



Statement by the Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice on International Human Rights Day

December 10, 2014 - Today marks the 64th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted following the horrors of World War II, the Declaration is a significant accomplishment for humankind. It was embraced by nations of the world as a common goal for all. Ever since its adoption, the Declaration has called upon every individual and every institution to promote these universal rights and freedoms. While Syria was one of the first states to ratify the Declaration, today the Syrian people are deprived of many of the Declaration's most basic rights. The oppression suffered by the Syrian people for decades has taken a turn for the worse over the past four years. Syrians have been subjected to unprecedented crimes, including genocide and crimes against humanity.

For the fourth year in a row, Human Rights Day passes whilst Syrians are denied their most basic right. As of today, more than 200,000 Syrians have been denied their right to life. This fundamental right is clearly stipulated in Article 3 of the Declaration.

For the fourth year in a row, Human Rights Day passes as thousands of activists and civilians are subjected to forced disappearance. Forced disappearance is in clear violation of Article 9 as well as Articles 6, 19, 20, 21, and 24 of the Declaration.

Arbitrary arrests are commonplace on the day of the 64th anniversary. These arrests without legal warrants or access to a fair trial violate Articles 3 and 5 of the Declaration. The number of documented deaths by torture has surpassed 5,000. Estimates of the true number are much higher. This anniversary coincides with the absence of justice in Syria. Perpetrators of human rights violations (including mass murder, abduction, torture and rape) act with impunity at a time when Syrian prisons are filled with prisoners of conscience.

For the fourth year in a row, Human Rights Day passes whilst more than 8 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes. These 8 million Syrians left behind their property, jobs, schools, universities and places of worship. Many of them do not receive humane treatment and are denied even their most minimal rights as refugees. As this day passes, the tragedy of the Syrian people and the violation of their rights has lasted 45 months with no solution in sight.

The Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice (SCTJ) holds the Syrian authorities accountable for human rights violations. The involvement of the Syrian regime in the murder of tens of thousands of civilians has been systematically documented. The Syrian authorities target civilians with warplanes and weapons banned under international conventions. The Syrian authorities have also arrested and abducted tens of thousands, and disabled all accountability mechanisms. The authorities have even targeted Syrian refugees, inflicting further humiliation and frustrating access to essential documentation.

SCTJ holds ISIS and other armed groups accountable for human rights violations. ISIS has committed hundreds of documented violations against Syrian civilians including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and torture. SCTJ seeks to bring all perpetrators of human rights violations to justice, without any regard for their ideological, national or religious goals.

The Declaration's signatory nations are morally and politically responsible for the continuation of these violations against the Syrian people. The Commission therefore calls upon these nations to act without hesitation and to put an end to the human rights violations in Syria. The signatory nations have a responsibility to return justice to Syria and to help the Syrian people emerge from this horrific crisis. The Syrian people should be empowered to establish a state based on the rule of law and the protection of human dignity.

For its part, SCTJ - in partnership with Syrian civil society institutions and the families of Syrian victims - works to develop a comprehensive national vision for justice in Syria in accordance with international humanitarian law.

SCTJ calls upon all Syrian victims of human rights violations to bring their cases to the Commission. SCTJ and its civil society partners within Syria document human rights violations perpetrated by any party. SCTJ calls upon all combating parties to respect the rights and dignity of the Syrian people and to cease all human rights violations against civilians.

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For more information about the Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice, please contact: info@syriantransitionaljustice.org