



Detention in Sednaya

Report on the Procedures and Consequences
of Political Imprisonment

The Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMSP) seeks to reveal the truth about, and bring justice to, those detained on the basis of political opinions or activities. It strives to uncover the fates of missing and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria in general, and those in the infamous Sednaya Prison in particular. The Association addresses the people detained or missing in Sednaya Prison by documenting their numbers, the locations and dates of their disappearance, as well as the entities responsible for their arrest. It also strives to contact the families of the missing, and to provide them with moral support and convey their voices and express their suffering in all possible and available means. The Association also works to delineate the issue of detainees and missing persons to local and international public opinion, and to cooperate with local and international human rights organizations in conducting investigations on the issues of detainees and missing persons in Sednaya Prison.

رابطة معتقلي ومفقودي سجن صيدنايا
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Dedication

To our brothers who have been tortured to death. To those whose frail bodies been under severe hunger and illnesses. To Ragheed Al Tatari the dean of detainees, to Walid Barakat and Bashar Ali Saleh To all those left behind in the hell of Assad's prisons.

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and Consequences of Political Imprisonment

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©Najah Albukai

Najah Bekaa is a Syrian fine artist. He studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Damascus University. Then he graduated from the Regional School of Fine Arts in Rouen, France. He served as a teacher at the Arab League in Damascus.

He was detained several times for his participation in Syrian protests against the Syrian Regime. The last detention was in 2014, where he was held in Damascus Central Prison (Adra).

During his detention, he witnessed the practices of Syrian regime and intelligence officers against the detainees inside detention centers and when he was released he reflected on his experience and translated these violations into paintings you will see in this report. He left Syria in 2015 and was granted political asylum in France.

“It is true that totalitarian domination tried to establish these holes of oblivion into which all deeds, good and evil, would disappear, but just as the Nazis’ feverish attempts, from June, 1942, on, to erase all traces of the massacres - through cremation, through burning in open pits, through the use of explosives and flame-throwers and bone-crushing machinery - were doomed to failure, so all efforts to let their opponents ‘disappear in silent anonymity’ were in vain. The holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible. One man will always be left alive to tell the story.”

**Hannah Arendt (From her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem:
A Report on the Banality of Evil*, 1963)**



Executive Summary

This report examines the procedures and consequences of detention in Sednaya prison in Syria, and aims to answer the following: Who are the detainees and how are they arrested? What are the consequences of arrest on them and their families (physical, psychological, economic and social impacts)? What changed after the revolution, whether in terms of the procedures of detention or its consequences? The report

is based on data from the first 400 cases (all men) documented up to early March 2019, as part of a project by the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison ongoing since early January 2018. It aims to document the names of Sednaya's detainees from the time of its establishment up to the present day, the earliest recorded arrest being in August of 1980. The documentation process remains ongoing, with the most recent case of detention included in this report being from April 2017.

The research into the social and demographic backgrounds of detainees raises many questions about the extent of damage suffered by individuals on a personal level, and by Syrian society at large, as well as the relations between religious or ethnic groups among the detainee population. Detainees were often young men, with a job or profession, a family, and a high level of educational attainment, hailing from a particular sect (Sunni). There were, however, also children and elderly persons among the detainees.

Bashar al-Assad's ascension to power in the year 2000 was accompanied by a large increase in arrests, even before the Syrian revolution; representing about a third of all arrests between 1980 and 2017. However, the rate of arrests reached its peak after the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, with more than half of all arrests happening in this period. In practice, what takes place hardly resembles an "arrest" as conventionally understood, being more akin to a kidnapping: the detaining entity does not identify itself at the moment of arrest, and no decision by a legally-recognized authority is produced. Moreover, the detainee is not informed of the reason for their arrest at the time.

The Military Interrogation Branch, the Officer Affairs Branch, and the Palestine Branch—all falling under the Military Intelligence Directorate—are the entry points into Sednaya. More than 90% of detainees reported that they were tortured in the prison, and also in the security branches they passed through before arriving there (or after leaving). All those who said they were tortured reported physical torture (100%), and 79.8% reported psychological torture. As for sexual torture, the rate was 29.4% (the true percentage is probably much higher; this is a very sensitive issue and many avoid discussing it). As for the courts in which detainees are tried, these are tantamount to security agencies that liquidate dissidents and rob them not only of their freedom but, in many cases, their property as well.

Detention leaves numerous social, physical, and psychological effects that stay with detainees long after their release from Sednaya, many of them insurmountable. This is in addition to the enormous financial impact of the extortion of detainees' families in order to obtain information about the fate of the detainee or to obtain a visit. Nor does it end there. Many have paid large sums for false promises to release detainees. This money is paid to intermediaries close to the regime and its "shabbiha" affiliates and the security services, as well as to lawyers and judges.

After the revolution against the regime in 2011, major changes occurred in the procedures and consequences of detention: detainees included more military personnel, tended to be more educated, and younger. Furthermore, the detention process, and the means of handling detainees, became more brutal, whether in terms of torture, "trial" proceedings, or the extortion to which they and their families were subject.

The report concludes with a number of recommendations regarding the need to provide all support possible to detainees, their families and the families of missing persons. It also recommends that survivors of detention be present in any future plans or projects addressing justice in Syria, and to pressure governments to take practical measures to hold accountable

those responsible for violations and crimes. All the testimonies on which this report is based provide detailed information as to how violations and crimes were committed, the names and ranks of some of the perpetrators, and details that explain how orders are issued and implemented inside the regime's security agencies. Most witnesses are ready to testify before courts, and the Association welcomes cooperation with relevant international organizations. Below is a list of findings:

Main Findings

Who are the detainees?

- The vast majority of detainees were under the age of 37 at the time of arrest (88.2%) and were employed (81.9%). The majority of them were married and had obtained university degrees (about 58%).
- The percentage of minors detained in our sample is 2% of the total. The percentage of detainees aged 48 and above was 2.8%.
- Sednaya held detainees of non-Syrian nationalities. In our sample there were Turkish, Iraqi, Lebanese, and Palestinian former detainees, though the vast majority were Syrian. It also included detainees from different sects and ethnicities, but the overwhelming proportion were Sunni (98.7%).
- The largest percentages were residents of Homs, Idlib, and Aleppo (more than 15% from each).

Where and when were arrests carried out?

The highest proportion (46.4%) were arrested in their place of work. Bashar al-Assad's reign marks a defining moment in the rise in the number of detainees: one-third of all arrests between 1980 and 2017 took place during his rule before the Syrian revolution in March 2011, and half occurred after 2011 (note that this data relies on survivors).

How were arrests carried out?

Only about 11% said that the entity that carried out their detention identified itself at the moment of arrest. In rare cases (nearly 2%), these authorities produced an arrest warrant issued by a legally-recognized authority, or informed the detainee/abductee of the reason for their arrest.

Which entity carried out the arrest?

- The Military Intelligence Directorate is responsible for the detention of more than three-quarters of Sednaya detainees.
- The vast majority of detainees pass through more than one security branch (less than one-third only passed through one branch, while almost three-quarters went through two or more branches).

How were detainees treated?

- Almost none were spared torture while in Sednaya prison or in the security branches they passed through.
- All of those who reported torture said they were subjected to physical torture (100%), and 97.8% reported psychological torture. As for sexual torture, the percentage was much lower (29.7%) due to the sensitivity of the topic.
- We identified twenty different forms of physical torture, the most common being beating with sticks and batons, as all were tortured in this method (100%). This was followed by whipping (95.2%), and then "the wheel" (about

80%). Most detainees were deprived of food, and were subjected to the pouring of cold water, and more than half were trampled by foot. A large proportion of detainees (more than 40%) were subjected to electric shocks, and/or the so-called “Shabeh” procedure, and/or torture via what is known as the “wind carpet.”

- We identified twenty-four methods of psychological torture, among them: blindfolding (78.7%), insults of a religious nature (71.6%), mock executions (69.8%), verbal abuse and insulting family members (66.9%), solitary confinement (65.4%), threats of arresting parents (59.3%), stripping (85.3%), sleep deprivation (55.9%) and forcing to watch another person being tortured (55.1%).
- We identified eight methods of sexual torture, including beatings targeting sexual organs (81.4%). About one-third were subjected to harm targeting sexual organs, or sensitive body parts, by various other means.

How did trials take place?

- The majority were tried in so-called Military Field Courts (57.2%). More than a third were tried in the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), and 6.5% were tried in the Counter-Terrorism Court.
- About one-third of detainees did not know whether or not they were tried under the Syrian Penal Code, as only about a quarter said they were tried under this law. The largest proportion; more than one third; responded with “no.”
- Trials according to the Syrian Penal Code were mainly carried out according to the following legal articles: membership of prohibited parties or associations (37.9%); weakening national sentiment or inciting racial or sectarian strife (21.2%); broadcasting false news abroad (12.1%).

What were the sentences issued against detainees, and how did they differ from the actual terms they spent in detention?

The durations of sentences ranged from 2 to 21 years. About a third of detainees received sentences of 5-6 years, and the same percentage were sentenced to more than 10 years.

- The actual duration served by detainees varied from one sentence to another: About a third of detainees were detained for longer periods than their sentence.
- The overwhelming majority of detainees (more than 70%) were stripped of their civil and military rights.
- The movable and immovable assets of more than a third of detainees were seized. In most cases (62.3%), the confiscation was carried out through seizure of property without any ruling to that effect.

How were detainees released from Sednaya?

Half of the detainees were released under a general amnesty. However, it is worth noting that more than three-quarters of detainees who were military personnel were released under a general amnesty, compared to less than a third of civilian detainees. More than three-quarters of detainees with sentences of between a year and three years were released in this manner; a percentage which drops to about a quarter of those sentenced to more than three years.

What were the social effects of arrest?

- More than 40% of detainees reported that detention had a negative impact on their civil status.
- A small percentage (nearly 13%) managed to resume their education after its suspension.
- Detention negatively impacted the employment status of the majority of detainees (67.8%). 87.3% of those who lost their jobs said they received no compensation.

How severe were the physical and psychological effects felt by detainees after their release?

More than a third said their physical injuries affected their ability to lead a normal life. The same was true for psychological harm, but this percentage is less than a quarter. In general, the majority recovered from psychological damage, but more than a quarter said that the severity of psychological damage had not receded or remained unchanged from the time of their release up to the present day (date of interview).

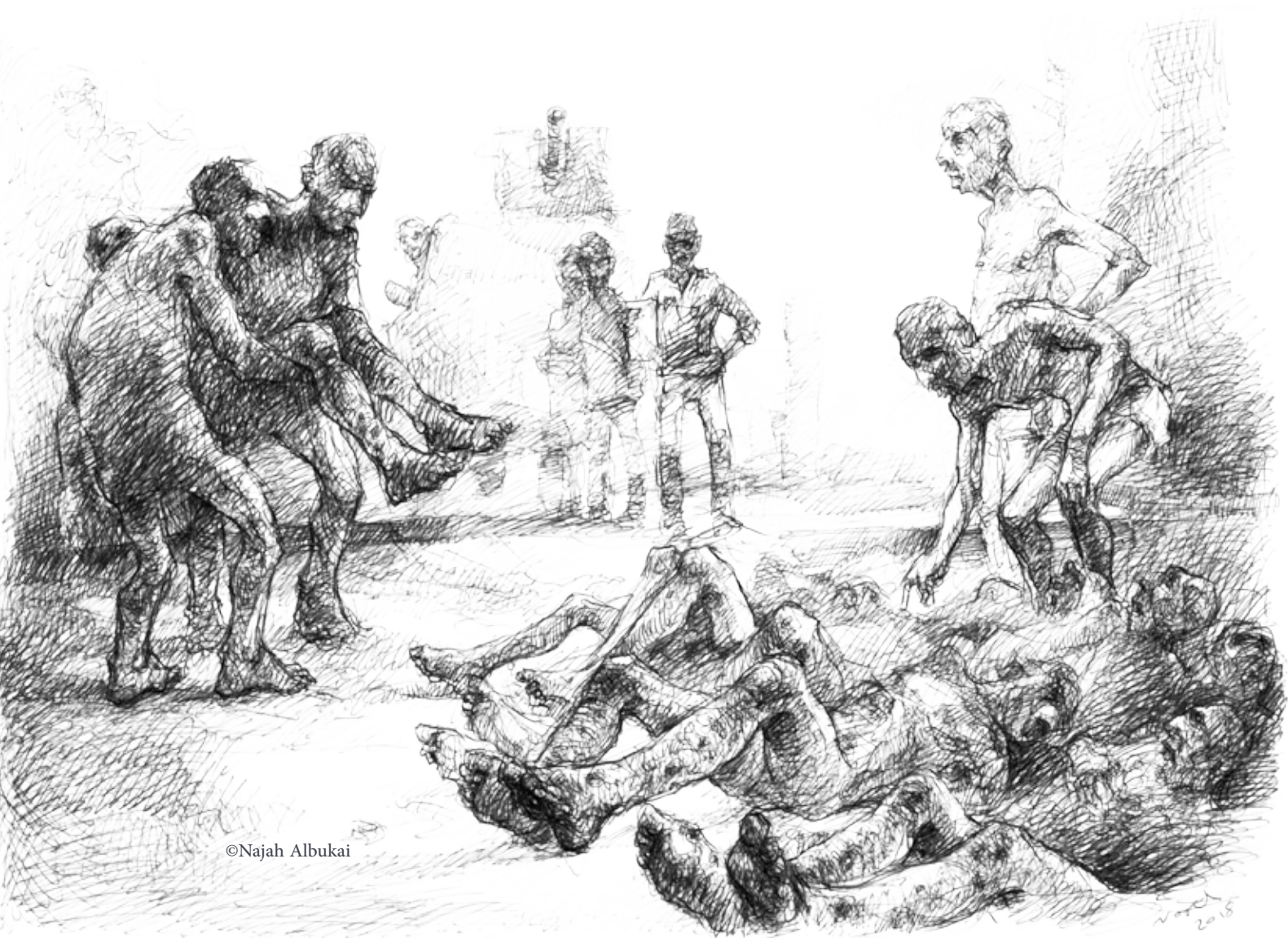
- The majority of former detainees find themselves unable to overcome psychological damage, which hinders their ability to lead a normal life.
- There is a correlation between marriage and recovery from psychological damage: the proportion of those who recovered who are married is at 70%, falling to a 56% recovery rate in the case of the unmarried.

What were the economic effects of detention on detainees or their families?

- The majority (57.3%) said their relatives paid money to gain information about their fate or to visit them. In most cases, these sums exceeded US \$1,500.
- The majority (63.8%) said their relatives paid in exchange for promises of their release. In most cases, these sums exceeded US \$4,000.
- Sums of money were paid to various intermediaries with relations with the ruling authority. In addition, money was paid to lawyers and judges. What is worth noting here is the role of the Shabbiha, who appeared to be “competing” with security and intelligence personnel in these acts of extortion and exploitation.
- Many lost their jobs without any compensation, and found great difficulty in reintegrating into the labor market.

