: “If you go ask you about a detainee, they give the ID, just to get rid of you... We have seen so many cases where the family is given an ID and death certificate, and after two years their son comes home... So we are surviving on hope. He is probably dead, but we still hope.” Amer described how his family was affected by Yamen’s enforced disappearance: “My family has collapsed. If there was a grave, I could go visit him. Even a grave would be better than this, never knowing where he is or what happened to him.”

Amira, a 60-year-old woman, went missing on 9 November 2014. Prior to her arrest, her daughters had all been arrested and detained as a result of their peaceful political activities in 2013 and 2014, one for her work as a media activist, the second for providing medical assistance to demonstrators and the third for organizing protests. All three have now been released. Amira went missing on the road as she was returning to her hometown after visiting one of her daughters in Adra prison. Given the fact that the area where her mother went missing is controlled by the government, her daughter Faten is confident that she is now in the custody of the security forces. Amira’s children have sought information on her whereabouts through official and unofficial channels, but they have been unsuccessful so far. Faten told Amnesty International: “We immediately started searching, using a lot of different people. But one month ago we lost hope. There is no information. Just nothing.” She added: “Because my father was active, and we kids were active, all of the eyes were on our family. My mother knew it was risky to cross through the checkpoints, but she had to visit my sister. That’s my mother.” **Faten feels her mother has been targeted because of her children’s activism. “Of course I feel guilty. I believe she was arrested because of us,” she said.** » Quelle: AI - Amnesty International: 'Between Prison and the Grave': Enforced Disappearances in Syria, 5. November 2015: www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1459953265_mde2425792015english.pdf.

US Department of State, 13. April 2016:

*«Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture: **According to reports, the government and its affiliated militias consistently engaged in physical abuse, punishment, and torture of both opposition members and civilians. Government agents targeted individuals with previous ties to foreign governments that favored the opposition; it also targeted family members and associates of such individuals.** Government officials reportedly abused prisoners and detainees, as well as injured and sick persons, and raped women and men as a tactic of war. In addition, according to the COI, the “Caesar photographs” smuggled out of the country in 2014 by a former government photographer documented the torture and severe malnourishment of more than 11,000 deceased detainees between 2011 and 2013.»* US Department of State, 2015 Country Reports on the State of Human Rights Practices, 13. April 2016: http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/322447/461924_de.html.