

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 24/4873/2016

19 September 2016

Amnesty International calls on the Syrian government, armed groups and the international community to address detention-related abuses in ongoing peace talks on Syria

Amnesty International welcomes the updated report from the Commission of Inquiry and shares the Commission's grave concerns regarding the humanitarian crisis in Syria, and the commission of gross human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by parties to the conflict.

Over the last year our research findings reveal widespread and systematic torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, and enforced disappearance by government forces that amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹ While the scale of abuses cannot be compared, Amnesty International has also recently documented cases of abduction, torture and summary killings by armed groups in Aleppo and Idlib governorates.² Conservative estimates suggest that at least 17,700 people have died in custody in Syria since March 2011.³ The real figure is likely to be much higher given that the whereabouts of tens of thousands of people held by government forces are unknown.

Amnesty International considers it imperative that the Commission be granted full access to Syria, in particular to carry out unannounced visits to all detention facilities to investigate and monitor conditions.

Does the Commission expect the Syrian government to allow it access to the country in the near future?

¹ Amnesty International, *It breaks the human: Torture, disease and death in Syria's prisons* (Index: MDE 24/4508/2016), 18 August 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/4508/2016/en/>.

² Amnesty International, *Torture was my punishment: Abductions, torture and summary killings under armed group rule in Aleppo and Idlib, Syria* (Index: MDE 24/4227/2016), 5 July 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/4227/2016/en/>.

³ Human Rights Data Analysis Group, *Technical memo for Amnesty International report on deaths in detention*, 18 August 2016, <https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/HRDAG-AI-memo.pdf>.

Amnesty International calls on the government of Syria and the leadership of armed groups to make clear to their forces that serious detention-related abuses will no longer be tolerated. Amnesty International urges the International Syria Support Group, particularly Russia and the United States, to address the issue during ongoing peace talks. All parties to the conflict must provide immediate and unhindered access for recognized international detention monitors to all persons deprived of their liberty, without prior notification. They should also urge all parties to immediately and unconditionally release all those who are currently arbitrarily detained for their human rights, humanitarian and media work.

Amnesty International appeals to the Syrian government and other Member States to use the occasion of Syria's UPR in October to further address the massive detention-related concerns in the country. Amnesty International urges the international community to support Syria to implement the UPR recommendations, including through the provision of technical assistance.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue with the UN Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic on 19 September 2016 during its 33rd session. During the interactive dialogue, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Public Document

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