How did procedures and consequences change during Bashar al-Assad’s reign, and between the pre-revolution period and its aftermath (March 2011-present)?

- Workplace: After the revolution, most arrests were carried out at the workplace. Before that time, they took place in multiple locations. In most cases, “workplace” refers to a military base.
- Trials: Before the revolution, trials were mostly based on the Syrian Penal Code (61.3%). However, only 5.5% of those detained after the revolution were tried in accordance with this law. In the era of Bashar, and before the revolution, the majority were tried according to Article 1 of Law 49. The situation changed radically afterwards, as later trials were likely based on Law No. 19 of 2012 on combating terrorism.
- 96% of post-revolution detainees said they were not informed of the duration of their sentence. This percentage was up from 22.2% before the revolution.
- Most detainees in Sednaya, during Bashar’s rule and before the revolution, said that their assets were not seized (72.2%). However, the properties of more than half of detainees after 2011 were confiscated.
- 31.4% of detainees, during Bashar’s rule and before the revolution, said that they or their families paid money in exchange for promises of release, which rose to 38.0% after the revolution.
- During Bashar’s reign, more than half of those detained before the revolution (or their families) paid sums of money in order to obtain information about the fate of detainees or to visit them. After the revolution, the majority of detainees (67.9%) paid for this.
- Physical torture in Bashar’s era saw a significant rise in practices that leave visible physical traces long after release from prison: peeling of the skin, pouring boiling water, branding with hot metal tools, disfigurement of the face or visible parts of the body, and deprivation of food. Three-quarters of post-revolution detainees were subjected to the latter practice, while it was inflicted on about half of pre-revolution detainees during Bashar’s era, and about a third during the reign of Hafez al-Assad.
- Sexual torture increased substantially after the revolution.
- Psychological torture increased after the revolution compared to Bashar’s era before it. There also appears to be a systematic practice of using the corpses of deceased detainees to torture their living cellmates.





Introduction

Detention centers in Syria are spaces designated by the state for the systematic violation of the rights and dignity of citizens. It seems that the two Assads, Hafez and Bashar, each designated at least one center intended to be both a detention facility and a torture camp, the mere name of which evoked terror among Syr-

ian society. ¹During the reign of Hafez al-Assad, that place was Tadmor Prison, but in the era of his son Bashar, it became Sednaya, ²both located in some of the most coveted tourist attractions in Syria (Palmyra and Ma'aret Sednaya, respectively). Located about 30 km north of the capital Damascus, Ma'aret Sednaya is considered one of the most important Christian pilgrimage sites in the Levant. The construction of what became known as Sednaya Prison was completed in 1987. During the era of Hafez al-Assad, Tadmor Prison was a place where death became equivalent to life, and at times was the ultimate wish of those living within the facility, according to the Syrian writer and former Tadmor inmate Mustafa Khalifa. ³Under Bashar, Sednaya took Tadmor's place, ⁴with Amnesty International reporting that "Saydnaya Military Prison is where the Syrian state quietly slaughters its own people." The name of this detention center rose to prominence during the Syrian revolution, largely because many Syrians lost loved ones to the prison and began speaking out about their tragedies. ⁵There remains much uncertainty shrouding Sednaya Prison. Who are its detainees? How were they arrested? Which security apparatuses carried out these arrests? What are the security branches that the detainees passed through before ending up in Sednaya? How were they tried? What has changed compared to the period preceding the Syrian revolution of 2011? What are the psychological, social, economic, and physical impacts of detention in Sednaya? These are the questions that this report attempts to answer, referencing data collected from more than 400 interviews with former Sednaya detainees, marking the first instance in which such a large number of former Sednaya detainees have been reached. This study thus sheds light on many hitherto-ambiguous aspects of detention in Sednaya; the modus operandi of security services; and the changes that occurred after 2011. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen our understanding of the conditions and latent impacts of Syrian detention facilities in general, and Sednaya Prison in particular. It is hoped that all of this will contribute to empowering Syrians in their struggle for salvation and justice, especially since the study contains cases documented in a manner enabling them to be legally handled for the purpose of initiating prosecutions of the perpetrators of violations.

This report presents its results in three sections. The first deals with detention procedures, from the moment of arrest until trial and imprisonment thereafter. The second discusses the physical, psychological, economic, and social consequences impacts of detention. The third section examines the shifts that have occurred after the Syrian revolution of 2011, either in the procedures of detention or its impacts. The study concludes with recommendations taking into account the significance of these findings, and how to best utilize them in seeking justice for former detainees.

1 See: (Arabic) Yassin al-Haj Saleh, "Legacy of Tadmor: Sednaya, Racial Transformation, Genocide," *Al Jumhuriya*, 2017.

2 To learn about changes that have taken place in Sednaya, see: (Arabic) "Sednaya Prison, From Foundation to Human Incinerators," *Al Jumhuriya*, 2017.

3 Mustafa Khalifa, *The Shell: Memoirs of a Hidden Observer*, Interlink Pub Group, 2016

4 The Islamic State organization (IS) took control of Tadmor Prison and completely demolished it in 2015.

5 See: (Arabic) "Prisoner Testimonies to Washington Post: The Syrian Regime Emptied Sednaya Prison Through Mass Executions," *The New Arab*, 2018.

Sednaya Prison

With the official name the First Military Prison, Sednaya Prison (hereafter called Sednaya) was built in such a manner as to make it one of the most fortified structures in Syria. It is administered by the military police, under direct supervision by the Military Intelligence Directorate, and consists of two separate structures: the Red Building, where primarily-civilian detainees are incarcerated; and the White Building, reserved for military prisoners. The Red Building comprises three separate blocks (A, B, and C), converging in a single area referred to as “the hexagon.” The basement of the prison in Block A consists of underground rooms and solitary confinement cells, added to the 100 solitary cells on the ground floor of Block B. There are no accurate estimates as to the number of detainees who have passed through Sednaya, or of those who remain there to this day.

According to several testimonies recently collected by the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMSP), we have been able to estimate the number of detainees in the prison between its inauguration in 1987 and 2018. The earliest arrivals in Sednaya, who were transferred there when it was first opened in 1987, told of their distribution across its newly opened wings. The transfer of detainees to the prison, mainly from Tadmor and to a lesser extent from other security branches and Mezzeh Prison, continued until Sednaya was completely filled in 1990. One former inmate who had been detained there at the time estimated the number of political prisoners to range between 3,200 and 3,500, on the basis that a dormitory (with a length of 8 meters and a width of 6 meters) held 20-21 detainees, with ten dormitories to each wing, six wings to each floor, and three floors in total. All the dormitories were occupied by political prisoners, except for two wings reserved for charged military personnel⁶, which had been the case before the White Building was established. With the famous amnesty granted in 1991, nearly 2,000 prisoners were released from Sednaya, but the gap was soon filled with transferees from Tadmor, estimated at 5,000 prisoners throughout the 1990s, some of whom were admitted to Sednaya while others were released. This continued until the closure of Tadmor and Mezzeh prisons at the turn of the millennium, when the few remaining prisoners were transferred to Sednaya prison, in addition to 200-300 detainees from Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami who were admitted to Sednaya in December 1999.⁷

We estimate the number of detainees who were in Sednaya in 2005 at 500-600 detainees. About 100 of these were in a wing designated for members of the Muslim Brotherhood, with another 100 in the Hizb ut-Tahrir wing, and fewer than 100 in another wing containing prisoners accused of communication with Israel and other miscellaneous charges⁸. The prison also held a few communists, and nearly 100-120 jihadists whose incarceration began in early 2003 following the 9/11 attacks and the 2003 Iraq War. At the end of the year 2005, the regime issued a general amnesty whereby some 200 prisoners on various charges were released. In subsequent years, the prison began to steadily receive Salafist-jihadists, who had become the majority of the prison population by the time the prison riot began in 2008. Witnesses of this riot recall the number of prisoners at the time being around 1,200, including nearly

6 Military personnel detained on criminal charges – not on political grounds.

7 Hizb ut-Tahrir did not enjoy popular support base at the time. Its members belonged to an educated “elite” and were made up of doctors, engineers and teachers. See: (Arabic) Razan Zeitouneh, “Coup Against the Party of the Caliphate: Extensive Narration of Personal Experiences,” Al Awan, 2013.

8 Such as insulting the president of the republic, smuggling, issues with members of the security services, and other matters which do not directly relate to political activity.

900 Islamists, the majority of whom were arrested on charges relating to Salafist-jihadism. After quelling the riot, the prison authorities transferred new political prisoners to the White Building, so as to keep them away from veteran prisoners (the rioters). One of the former detainees in that building estimated the number of political prisoners after the riot – and before the revolution – at 400. In 2011, the prison was completely emptied of political prisoners who had been detained before the Syrian revolution, as on May 25 Bashar al-Assad issued a set of decrees which he dubbed “reforms” in an attempt to circumvent the demands of demonstrators. In parallel, the Supreme State Security Court was dissolved, the state of emergency was lifted, and a general amnesty for political detainees in Syria was declared. The last political prisoner detained in Sednaya Prison before the Syrian revolution was released on June 29, 2011, and the prison was thus completely emptied. There then ensued the preparation and transfer of new detainees arrested against the background of their participation in the 2011 popular uprising.

The pace of detention accelerated rapidly after 2011. Sednaya saw a significant increase in the number of its inmates. It should be noted here that it is immensely difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the numbers of detainees. We would argue that the Syrian regime itself is incapable of producing accurate lists or figures of detainees, due to the large number of extrajudicial executions and cases of torture and starvation, deprivation and total absence of health care, and detention incommunicado that have taken place there in recent years. On May 15, 2017, Stuart Jones, the US Acting Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, stated that the United States has evidence that the Syrian regime installed a crematorium in Sednaya Prison in 2013 to erase evidence of mass extermination committed there, and that there were satellite images proving this development⁹. All we can add in this regard is that the number of detainees who survived until May 2014 was about 8,000 political prisoners. Prior to the launch of the Geneva 1 talks, Bashar al-Assad issued a special amnesty to some 700 detainees, most of them military personnel arrested on charges of attempted defection or dealing with the rebels (“terrorists” according to the regime’s terminology). There exists no accurate information as to the fates of detainees after 2014. According to testimonies of Sednaya survivors documented by the ADMSP, one of whom was released in November 2018, the number of detainees witnessed a significant decline in the years following 2016, rendering the second floor of the prison entirely empty. By cross-referencing the testimonies, the ADMSP estimates the number of detainees in Sednaya at the end of 2018 at around 2,500 political prisoners.

Most reports and studies on detention centers in Syria are based on theoretical approaches that emphasize the subject of torture and the illegality of the procedures following the moment of arrest. Rarely have studies adopted field data on Sednaya Prison, for two probable reasons: the secrecy shrouding the prison; and the fear that gripped Syrian society with regards to it, whether inside or outside the country. In 2015, Amnesty International released an extensive report on Syrian prisons, devoting a full chapter to Sednaya¹⁰. In addition to documenting torture, the report confirmed that many of the detainees were tried before so-called Field Military Courts. These courts are not obligated to act in accordance with existing legislation, and there is no room for appeal after the issuance of judgments. They are also confidential, and detainees are not allowed access to legal representation. Such trials typically last no longer than a few minutes, and sentences are handed down according to confessions extracted by torture. In 2017, Amnesty International published a new report that aroused great interest in what is happening between the walls of Sednaya. Entitled *Human Slaughterhouse: Mass Hangings and Extermination at Saydnaya Prison*, this report relied on individual interviews with 31 persons formerly detained in Sednaya Prison, a number of former prison staff and guards, as well as doctors, lawyers, judges, experts, and family members of detainees (the total number of interviewees

9 See: “U.S. says Syrians built crematorium at prison to dispose of bodies”, Reuters, 2017. It is worth mentioning that many of the former detainees we interviewed reported the spread of odors indicating burning. When matching the dates of their detention and the dates they mentioned, we concluded that this occurred after 2013.

10 Amnesty International, “It Breaks the Human”: Torture, Disease and Death in Syria’s Prisons, 2016.

was 84). The organization estimated that between 5,000 and 13,000 people had been extra-judicially executed in Sednaya during the period between September 2011 and December 2015. The report stressed that, "The authorities' treatment of detainees in Saydnaya seems designed to inflict maximal physical and psychological suffering. Their apparent goal is to humiliate, degrade, dehumanize and to destroy any sense of dignity or hope." Deeming the crimes committed within the prison to amount to crimes against humanity, the report concluded that, "the murder, torture, enforced disappearance and extermination carried out at Saydnaya since 2011 have been perpetrated as part of an attack against the civilian population that has been widespread, as well as systematic, and carried out in furtherance of state policy".

These reports focus on the issues of torture and executions, which are undoubtedly crucial and must be continually addressed. However, many issues regarding the procedures, circumstances, and consequences of detention still require further investigation. While qualitative research is characterized by its ability to dive into the details of the subject matter and create an in-depth understanding, it is still unable to form a general picture of the topic at hand, and hence its results cannot be generalized, requiring quantitative research to statistically analyze the dataset. This report complements what has been achieved so far in regard to Sednaya. In the following section, we explain the methodology we have adopted in data collection and analysis.



Methodology and Sampling

Since early January 2018, the ADMSP has worked to establish a database documenting the names of detainees in Sednaya Prison from its establishment in 1987 to the present day. The database serves to provide information on current and former detainees in the detention facility, including the date of arrest, the entity that carried it out and the grounds for detention, as well as the treatment the detainee received while confined in Sednaya, and the names of persons involved in the torture and human rights violations accompanying detention. The aggregate of this information can assist in holding perpetrators of torture accountable, and in revealing the truth about what happened in Sednaya. It also supports efforts to trace remaining detainees and uncover their fates. The database is divided into seven main categories of information:

1. Personal Information;
2. Legal information (Legal framework for detention, courts, judges, defense guarantees, legal framework for trial);
3. Detentions, violations and torture (Detaining agency, forms and methods of torture, treatment during arrest and imprisonment, etc.);
4. The social and economic impacts of detention (Loss of livelihood, cessation of educational attainment, family disintegration, confiscation of property, etc.);
5. Injuries incurred from torture and their impact on the lives of former detainees;
6. Persons believed to be directly responsible for torture of detainees during arrest or imprisonment;
7. Persons lost in Sednaya due to torture, lack of medical attention, starvation, and extrajudicial execution.

Data is continually collected by a field research team trained in the documentation of human rights violations. The team consists of 11 former detainees distributed both within Syria – in areas outside the control of the Syrian regime – and abroad, in Turkey and Europe. The first case used in this report was documented on February 1, 2018, and the number of cases documented as of the time of writing (late April 2019) is 570. The team has conducted interviews in person when possible. When this has not been feasible, due to the scattering of former detainees across different countries and cities, interviewees instead filled out online questionnaires with the assistance of the documentation team, using audio communication services such as WhatsApp and Skype.

