

ALERT



CIVILIANS IN SYRIA

“It is time for action now. It is time for a political will to put an end once and for all to this horrible suffering that the Syrian people are experiencing.”

*Raed Saleh, director of the Syria Civil Defence
(the White Helmets)*

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SIMON-SKJODT CENTER
FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE

IN MARCH 2011, SYRIANS STAGED LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS DEMANDING a democratic government. Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime reacted with mass arrests and lethal violence. The crisis soon escalated into an armed conflict involving local, regional, and international actors. Aided by Russia, the Assad regime continues to commit mass atrocities against civilians in Syria today.

After more than a decade of the Syrian government’s relentless attacks on civilians, over 500,000 Syrians have been killed, more than 6 million people are internally displaced, and over 5.5 million more have fled the country. More than 100,000 people are estimated to have been arbitrarily detained—and those who have survived and witnessed detention have told the world about crimes of torture, sexual violence, and killings that take place behind those closed doors. The Assad regime has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against civilians in Syria. Other groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), opposition forces, Syria’s international allies—particularly Russia and Iran—and other armed groups have also committed crimes, but the Assad regime is the primary perpetrator.

The Assad regime’s crimes against Syrian civilians have included extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, torture, forced displacement, arbitrary detention, bombings of residential areas, deliberate starvation by besiegement and blocking humanitarian assistance, targeting of hospitals and other medical infrastructure, and chemical weapons attacks. Chemical weapons—which are banned under international law—have been used since 2013, particularly in Idlib province and Eastern Ghouta. These crimes have created a humanitarian catastrophe

continues ►

of staggering proportions. The Syrian people, and refugees who may return to Syria, continue to face the risk of arbitrary detention and other crimes. The Museum's **Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide** is deeply concerned about these crimes and calls on the international community to take the following measures:

- Compel the Assad regime to release detainees and reveal information on those forcibly disappeared
- Support local civil society within and outside Syria, such as human rights groups, independent journalists, and aid organizations
- Advance justice and accountability for victims, and support whistleblowers, defectors, and witnesses
- Follow obligations under international law to protect refugee populations fleeing Syria

LEARN MORE AT ushmm.org/syria



WHAT YOU DO MATTERS. We can all play a role in helping prevent genocide. Action takes many forms, and every action counts. You can:

Stay informed. Follow the news; visit our website to learn more about places at risk of genocide and other violence, ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries

Join the Museum community. Sign up to receive email updates and follow us on Twitter @CPG_USHMM and Facebook @CenterForThePreventionOfGenocide

Engage with your community. Spread the word about what you've learned with friends, family, and colleagues

Support education and relief efforts. Find out more about humanitarian organizations, what they are doing in response to mass atrocities, and how you can help

Contact the media. Tell television, radio, newspaper, and online journalists that you want better coverage of places at risk of genocide and other violence; visit their websites, tag them on social media, call them, and send emails that provide feedback on their coverage

Contact your elected representatives. Alert them to the need to provide humanitarian assistance, protect civilians, stop the violence, and promote solutions to crises



Above and previous page: Syrian refugees walk into Jordan at the Al Hadalat crossing in February 2014. *Lucian Perkins for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum*

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SIMON-SKJODT CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF GENOCIDE 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW Washington, DC 20024-2126 ushmm.org