



Amnesty International Public Statement

**UN Human Rights Council Thirty-fourth session,
27 February – 24 March 2017**

Item 6: Consideration of the UPR report on Syrian Arab Republic

16 March 2017

AI Index: MDE 24/5914/2017

Mr. President,

Amnesty International estimates that since 2011, 17,723 persons have died as a result of torture or other ill-treatment in detention centres across Syria. As many as 13,000 individuals have been killed in a widespread and systematic practice of extrajudicial executions, carried out in weekly mass hangings in Saydnaya Military Prison. Moreover, in the past six years, tens of thousands have been subjected to enforced disappearance, the majority at the hands of government forces.¹

We welcome the many recommendations made to Syria to end enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture and sexual violence and to bring those responsible to justice.² We urge Syria to give immediate effect to these recommendations and provide reparations to the victims and their families.

We note Syria's statement in the Working Group that it has investigated and prosecuted human rights violations related to cases of enforced disappearance before national criminal courts.³

We are concerned, however, about the use of unfair trials and the practice of trying civilians in military courts which do not conform to international fair trial standards. We urge the government to ensure that all detainees are registered and held in recognized places of detention, have access to lawyers and medical care, and are allowed regular visits by their families. We also urge the government to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

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/>. Amnesty International, *Human Slaughterhouse: Mass Hangings and Extermination at Saydnaya Prison, Syria* (Index: MDE 24/5415/2017), 7 February 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/5415/2017/en/>

² A/HRC/34/5, recommendations 109.152-109.166

³ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/34/5, 27 December 2016, presentation by the state under review, 16.

Moreover, in light of the widespread and systematic nature of the human rights violations that have taken place, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity, we call on Syria to allow for an independent investigation to take place and to ensure that its findings are communicated to the victims' families.

In line with many recommendations made during the review,⁴ Amnesty International reiterates its call on Syria to grant independent international monitors, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, full co-operation and unhindered access to all prisoners and allow them to carry out unannounced inspection visits to all detention facilities, to investigate all alleged crimes under international law and violations and abuses of international human rights law.

Amnesty International notes Syria's statement in the Working Group that the definition of the crime of torture in the new draft Criminal Code is in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.⁵ We urge the government to move expeditiously towards ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, as recommended in the review.⁶

Thank you, Mr. President,

⁴ A/HRC/34/5, recommendations 109.44-109.62, and 109.83

⁵ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/34/5, 27 December 2016, paragraph 16.

⁶ A/HRC/34/5, recommendations 109.3 and 109.6