The team has faced many difficulties, and was occasionally forced to cease the data collection process, for several reasons that may be summarized as follows:

1. Difficulty of accessing survivors from Sednaya Prison, due to the limited number of people who have been released alive from the prison after 2011;
2. Even when access to former detainees was possible, issues such as their fear for themselves or their families persisted, especially in the case of those living in regime-controlled areas. Many also refused to participate in the study altogether;
3. Unwillingness to contribute to the documentation process can be attributed to several factors, most notably the transformation of the documentation of violations, in the view of many former detainees, into a routine process carried out by many human rights organizations without any indication of their

purpose, in addition to the absence of serious international efforts to hold accountable the culprits affiliated with the regime or its allies. Added to that are personal and psychological impediments, including tremendous pressure placed on survivors following their release, either by the families of other detainees and missing persons, or by human rights organizations and others who persistently ask for any information about those detained or missing. This leads to a recurrent re-evoking – and reliving – of the tragic memories that survivors attempt to forget or banish from their thoughts;

4. The deteriorating security situation in the areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, resulting in the inability of team members in different areas to operate at an equal pace;
5. The vast geographical distribution of former Sednaya detainees across the world, and their preoccupation with securing their daily livelihoods, which leads to stalling and delays in scheduling interviews. Significantly, it proved easier to access and interview military personnel who had been detained in Sednaya Prison during the Syrian revolution, given the presence of a large number of them in designated “officers’ camps” in southern Turkey (which led to a disproportionately high representation of military personnel in the sample).

This report is based on data collected from the first 400 cases (all male)¹¹ until the beginning of March 2019, with the earliest date of arrest being August 1980, and the latest April 2017. It aims to answer the following questions: Who are the detainees and how were they arrested? What were the impacts of detention (physical, psychological, economic, and social) on them and on their families? What has changed after the revolution, whether in the detention procedures or its consequences?

While the sample is non-probabilistic, it nonetheless illuminates many issues that have so far remained ambiguous, providing for a better understanding of what has generally happened to Sednaya inmates, and establishing a more accurate perception of what has happened, and continues to happen, inside the prison’s walls. To better demonstrate the significance of this sample size and this report, it may be useful to indicate that, if we assume an unlimited or infinite research population size (more than 10,000 detainees), a probabilistic sample of this number with a 95% confidence level would yield results with an error margin of up to +/- 5%. The margin of error would approximate this percentage regardless of the sample size. If we were to assume the researcher increased the sample size from 400 to 1,000 (for a population size of 100,000 individuals and a 95% confidence level), then the approximate margin of error would be +/- 3%, and would then be improved by two percentage points.¹² Furthermore, since documentation is a continuous process, the ongoing data analysis will assist in verifying the generalizability of the findings of this report. Therefore, the best means of overcoming the infeasibility of a probabilistic sample is the repetition of the research: analyzing more data in subsequent periods as the continuous process of documentation and cross-referencing progresses.

11 Until 2011, women were not detained in Sednaya. There have been reports of women being transferred to Sednaya after that year (see, for example, Oliver Wainwright, “The worst place on earth,” *The Guardian*, 2016; (Arabic) Sulafa Jabbour, “Sednaya Prison: Syria’s Hellscape of Death,” *Al Jazeera*, 2016; (Arabic) Syrian League for the Defense of Human Rights, *Sednaya Military Prison: Special Report*, 2013). As such, we did our best to verify the detention of women in Sednaya, but we did not find any evidence to support these claims.

12 The margin of error is a statistical term expressing what is known as a sampling error in a probabilistic sample (resulting from the generalization of the results derived from the sample to the research population). Supposing that the results of a survey showed that 60% of the population would vote for a candidate, and the margin of error was +/- 3%, then the real figure should range between 57% and 63%. The greater the margin of error, the greater the uncertainty about the precision and representativeness of the results and their proximity to the actual figures. In general, the acceptable margin of error in the social sciences is +/- 5% at most. The main problem in non-probabilistic samples lies in the researcher’s inability to determine the margin of error. The results could therefore be very close to the real figures or could otherwise be inaccurate. However, when discussing approximation, we often talk about percentages that may slightly exceed 5% but do not deviate further, and therefore remain valid in providing a better understanding of the subject matter of the study. This is true with the exception of very few cases that often occur when the sample size is too small, or when the researcher does not take into consideration the characteristics of the research population, neither of which applies to this report. Our sample was large and took into account the various major categories of detainees: civilians, military, young and old, etc.



The Road to Sednaya

Social and Demographic Backgrounds of Detainees

As shown in Table 1, the vast majority of detainees were under 37 years of age at the time of their arrest. In general, the largest proportion is in the age group 18-27 (slightly less than half), followed by the age group 28-37 (39%). Remarkably, children (under 18) made up 2% of the total number of detainees,¹³ while those over age 48 accounted for 2.8%.

A majority of detainees (58.7%) had been married at the time of their arrest, and an overwhelming majority had been employed. A substantial percentage were employed in military sectors (45.7%), and most had attained at least a university degree (57%). Their fields of study varied, but more than half studied military sciences, and about a quarter studied natural sciences, while a similar proportion studied social sciences and humanities.

Although the vast majority of the detainees were Sunni Arab Syrians, some detainees were of different nationalities (Turkish, Iraqi, Palestinian, and Lebanese nationals), and various ethnicities and religious sects (Kurdish, Turkmen, Dagestani, Circassian, Chaldean, and Armenian, as well as Isma'ili, Alawite, Christian, and Yazidi). As for governorates, detainees hail primarily from Idlib, Homs, and Aleppo (more than 15%), followed by Hama, Rural Damascus, Deir ez-Zor, and Damascus, falling to less than 5% for the remaining governorates.

This data raises many questions about the extent of damage which individuals, on the one hand, have suffered at the personal level, and that Syrian society on the other hand has sustained at the collective level in terms of interrelations between its religious and ethnic groups. A detainee is typically young, has a job or profession, a family, a high level of educational attainment, and is from a particular sect (Sunni).

13 For more information on child detainees in Sednaya Prison, see Urnammu Center for Justice and Human Rights, *Forgotten Children*, 2018.

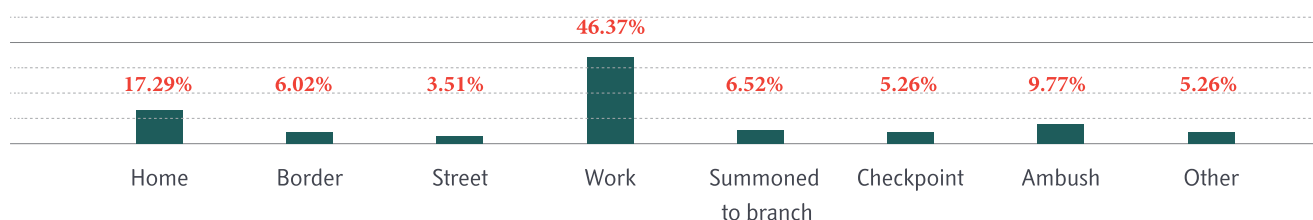
Table 1. Social Backgrounds and Demographics of Sednaya Detainees

Nationality		Educational level at arrest		Age at arrest	
Syrian	98,00%	Illiterate	2,56%	Less than 18 years old	2,01%
Turkish	0,75%	Literate	1,79%	18 - 27 years	47,12%
Iraqi	0,75%	Elementary education	4,86%	28 - 37 years	39,10%
Lebanese	0,25%	Middle school	11,76%	38 - 47 years	9,02%
Palestinian-Syrian	0,25%	High school	15,86%	48 years and above	2,76%
Ethnicity		Higher Institute	6,39%	Governorate	
Arabic	93,70%	University	56,01%	Idlib	18,32%
Kurdish	3,78%	Post-Graduate education	0,77%	Aleppo	16,54%
Turkmen	1,01%	Field of Study		Homs	15,52%
Dagestani	0,25%	Philosophy, social sciences and humanities	24,50%	Hama	10,94%
Circassian	0,25%	Natural sciences	22,80%	Rural Damascus	8,40%
Chaldean	0,25%	Military science	52,70%	Deir ez-Zor	6,87%
Armenian	0,25%	Civil Status at Arrest		Damascus	5,60%
Declined to answer	0,50%	Single	36,73%	Raqqa	4,58%
Religion-Belief		Engaged	4,08%	Daraa	4,33%
Muslim	94,46%	Married	58,67%	Hasakah	4,07%
Non-religious	4,79%	Divorced	0,51%	Latakia	3,31%
Yazidi	0,25%	Occupation When Arrested		Quneitra	1,27%
Christian	0,50%	Working	81,90%	Tartous	0,25%
Sect		Unemployed	1,00%		
Sunni	98,68%	Student	11,30%		
Ismaili	0,26%	Cadet	5,80%		
Alawite	0,53%	Nature of Work at Arrest			
Catholic	0,26%	Work in civilian entity (civilian)	54,30%		
Declined to answer	0,26%	Working in military or security (military)	45,70%		

Place and Date of Arrest

The data analysis shows that the majority of those wanted by the security services were arrested from their place of work (slightly less than half), followed by arrests at the place of residence (17.3%), and then ambushes for wanted individuals (9.8%). Other arrests were conducted at borders or by summoning to security branches (Figure 1). In the majority of cases, the workplace was within a military or security sector.

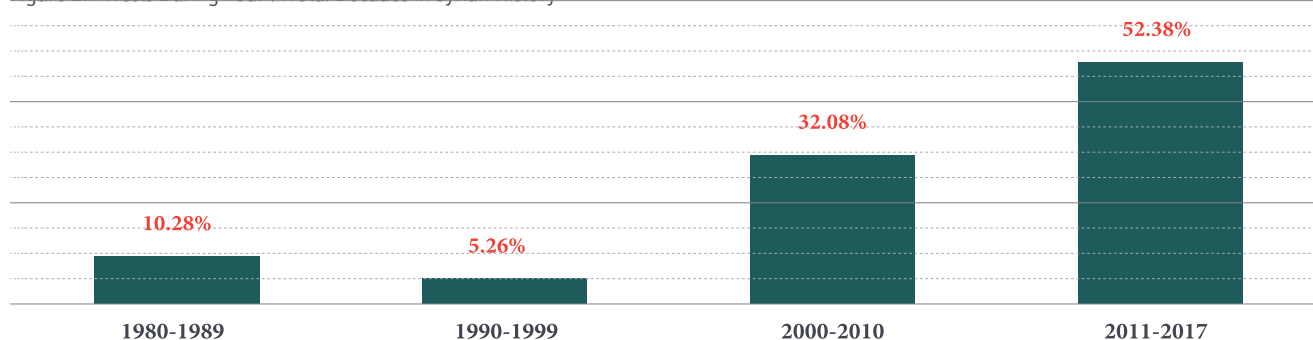
Figure 1. Places of Arrest



By examining the data along four pivotal decades in the history of Syria, from Hafez al-Assad's seizure of power to the present day (Figure 2), we observe how the arrival of Hafez's son to power marked a significant increase in arrests, even before the Syrian revolution, amounting to nearly a third of all arrests between 1980 and 2017. However, arrests peaked after the start of the Syrian revolution in 2011, during which one of every two detainees was arrested (accounting for more than half of the arrests in the period between 1980 and 2017).¹⁴

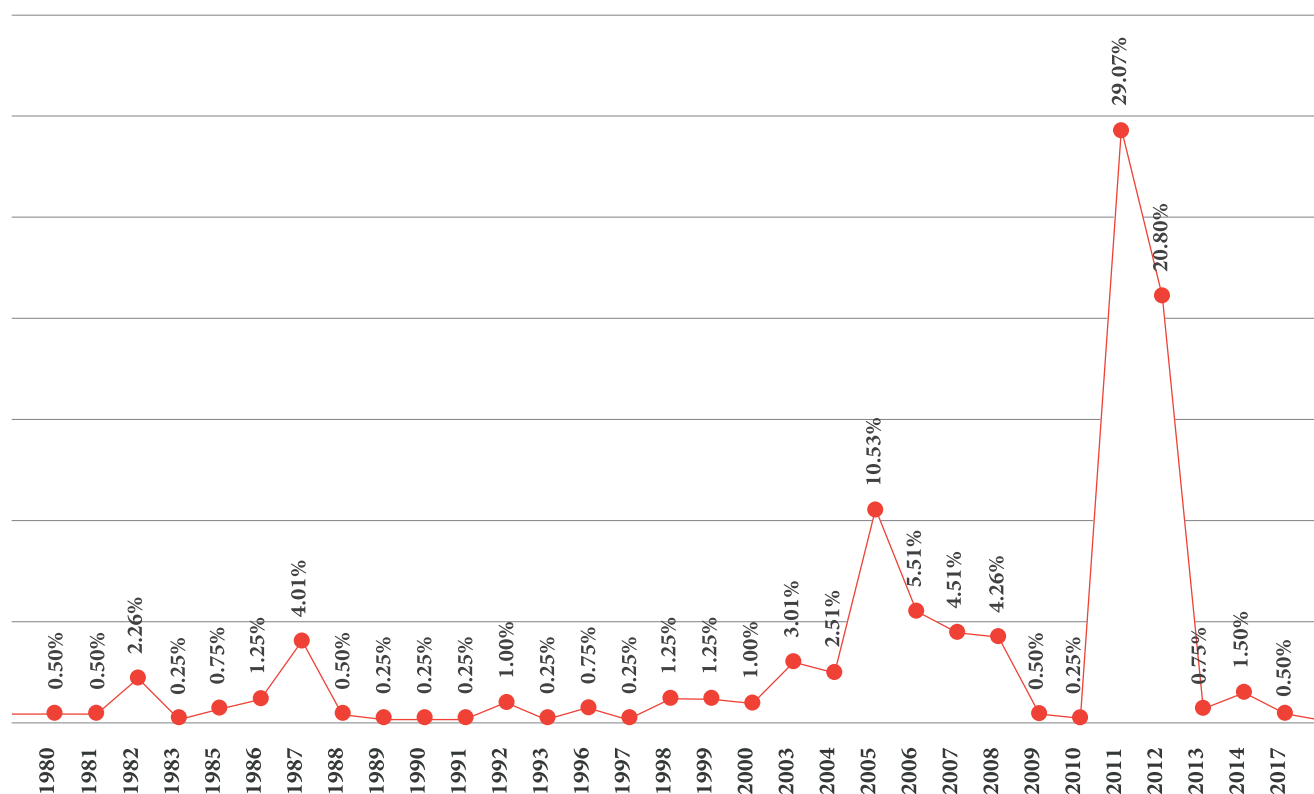
Looking at the years of arrest more closely, the main dates that witnessed large-scale arrest campaigns during the Hafez al-Assad era become prominent: the years 1982-1987 ("the 1980s events"). As for Bashar's era, the time interval with the highest rate of arrests was 2003 to 2005, following what became known as the Damascus Declaration, as well as the US-led invasion of Iraq and the subsequent surge in Salafist and Jihadist activism in Syria. Rates of arrest then gradually recede, only to peak again and by a very wide margin compared to all the years prior to 2011, the year the Syrian revolution broke out and the regime and its allies officially declared war against Syrian society (Figure 3). However, caution is required when reading these figures, and when establishing estimates for the number of detainees on the basis of available data. As mentioned earlier, the number of detainees after the revolution - according to our sample of survivors - appears to be equal to the number of detainees prior to it. Yet the percentage is probably much higher than that, for reasons explained earlier regarding the likelihood of mass extermination within the prison, and the remaining of many in detention to this day. As such, what can be confirmed today is that the number of detainees held in Sednaya during the first six years into the revolution was at least equal to the number of those detained between 1987 (the date of its inauguration) and 2011 (right before the revolution), but it could also be twice that number. The ways arrests were carried out and the procedures followed by the authorities are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Figure 2. Arrests During Four Pivotal Decades in Syrian History



¹⁴ Here, we are talking about arrests carried out since 1980. Although the detainees in our sample are prisoners in Sednaya, many of them were detained before the establishment of the prison and were later transferred to it after 1987, and this data relies on the year of arrest.

