



Syrian war criminal jailing “bittersweet” for victims, survivors and families - statement

A statement by five associations of Syrian victims, survivors and family members

14 January 2022

As victims, survivors and family members impacted by enforced disappearance and detention in Syria, we met with mixed feelings the [guilty verdict](#) and sentence of life imprisonment for former Syrian intelligence officer Anwar Raslan by the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany, on 13 January 2022 for the murder of at least 27 people and torture of at least 4,000 at a Damascus prison.

The ruling is welcome and significant. The jailing of this war criminal sends a message to the world that impunity will not prevail and perpetrators of heinous crimes will not escape accountability. It also provides further proof – from a highly credible court – that the Syrian regime has consistently pursued a systematic policy of gross human rights violations, including torture and sexual violence.

“The verdict means a lot to me. But I will not rest until I know the whereabouts of my son and husband”
– Fadwa Mahmoud, Syrian activist and co-founder of the Families for Freedom

At the same time, it’s bittersweet. Thousands in Syria remain missing and behind bars, and our satisfaction at this verdict is overshadowed by our long and continuing suffering as we seek our missing loved ones and demand justice for the crimes against us. This important conviction is just a first step on the long and arduous path toward justice.

This verdict must spur greater efforts to secure the release of all detainees (including our relatives and loved ones), to reveal the fate of the disappeared, and to pursue comprehensive accountability measures for victims of the Syrian regime as a whole – beyond individual prosecutions – and of all perpetrators of crimes in Syria, including de facto forces and ISIS. In pursuit of these goals, our five organisations – the Association of Detainees and Missing in Sednaya Prison, Families for Freedom, Caesar Families Association, Ta’afi initiative and the Coalition of Families of Persons Kidnapped by ISIS-Daesh – have developed the [Truth and Justice Charter](#), which outlines our vision and demands for justice in Syria as victims, survivors and family members, and as rights holders.

"We differentiate between short-term justice and long-term justice. In the short term, there are immediate measures that must be taken to put a halt to ongoing violations and alleviate the suffering of survivors, victims and their families. In the medium- to longer-term we have additional demands to ensure comprehensive justice and non-repetition of the crimes we have suffered and continue to suffer from" - [Truth and Justice Charter](#)

Our key demand is to urgently and comprehensively address the issue of the missing, disappeared and detained in Syria. To this end, we have developed a [study](#) outlining the feasibility of creating a dedicated international mechanism to reveal the fate of Syria’s hundreds of thousands of missing persons.

The verdict against Anwar Raslan proves that justice can be delivered, where political will exists to pursue it. To prevent future generations of Syrians suffering the same violations we have endured, it must now energise our allies to do more.

[Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison](#) (ADMSP)

[Caesar Families Association](#)

[Families for Freedom](#)

[Ta’afi](#)

[The Coalition of Families of Persons Kidnapped by ISIS-Daesh](#) (Massar)