Figure 3. Years of Arrests



Procedures Followed at the Moment of Arrest

Table 2 demonstrates that what happens in practice does not resemble what is typically referred to as an arrest. Only about 10% said that the people that arrested them introduced themselves at the moment of arrest. In rare cases (up to 2%), they produced an arrest warrant issued by a legally authorized entity or informed the detainee/abductee of the grounds for their arrest.

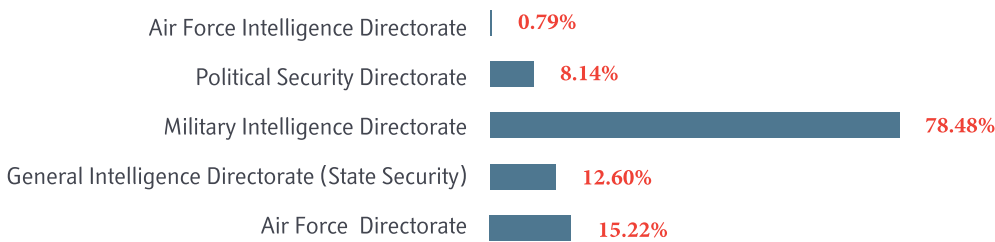
Table 2. Arrest Procedures

	Yes	No
Did the people carrying out the arrest make themselves and the entity they represent known at the moment of your arrest?	10,91%	89,09%
Was an arrest warrant or order issued by a legally recognized authority produced?	1,75%	98,25%
Were you informed of the grounds for your detention at the moment of arrest?	2,28%	97,72%

Security Agencies and Branches Responsible for Arrests

The Military Intelligence Directorate was responsible for the detention of more than three quarters of the sampled Sednaya prisoners (Figure 4). The vast majority of detainees passed through more than one security branch: fewer than one third of detainees passed through one branch, and almost three quarters passed through two or more branches (Figure 5). It appears that the Military Interrogation Branch, Officers Affairs Branch, and the Directorate’s Palestine Branch are the gateways to Sednaya (Figure 6). Each security agency has several affiliated branches. Table A in the Appendix lists the security agencies and their affiliated branches mentioned by the Sednaya detainees.

Figure 4. The Security Branch Conducting the Arrest*



*A significant proportion of the detainees reported more than one security apparatus responsible for their arrest, with the agency carrying out the arrest directly transferring them to another one.

Figure 5. Number of Security Branches the Detainees Passed Through

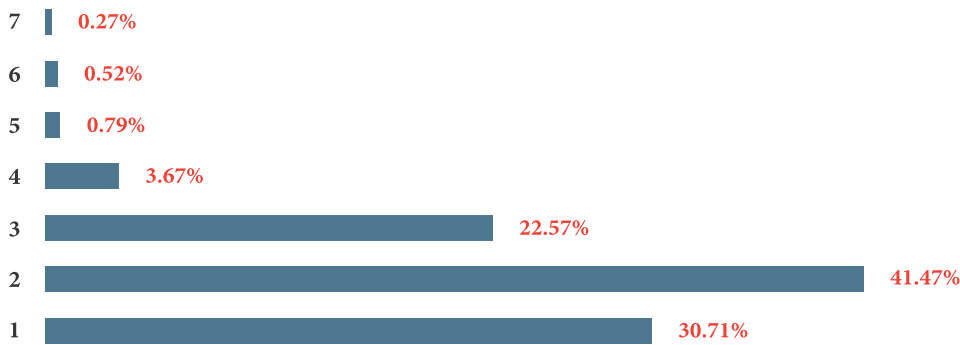
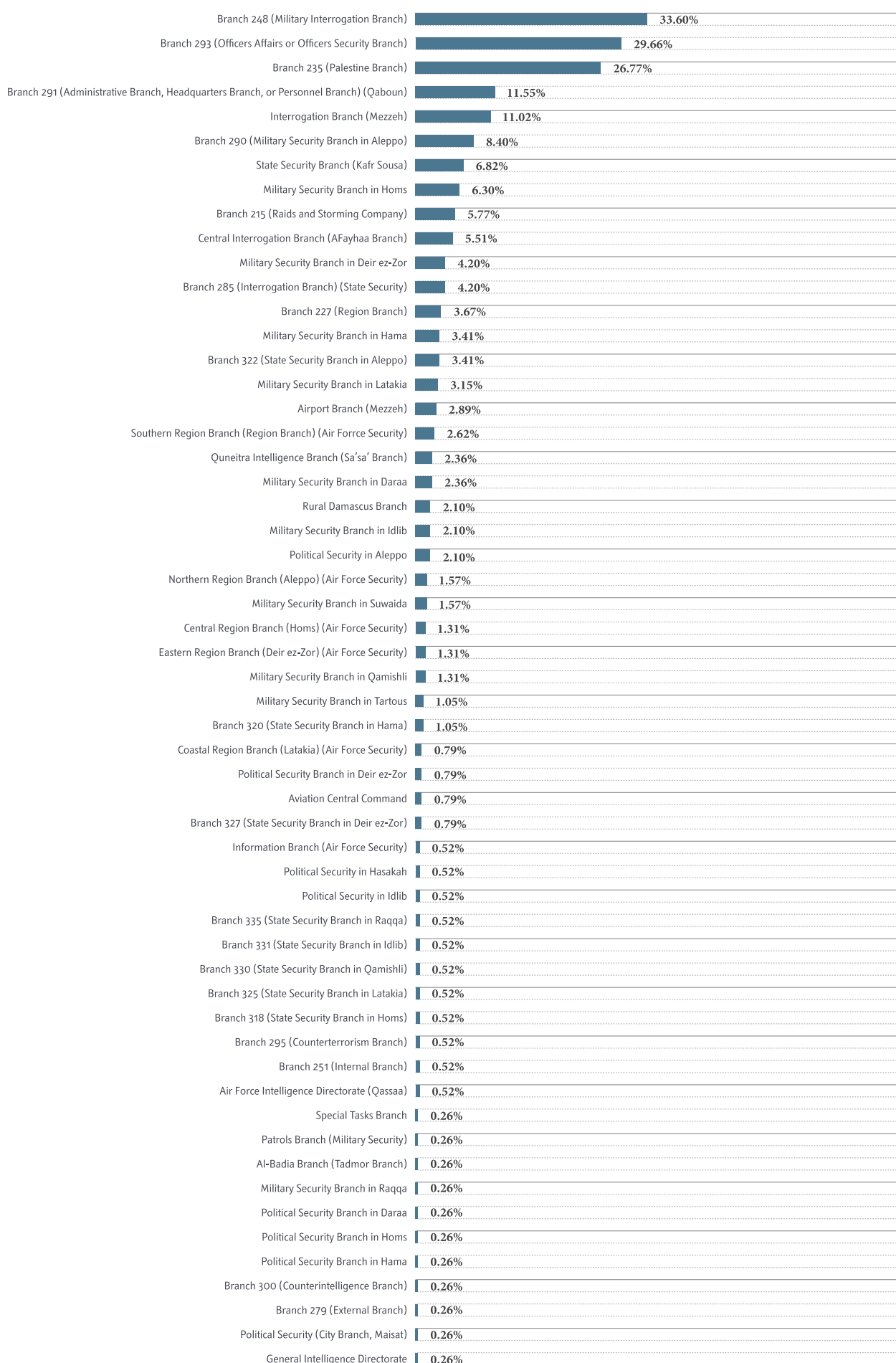


Figure 6. Security Branches Passed Through by Detainees



Almost none of the detainees escaped torture, which was not limited to specific security branches or detention centers (Figures 7 and 8). Almost all of those interviewed said they were tortured, as detainees face all forms of torture from the moment of their arrest until their arrival in Sednaya. As shown in Figure 8, more than 90% said they were tortured both in Sednaya and in the branches which they passed through before arriving in Sednaya – or which they were transferred to after being released.

Figure 7. Subjection to Torture

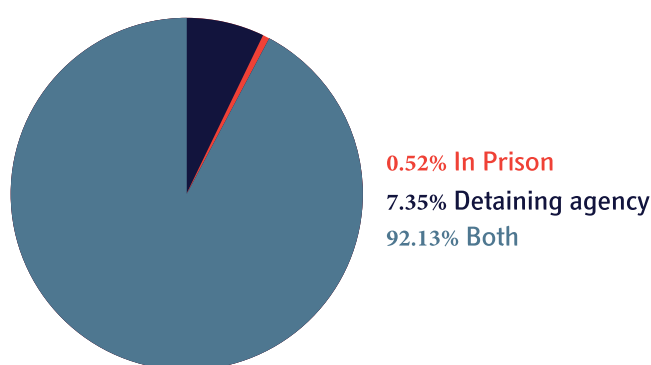


Figure 8. Location of Torture

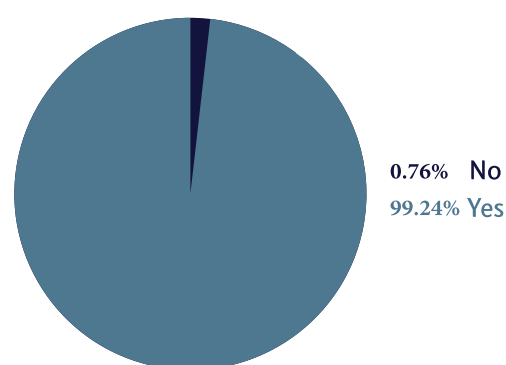


Table 3 shows the various forms of torture to which detainees were subjected. There is no doubt that the three main forms of torture (physical, psychological, and sexual) that we have identified are mutually overlapping. The distinction we make here between different forms of torture is procedural and based on the different methods employed, and is aimed at identifying the extent to which they are used. All those who said they were subjected to torture reported physical torture (100%), and 79.8% reported psychological torture. While 29.4% reported sexual torture, we estimate the actual percentage to be much higher. This is a very sensitive issue and most men avoid addressing it, and even the recurrence of the methods of sexual torture mentioned here may not reflect the reality. Therefore, caution must be applied when examining the data analysis concerning this form of torture.

1. **Physical torture:** We identified 20 different methods. The most common is beating with sticks and batons, as all the respondent detainees were subjected to this method of torture (100%). It is followed by whipping (95.2%) and then the “tire” (about 80.8%). Most detainees were also subjected to food deprivation and the pouring of cold water, and more than half were trampled by foot. A large proportion (more than 40%) were subjected to electric shocks, body suspension, and hanging, and the “wind carpet,” and a quarter of detainees were tortured with the “German Chair.”¹⁵ About 15% were subjected to the maiming of faces and visible parts of the body, the pouring of boiling water, scalding with hot metal tools, immersion in cold water, and/or flogging. Excessive force-feeding is another method to which about 10% of detainees were exposed, and about 6% were subjected to dragging, crushing, and/or nail removal with pliers.

¹⁵ Body suspension, or shabeh, is conducted by various methods. The detainee may be suspended on a chair, or by his hands so that his feet remain far from the ground or touch it lightly (this method is also known as the strappado). It involves tying the hands from the front or behind the back, and then suspending and beating the detainee. For definitions of the “wind carpet,” the “German Chair,” the “tire”, and electric shocking, see Figure A in the appendix.

2. **Psychological torture:** We identified 24 methods of this form of torture. The overwhelming majority of detainees who reported psychological torture were blindfolded (78.7%) and 71.6% faced insults to what they regarded as religiously sacred. A majority were also subjected to mock executions (69.8%), swearing and verbal attacks on their female relatives (66.9%), solitary confinement (65.4%), threats of arresting their parents (59.3%), stripping (85.3%), sleep deprivation (55.9%), and being forced to watch another inmate be tortured (55.1%). More than a third were forced to hear sounds of torture, or to hear a specific inmate being tortured. More than a quarter reported being deprived of food for extended periods of time, and the same percentage reported delays in the retrieval of the body of a deceased detainee for a long time. About 20% were forced to utter blasphemies, had shoes placed into their food, had their food thrown into the toilet and/or spat in.¹⁶ 15.4% were forced to torture other inmates.
3. **Sexual torture:** We identified 8 forms. 81.4% of those who said they were subjected to sexual torture reported facing beatings of their sexual organs, and about one-third suffered various means of deliberate harm done to their sexual organs or sensitive areas of their bodies. About a quarter said they were forced into sexual positions and/or tied or tightened from sexual organs and sensitive areas. The threat of rape was another means of torture for more than 8% of those who said they were subjected to sexual torture.



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¹⁶ Some reported occasional urination on their food as well as spitting on it.

Table 3. Forms of Torture

	Physical Torture		Psychological Torture		Sexual Torture	
1	Beating with sticks or batons	100,00%	Hooding	78,68%	Beating of sexual organs	81,45%
2	Flogging with whips or cables	95,20%	Insulting the religiously sacred	71,57%	Harming sexual organs or sensitive body parts*	31,45%
3	"The Tire"	80,82%	Mock execution	69,85%	Forcing into sexual positions	22,58%
4	Food deprivation	62,35%	Swearing and verbal abuse	66,91%	Tying or tightening of sexual organs or sensitive body parts	20,16%
5	Pouring cold water	57,31%	Solitary confinement	65,44%	Threat of rape	8,87%
6	Trampling with foot	51,80%	Threatening with arresting of parents	59,31%	Insertion of a pipe or stick into the anus	3,23%
7	Body suspension	47,96%	Stripping	58,33%	Molestation	0,81%
8	Electric shocks	45,32%	Sleep deprivation	55,88%	Connecting electric wires to sexual organs and shocking them	0,81%
9	"Wind Carpet"	42,93%	Forcing to witness torture of another inmate	55,15%		
10	"German Chair"	26,62%	Forcing to hear torture of another inmate	39,95%		
11	Maiming of face and visible parts of body	17,51%	Hearing sounds of torture	37,01%		
12	Pouring boiling water	15,35%	Prolonged deprivation from available food	28,43%		
13	Scalding with hot metal tools	14,15%	Postponing the withdrawal of the body of a deceased person for a long time	27,21%		
14	Immersion in cold water	14,15%	Forcing to utter blasphemies	21,32%		
15	Flaying	13,43%	Placing shoes in food	20,10%		
16	Excessive force-feeding	10,55%	Pouring food into toilet	19,12%		
17	Dragging and crushing	6,95%	Spitting in food	18,87%		
18	Nail removal	6,00%	Forcing to torture another inmate	15,44%		
19	Immersion in boiling water	1,44%	Deafening of ears	12,25%		
20	Leg-splitting	0,24%	Spilling food onto the floor	7,84%		
21				5,15%		
22			Forced to witness sexual assault	0,74%		
23			Water-boarding	0,25%		
24			Extortion	0,25%		
			Forced urine drinking			

* Other than by beating, shocking, or tying, although it may accompany these practices, but may also involve, for example, pouring burning materials on sexual organs.

Trial Proceedings

Almost all detainees are brought before a court, but which court?

The majority of the sampled survivors were brought before military courts (57.2%) (Figure 9). Judge Riad Ali describes these as follows: “They are not courts in the legal sense, but rather a security apparatus designed to eliminate political opponents of the ruling regime; a tool to restrict public freedoms. Their rulings which were issued in peacetime can be described as crimes against humanity, while those issued in wartime are war crimes.”¹⁷ More than a third of the respondent former detainees were tried before the State Security Court, while 6.5% were tried before the Counterterrorism Court (Figure 9).¹⁸ The Syrian Penal Code distinguishes between political crime and other types of crime, and given the special treatment it gives to “political criminals” - exempting them from death sentences, hard labor, and penal labor, and replacing these with life or fixed-term sentences or simple imprisonment - the regime has resorted to the trial of many detainees outside of this legal code.¹⁹

Nearly one third of the detainees did not know if they were tried according to the Syrian Penal Code (Table 4). Only about a quarter of them said they were tried according to this code, while the largest percentage, more than a third, denied such a legal arrangement (Table 4). The question is, then, what is the nature of charging and sentencing by these courts? This is examined in the following paragraphs.

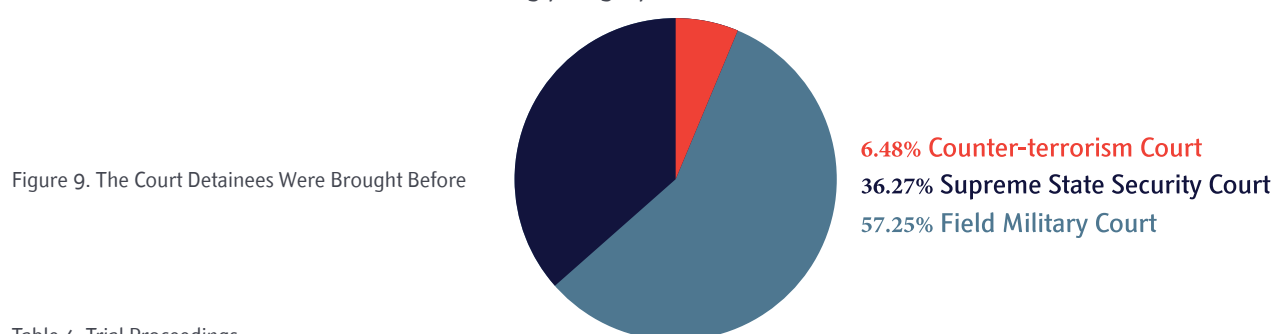


Table 4. Trial Proceedings

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Were you brought before a court?	96,98%	3,02%	0,00%
Were you tried according to legal provisions of the Syrian Penal Code?	28,38%	36,60%	35,01%
Did the judge notify you of the term of your sentence?	34,55%	65,45%	0,00%

For those who said they were tried under the Syrian Penal Code, the legal articles most frequently used pertained to prohibited parties or associations (37.9%), weakening national sentiment, or awakening ethnic or sectarian tensions (21.2%), and broadcasting false news abroad (12.1%). The purpose of these provisions, in short, is the elimination of any political dissent or opposition activity inside or outside the country. All opposition associations are prohibited, and any written or spoken content about the Syrian state of affairs can be classified as incitement of ethnic and sectarian strife. As for broadcasting false news abroad, this charge is likely to be primarily aimed at online censorship, whether the accused resided inside or outside the country (Table 5).

17 See (Arabic) Riad Ali, Field Military Courts: Courts or Crimes?, Syrian Legal Forum, 2018.

18 The Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) was abolished in 2011 during the Syrian revolution, as the Syrian regime attempted to carry out nominal “reforms.” These also included the repeal of the Emergency Law and the granting of citizenship to Kurds who had been undocumented in the civil registry. Given the heavily securitized nature of the regime, the Counterterrorism Court was soon established in 2012, and it has become a substitute for the SSSC. Both courts have been instruments of war crimes. See: (Arabic) Violations Documentation Center in Syria, “Counterterrorism Court in Syria: a Tool for War Crimes,” 2015; (also Arabic) Syrian Human Rights Committee, “On the Fifth Anniversary of its Abolition: the State Security Court, Repression in the Form of a Court,” 2016).

19 (Arabic) Abdul-Jabbar Al-Hunais, “Political Crimes,” Arabic Encyclopedia: The Specialized Legal Encyclopedia, <https://bit.ly/2Fub4jw>.

Table 5. Articles of the Syrian Penal Code Under Which the Detainees Were Tried

Article	Number	Percentage	Article Provisions
Article 267	4	3,03%	<p>1. Any Syrian who attempts to engage in acts, speech, and writing or anything else aimed at partitioning a part of Syrian territory and its annexation to a foreign state, or to impart on it a privilege that is reserved for the Syrian state, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of at least five years.</p> <p>2. If the perpetrator, at the time of committing the act, was a member of one of the associations or organizations referred to in Articles 288 and 308, they shall receive life imprisonment.</p>
Article 271	1	0,76%	Any person who has entered or attempted to enter a restricted place in order to obtain materials, documents, or information that must remain concealed for the security of the State shall be punished by at least one year's imprisonment, and if they committed the act with the purpose of espionage, they shall receive a term of hard labor imprisonment.
Article 272	1	0,76%	<p>1. Whoever steals or obtains materials, documents, or information as mentioned in the preceding Article shall be punished by a term of hard labor imprisonment.</p> <p>2. If the crime was committed for the benefit of a foreign state, the penalty is life imprisonment with hard labor.</p>
Article 273	1	0,76%	<p>1. Whoever possesses documents or information mentioned in Article 271, and publicizes or discloses them without a legitimate reason, shall receive a term of imprisonment of between two months and two years.</p> <p>2. If they disclose them for the benefit of a foreign state, they shall receive a prison term of five years with hard labor.</p> <p>3. If the offender retains such information and materials as a state employee, worker, or agent, they shall be liable to a term of imprisonment provided for in paragraph 1, and life imprisonment with hard labor in the case provided for in paragraph 2.</p> <p>4. If one of the above-mentioned persons is guilty only of an inadvertent mistake, the penalty shall be a term of imprisonment of between two months and two years.</p>
Article 278	9	6,82%	<p>The following shall be punished by a term of imprisonment:</p> <p>a) Whoever breaches measures taken by the state to maintain its neutrality in war.</p> <p>b) Whoever attempts acts, writing, or speech unauthorized by the government and by doing so places Syria at risk of hostile action, disturbs its relations with a foreign state, or subjects Syrians to acts of revenge befalling them or their property.</p>
Article 285	28	21,21%	Whoever, in Syria during wartime or when war is anticipated, makes claims aimed at weakening national sentiment, or inciting ethnic or sectarian strife, shall be punished with a term of imprisonment.
Article 286	4	3,03%	<p>1. The same punishment shall befall whoever broadcasts, in Syria in the same circumstances, news that is known to be false or exaggerated and could weaken the spirit of the nation.</p> <p>2. If the perpetrator considers these reports to be valid, they shall receive a term of imprisonment of at least three months.</p>

Article	Number	Percentage	Article Provisions
Article 287	16	12,12%	<p>1. Any Syrian abroad who knowingly broadcasts false or exaggerated news that would undermine the prestige of the state or its financial status shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of at least six months, and a fine of between one hundred and five hundred pounds.</p> <p>2. The court can order the judgment to be published.</p>
Article 288	2	1,52%	<p>1. Whoever attempts, in Syria without the permission of the government, to engage in a political or social association of an international nature, or in an organization of this kind, shall be punished by a term of imprisonment or house arrest of between three months and three years, and a fine of between one hundred and two hundred and fifty pounds.</p> <p>2. The term of imprisonment for whoever assumes a functional role in said association or organization shall not be less than one year of imprisonment or house arrest and a 100-pound fine.</p>
Article 297	1	0,76%	Whoever attempts, without the consent of the authority, to form armed factions, or to recruit, equip, or supply them with weapons or ammunition, shall be liable to a term of imprisonment.
Article 304	3	2,27%	Terrorist acts are all acts aimed at creating a state of terror, and are committed by means such as explosive devices, "weapons of war," inflammable substances, toxic or incendiary products, and epidemiological or microbial agents that pose a public risk.
Article 305	8	6,06%	<p>1. Conspiracy intended to commit an act or acts of terrorism shall be punishable by hard labor from ten to twenty years.</p> <p>2. Any act of terrorism shall be punishable by hard labor for between fifteen and twenty years.</p> <p>3. The act of terrorism shall be punishable by death if it results in sabotage, even partial, of a public building, an industrial establishment, a ship or other installations, or the disruption of the means of intelligence, transport, and communication, or if it leads to the death of a person.</p>
Article 306	50	37,88%	<p>1. Any association established with the aim of changing the economic or social structure of the state, or the basic conditions of society by one of the means mentioned in Article 304, shall be dissolved, and those who belong to it shall be subject to a term of hard labor.</p> <p>2. The penalty for its founders and managers shall not be less than seven years.</p> <p>3. The excuse or mitigation given to the conspirators under Article 262 covers the perpetrators of the crime specified above.</p>
Article 307	4	3,03%	1. Every act, writing, or speech intended to incite sectarian or ethnic strife or to encourage conflict between sects and the various elements of the nation shall be punishable by a term of imprisonment ranging from six months to two years, and with a fine of one hundred to two hundred pounds, in addition to deprivation of the exercise of the rights mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 65.
Total	132		

See: Ministry of Justice, Syrian Arab Republic: <https://bit.ly/2MEPOUY>.

Charges and Sentences

The charges against detainees in Sednaya take various forms: opposing the aims of the [1963 Baathist] revolution in terms of unity, liberty, and socialism; membership of a secret association with the aim of transforming the economic and social nature of the state and the basic conditions of society; publishing false or exaggerated news that could weaken national sentiment during or in anticipation of war; incitement of sectarian strife; undermining the prestige of the state; membership of a secret association aimed at overthrowing the regime; attempting to partition a part of Syrian territory to annex it to a foreign state; and membership of a group planning terrorist acts. Other charges include military defection, participation in protests, dealing with “hostile” parties, and insulting the head of the state. The terms of the sentences generally ranged from 2 to 21 years. About a third of the detainees received sentences of between 5 and 6 years, and another third were sentenced to more than 10 years (Figure 10).²⁰ However, the actual durations of incarceration differed from the terms handed down: 30.9% of the detainees were held for longer periods than their sentences (Figs. 11 and 12).

Figure 10. Sentences by Years

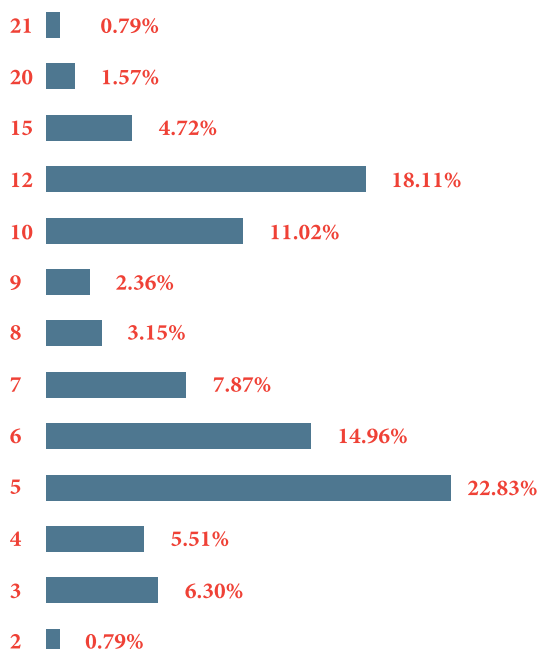
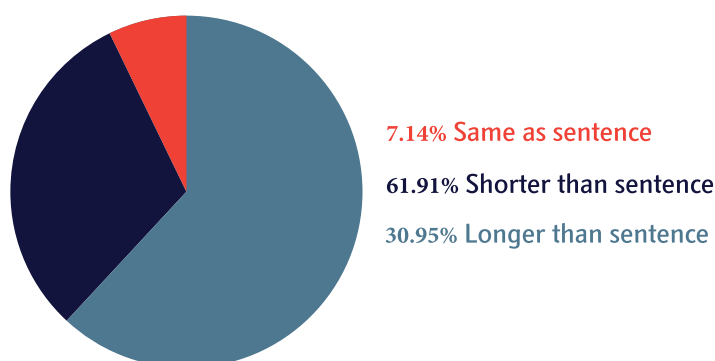
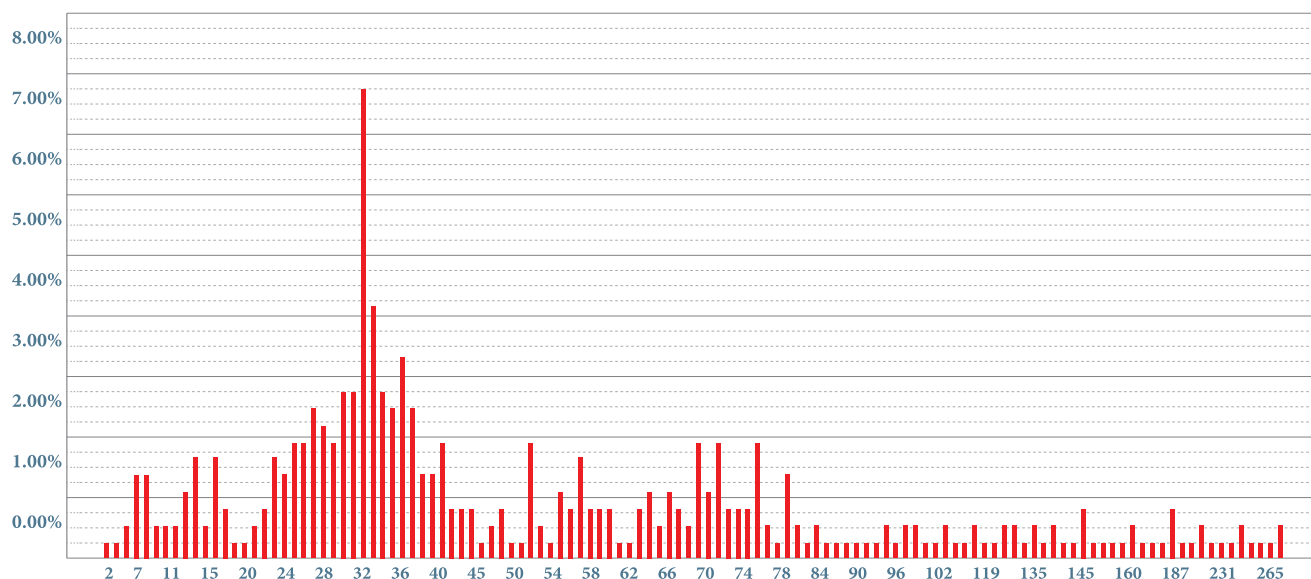


Figure 11. Relationship Between Sentence and Actual Detention Period



²⁰ More than half of the respondents were detained after the revolution began in March 2011. Therefore, it should be noted that sentences of some of those who were released did not exceed six years. This will necessarily increase the proportion of those sentenced for less than 6 years in our sample.

Figure 12. Actual Detention Period by Months

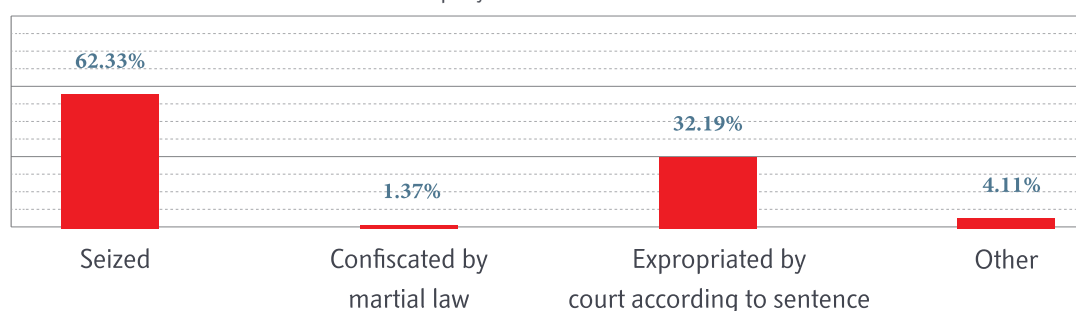


The overwhelming majority of detainees were stripped of their civil and military rights (more than 70%), and more than a third had their movable and immovable assets seized or confiscated (Table 6). Although about a third of the confiscation procedures were carried out according to a court order, the majority of seizures (62.3%) took place without any ruling to that effect (Figure 13).

Table 6. Confiscation of Property and Deprivation of Rights

	Yes	No	I Don't Know
Have you been stripped of your civil rights?	74,94%	10,08%	14,99%
Have you been stripped of your military rights?	72,80%	11,92%	15,28%
Has your movable and immovable property been confiscated?	36,29%	55,58%	8,12%

Figure 13. Who Confiscated Your Movable and Immovable Property?



Release from Detention

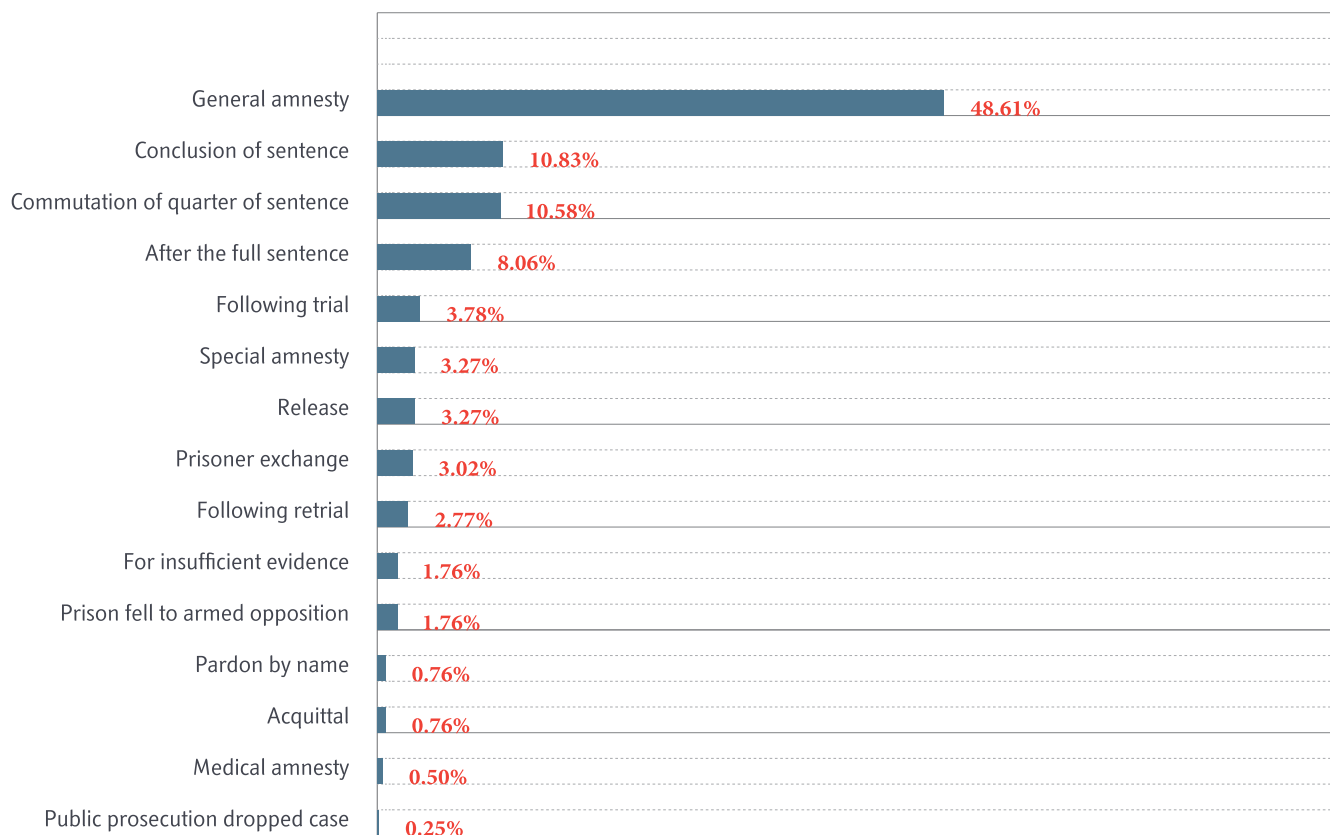


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Nearly half of Sednaya detainees were released under a general amnesty (Figure 14), which at first may seem to contradict the prevailing view. On every holiday in Syria, news or rumors of a general amnesty are circulated among the families of detainees, but they often end with disappointment. It is generally maintained that political prisoners are excluded because of the exception amnesty decrees make for the provisions under which they were tried.²¹ For a better understanding of amnesties and their effects on detainees in Sednaya, we examined detainees' professions at the time of arrest (civil/military) and the sentences of those released under general amnesties. While more than three quarters of detained military personnel were released under a general amnesty, fewer than a third of civilians were released in that manner (Figure 15). In addition, more than three quarters of those sentenced to 1-3 years have been released under a general amnesty, but this percentage drops to about a quarter in the case of detainees sentenced to more than 3 years (Table 7).

21 (Arabic) Joud Hilal, "Regime Maneuvers Regarding the Issue of Detainees, Enab Baladi, Issue 101, 2014.

Figure 14. Methods of Release



Special Amnesty: Such a decree is issued by the head of the regime, targets a certain group of prisoners of conscience, and pertains to a particular ideological or regional affiliation. For example, the years following the closure of Tadmor Prison and the transfer of its detainees to Sednaya saw the issuance of a number of amnesty decrees, most of which targeted detainees affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Of course, detainees from other political movements - secularists and pan-Arab nationalists - were also released, but the largest proportion of detainees released via such amnesties were members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

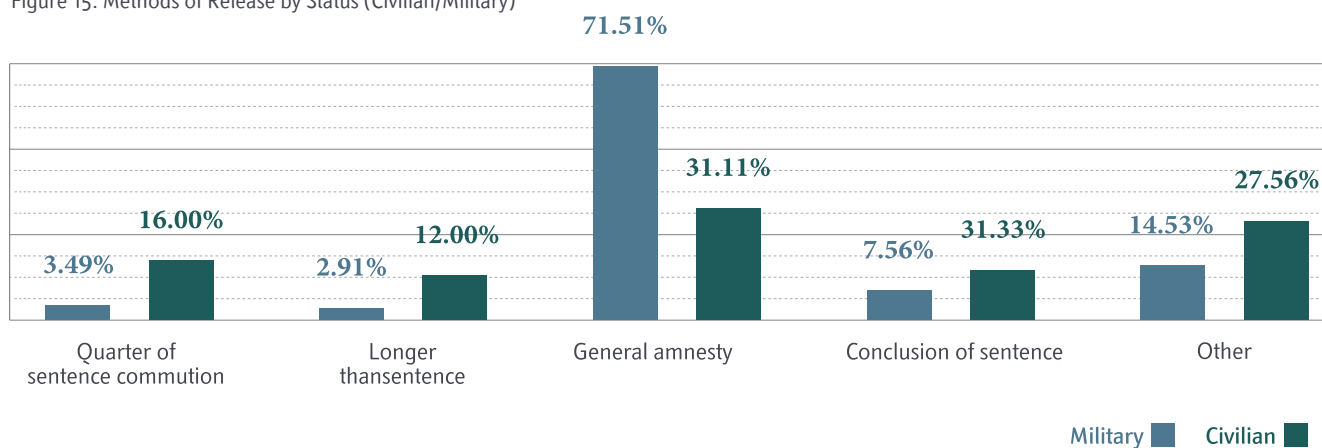
Pardons by Name: This is an amnesty decree issued by the head of the regime that pertains to lists of detainees specified by name, regardless of their ideological or political affiliations or the type of charges they received. These pardons are often issued after mediation by regional dignitaries or community leaders aimed at releasing a detainee or a certain group of detainees. On few other occasions, pardons by name took place after the payment of large sums of money to an influential security and intelligence official, or under political deals between the regime and some Syrian political movements or a neighboring state. Examples of this include the amnesty of Jordanian detainees in November 2007, which coincided with King Abdullah II's visit to Syria, and the pardon by name issued for Turkish detainees in early 2009, which coincided with President Abdullah Gül's visit.

Quarter of Term and Release: Judgments issued by the Supreme State Security Court were final and irrevocable, nor were they subject to the quarter-of-sentence amnesty. This amnesty is granted to prisoners on criminal charges in Syria, providing for the commutation of the sentence by three quarters, rendering a year's incarceration 9 months instead of 12. After the issuance of the general amnesties and the dissolution of the Supreme State Security Court on May 29, 2011, many cases that had not yet been decided by the court were transferred to ordinary civil justice. Some of the detainees whose detention period exceeded the legal period stipulated in Syrian law were released, while others whose cases were referred to civil courts were able to appeal their cases and seek commutation by three quarters.

Table 7. Methods of Release by Term of Imprisonment

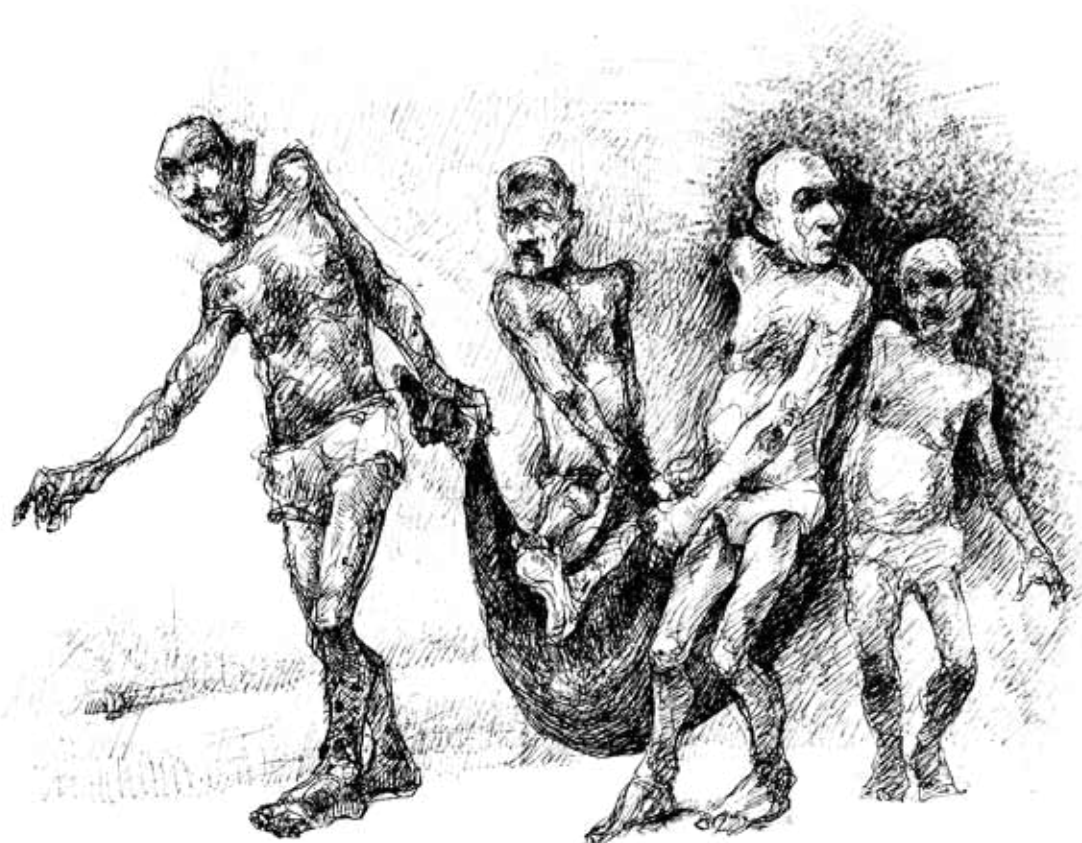
	Less than a year (By number)	1 to 3 years	3 to 6 years	More than 6 years
Quarter of sentence commuted	1	3,31%	23,01%	11,69%
Imprisonment longer than sentence	0	0,00%	15,04%	19,48%
Under a general amnesty	12	73,48%	23,01%	27,27%
Upon conclusion of sentence	0	3,31%	19,47%	18,18%
Other	11	19,89%	19,47%	23,38%
Total	24	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Figure 15. Methods of Release by Status (Civilian/Military)





Consequences of Detention



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Social Impacts

A large proportion (more than 40%) of the detainees reported that their detention has had an impact on their civil status (Figure 16). More than half said that their marriages survived but that the problem lay in the severance of ties with their families (Figure 17). On the other hand, a considerable percentage (16%) said their detention caused separation or estrangement from their wives or fiancées. More than a quarter declined to respond to this question, as the impact of detention on civil status appeared to be too sensitive for them to address.

Figure 16. Has Attention Affected Your Civil Status?

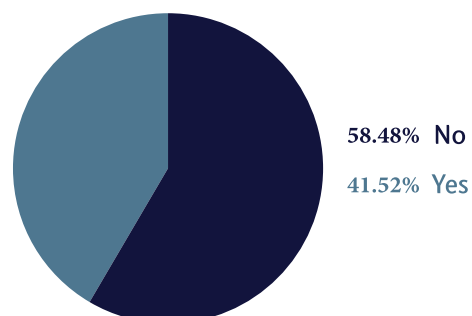
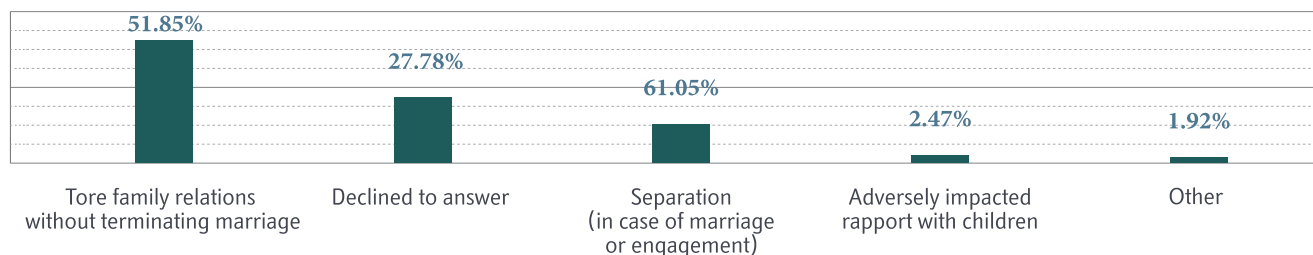


Figure 17. Impact of Detention on Civil Status



Detention has also left a significant impact on education, as only a small percentage of the detainees managed to continue their education after their release (around 13%) (Figure 18). More than two thirds reported that detention also affected their employment (Figure 19).

The experience of detention has adversely impacted the careers of a majority of former detainees (67.8%). 87.3% of those who had lost their jobs said they did not receive any compensation. Moreover, 3% sustained physical and psychological disabilities that hindered their ability to work, while 2.6% reported that their pursuit of employment failed because many were afraid to work with them. Only 1.1% were compensated for their loss of employment. Those who answered with "other" (Figure 20) were defected military personnel.

Figure 18. Impact of Detention on Education?

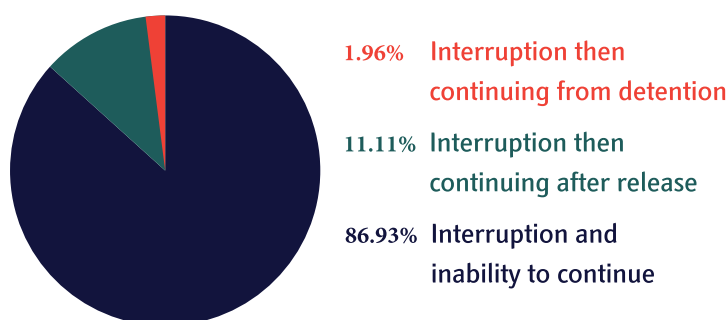


Figure 19. Has Detention Affected Your Work?

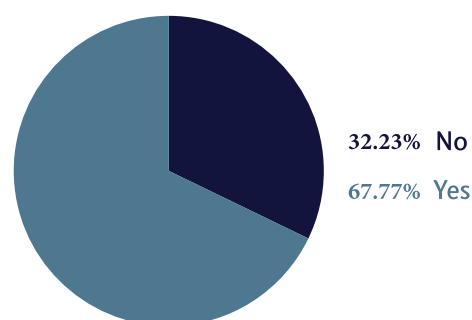
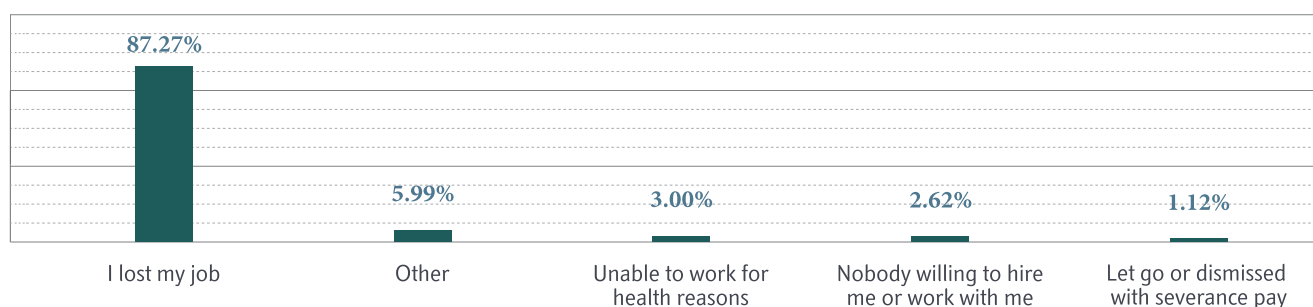


Figure 20. Impact of Detention on Employment



Psychological and Physical Impacts

Rarely does any detainee escape the lasting physical and psychological impacts of torture. More than 90% said they suffered from both (Figure 21). The effects of torture persist even after the detainee has regained their freedom. Figures 22 and 23 show self-assessment of physical injuries and psychological damage that has accompanied detainees after leaving the detention facility. More than a third said their physical injuries had affected their ability to lead normal lives. The same is true of psychological damage, but the proportion of those reporting an inability to lead a normal life drops to less than a quarter. In general, the majority recover from psychological damage, but more than a quarter stated that the severity of their damage had remained unchanged from the moment of their release up to the date of interview (Figure 24).

Figure 21. Were You Subjected to Physical or Psychological Torture During Detention?

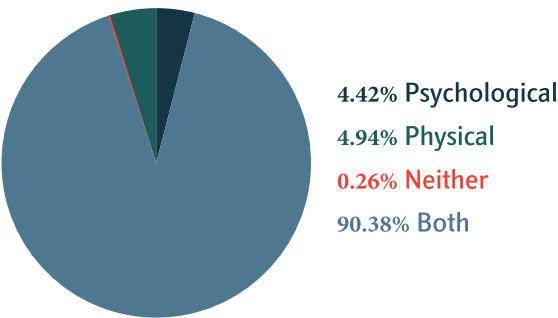


Figure 22. Self-Assessment of Psychological Damage

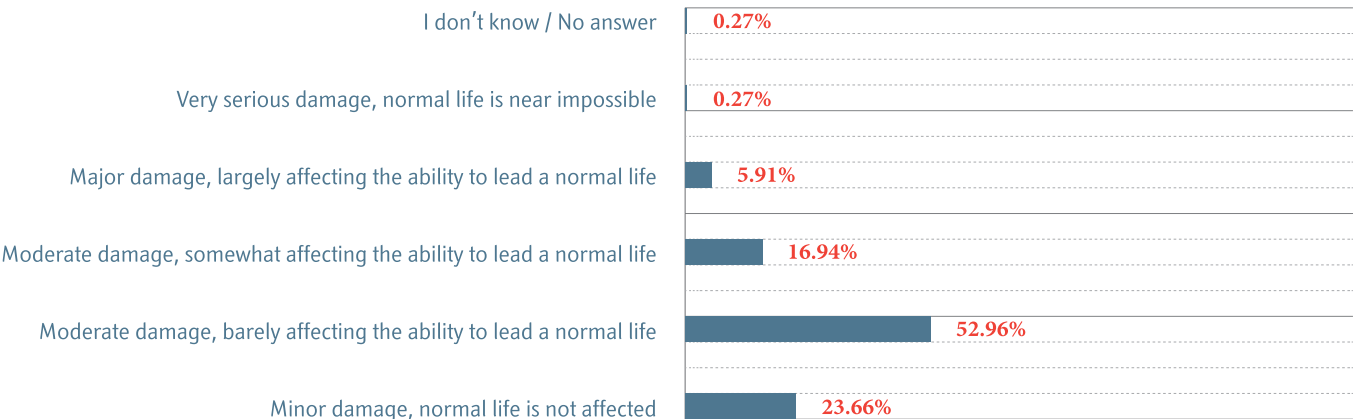


Figure 23. Self-Assessment of Physical Injury

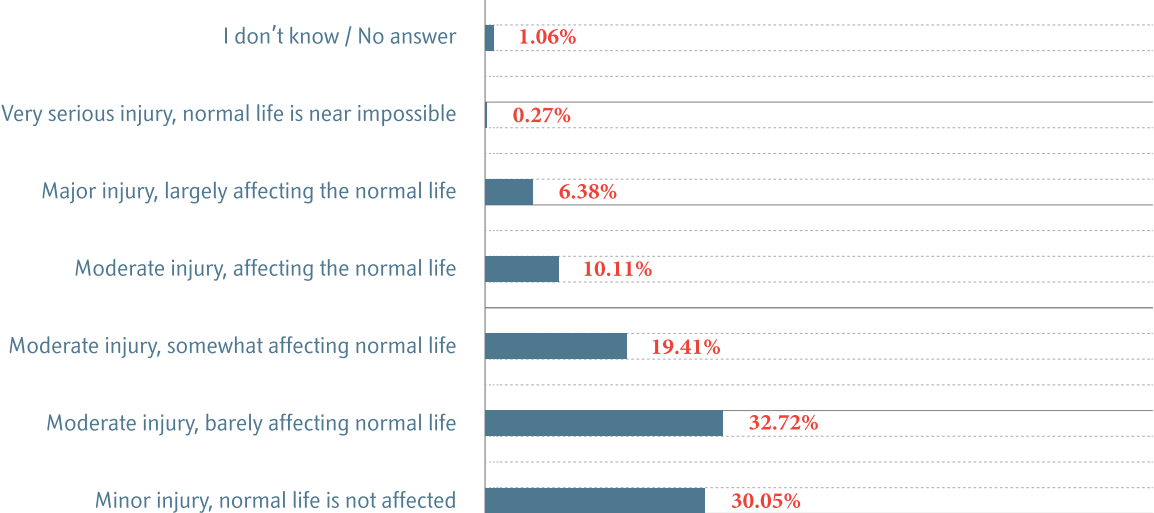
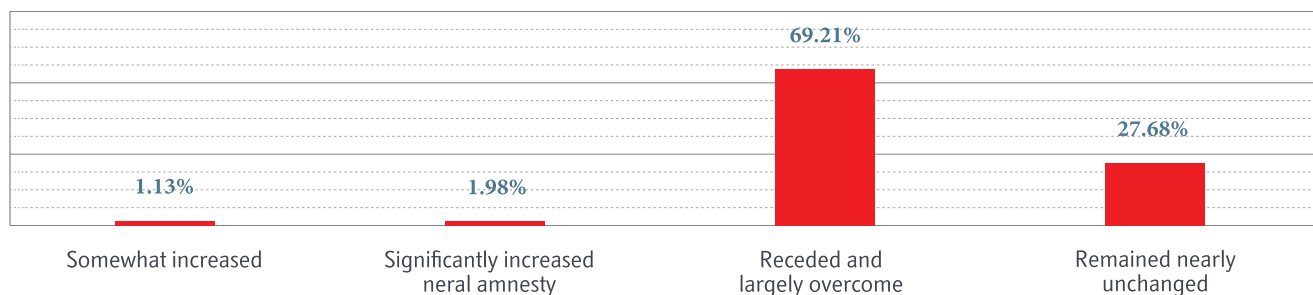


Figure 24. Recovery from Psychological Damage



Recovery from psychological damage does not seem an easy feat for former detainees in Sednaya. In the case of minor damage, the proportion of those who said they did not overcome the damage is about 6%, but it increases significantly with the increase of self-assessment of the severity, exceeding a quarter of respondents in the case of moderate damage that does not affect normal life. The gravity of the situation becomes greater when examining damage that does affect normal life, with the majority of the former detainees finding themselves unable to overcome such damage. This warrants consideration of the importance of psychosocial support, even long after release from Sednaya. We attempted to examine demographic and social variables to look at the relations between them in overcoming psychological damage. The only significant correlation we found was marriage, with 70% of married survivors having recovered, compared to 56% for the unmarried (Table 8).

Table 8. Recovery from Psychological Damage According to Self-Assessment of Severity

	Receded, largely overcome	Remained almost unchanged	Somewhat increased	Significantly increased
Severity of Damage				
Minor damage, normal life is not affected	92,86%	5,95%	0,00%	1,19%
Moderate damage, does not affect normal life	71,43%	26,86%	0,57%	1,14%
Moderate damage, somewhat affecting normal life	42,86%	55,56%	0,00%	1,59%
Major damage, significantly affecting normal life (by number)	8	8	3	3
Major damage, normal life is near impossible (by number)	0	1	0	0
Civil Status				
Married	70,57%	25,95%	1,27%	2,22%
Single	56,25%	43,75%	0,00%	0,00%

Economic Impacts

Detention means the total isolation of the detainee from the outside world. Parents are therefore vulnerable to substantial material extortion in their quest to learn about the fate of their children and loved ones. The majority (57.3%) said their relatives paid money to inquire about their fate or to visit them (Figure 25). The sums paid vary greatly, but generally exceed \$1,500 US (Figure 26). This is a very large number in a country like Syria, where the daily per capita income is around \$2-4.²² This is not limited to inquiries or visits, as the exploitation and emotional manipulation of families of detainees goes as far as false promises of their release. The majority (63.8%) said their relatives paid for promises to have them released (Figure 27). These amounts appear to be larger than those paid for visits or information, with the majority of said relatives paying over \$4,000 US (Figure 28). In a few cases (less than a quarter), these payments did in fact lead to the release of detainees (Figure 29).

Figure 25. Has your family paid money to know your fate during your detention or to visit your place of detention?

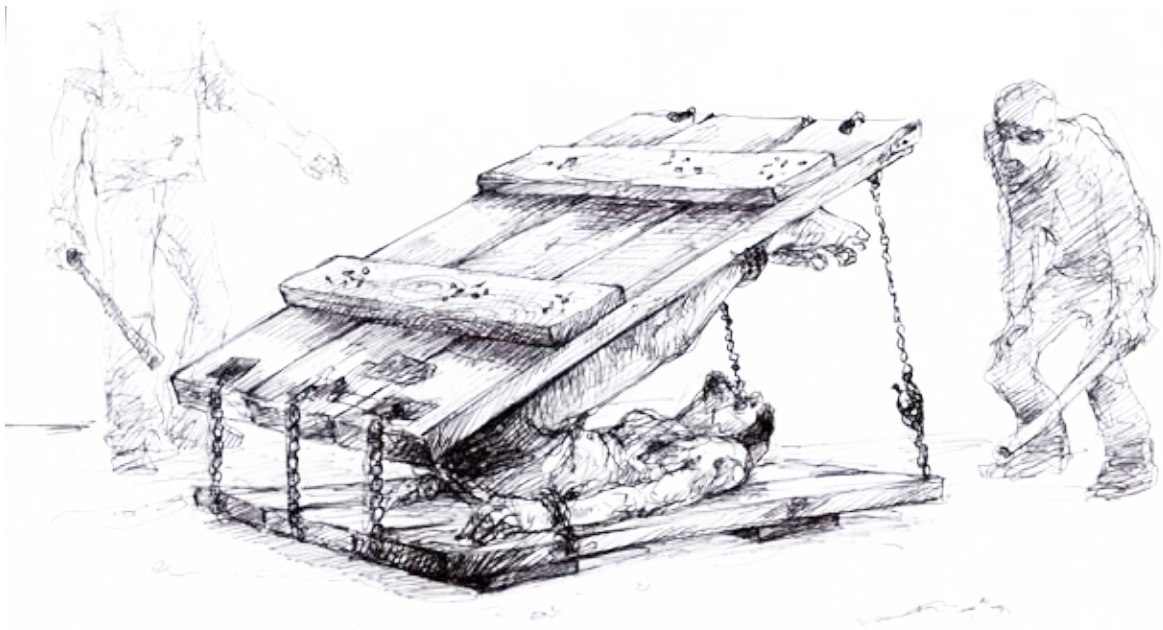
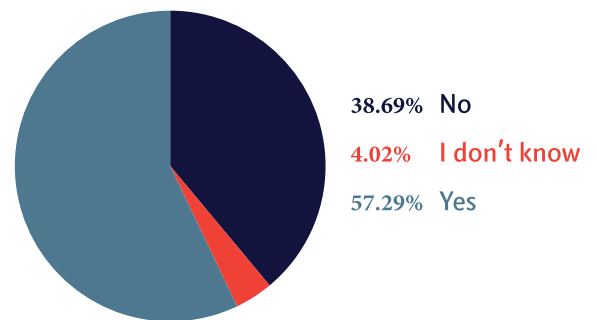


Figure 26. Sums Paid in Exchange for Information or Visits

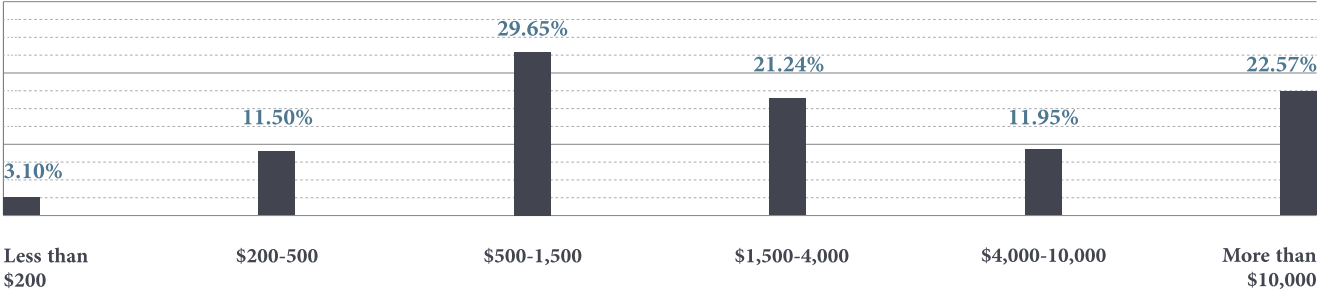


Figure 27. Has any money been paid in exchange for promises of your release?

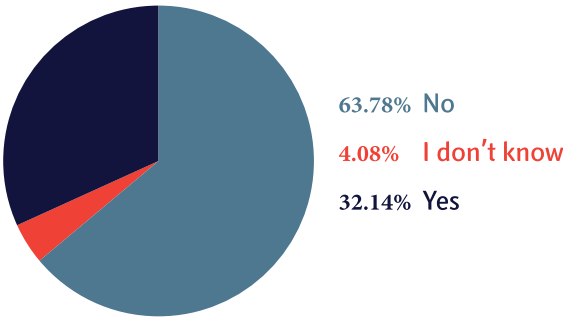


Figure 28. Sums Paid in Exchange for Promises of Release

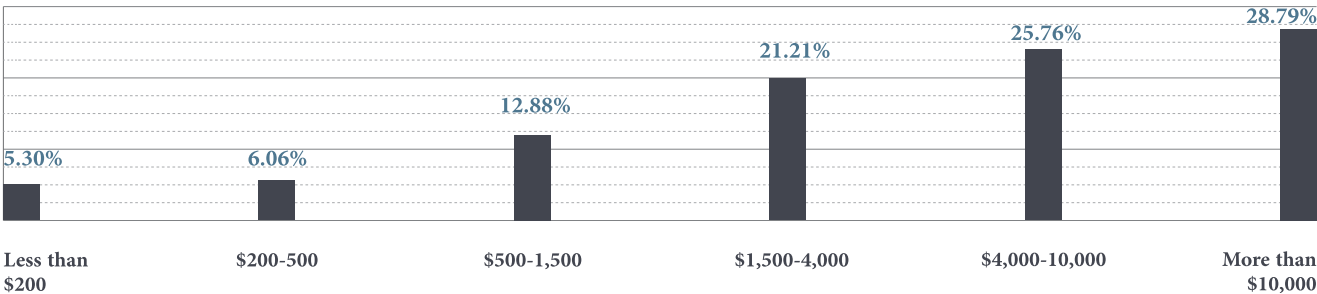
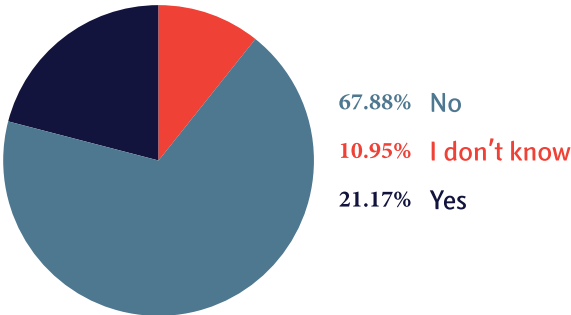


Figure 29. Has this money paid contributed to your release?



But to whom are these payments made?

Securing a visit to a detainee, or obtaining news about their fate or whereabouts, is done through the payment of money to various mediators who have personal connections with regime figures and members of state authorities. It is difficult to clearly define this category, as most mediators are people without official governmental or security positions. Instead, most such mediators enjoy good relations with government officials or senior army or security officers; some may be friendly with major “Shabiha” and regime-aligned warlords, while others might be employees of private companies owned by businessmen close to the regime. In some cases, they have private jobs and professions (owners of real estate agencies, commercial shops or restaurants, as well as artists, etc.).²³

In addition to this category, a high proportion of mediators are lawyers. It is unclear which payments were fees for the lawyers and which were bribes. What is notable, however, is the fact that 7.4% of the recipients of these payments were judges²⁴, as well as the prominent role of Shabiha in the extortion of detainees and their families, which appears to match - and at times surpass - the roles of security and intelligence officers (Table 9).

Table 9. The Party to Whom Payments Were Made in Exchange for Information, Visits, or Promises of Release from Detention

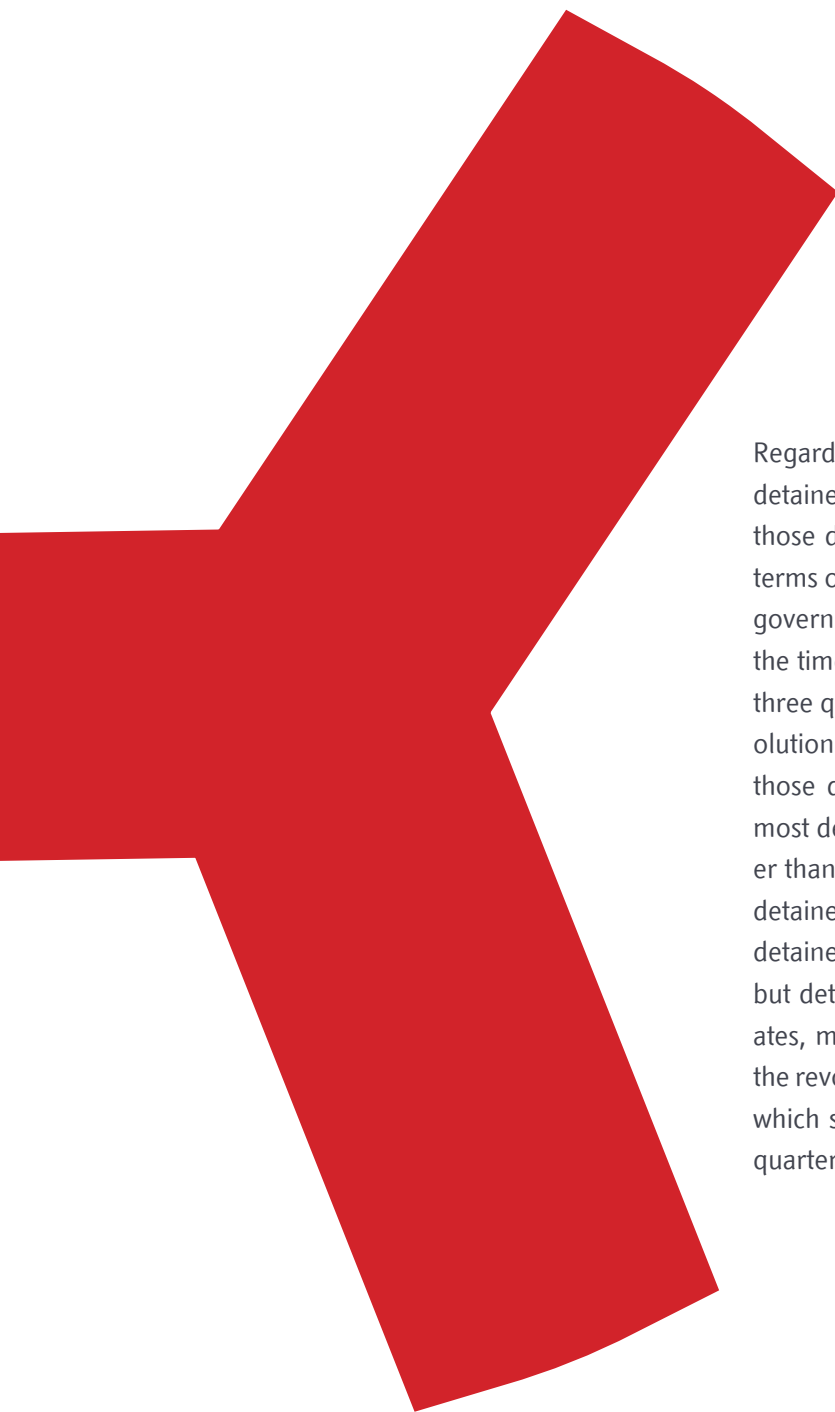
	The person received the money to secure a release from the detention center	The person received the money to secure a visit or convey news about the detainee
Security or intelligence officer	13,11%	17,81%
Shabiha member	15,57%	15,07%
Military officer	7,38%	10,50%
Judge	7,38%	0,46%
Lawyer	18,03%	9,13%
Public employee	1,64%	1,37%
Intermediary	36,89%	45,21%
Other	0,00%	0,46%
Total	100,00%	100,00%

23 Shabiha are paramilitary forces that have long existed in Syria under Hafez al-Assad, but their presence was confined to certain geographical areas, with close ties to the Assad family. After the revolution, the Shabiha phenomenon expanded, and its role changed so as to become a key player in the war against the Syrian people. Rateb Shabo notes five major changes: organizational, functional, political, moral, and numerical (or in terms of size). The organizational changes are its transition from an unorganized or improvised state of affairs into higher levels of disciplinary organization. Functional change refers to the fact that securing the regime has become its primary function. Politically, these forces have entered into the political arena (albeit with little political awareness). As for the change in size, it relates to its recruitment of thousands of young men. Finally, their moral change refers to the change of their social image; as they are currently considered by a large segment of Syrian society as acceptable, or even necessary, defenders of the homeland. See: (Arabic) Rateb Shabo, “Shabiha: The Triad of Violence, Sectarianism, and Economy,” *On Violent Groups in Syria*, by Rustom Mahmood (ed.), Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos), 2014.

24 In some cases, sums were paid to lawyers as retainers or fees for court proceedings and follow-up on the detainee’s case. However, a large percentage of interviewed detainees reported that their relatives had paid large sums of money to lawyers in exchange for the transfer of their cases from the Field Military Court to the Counterterrorism Court, and thus their transfer to civilian prisons such as the Hama Central Prison and Suwaida Prison. Others confirmed that their relatives had paid more than one party, including a lawyer, for the purpose of suspending or freezing their trials in the Field Military Court.



Changes After the Revolution of 2011



Regarding the social and demographic backgrounds of detainees, we have found significant differences between those detained before and after the Syrian revolution in terms of educational attainment, age at the time of arrest, governorate of origin, and the nature of employment at the time of arrest (civilian/military) (Table 10). More than three quarters of those detained in Sednaya after the revolution had university degrees, while only about 45% of those detained before the revolution did. Furthermore, most detainees arrested after the revolution were younger than 27 years old, while the majority of pre-revolution detainees were between 28 and 37. Almost half of those detained after the revolution were from Homs and Idlib, but detainees before had come from different governorates, most prominently Idlib, Hama, and Aleppo. Before the revolution, almost all detainees were civilians (91.5%), which shifted drastically after the revolution, when three quarters were military, and only one quarter were civilian.²⁵

²⁵ Most probably, the proportion of civilians is greater than that. As we explained earlier, ease of access to military detainees contributed to an increase in their number, and thus their proportion, in our sample. Moreover, large-scale forced disappearance, extermination, and execution has targeted civilians, but our sample relied on survivors. There has certainly been a significant change between the periods before and after the revolution, not only in the brutality of detention, but also in the profiles of the victims: from overwhelmingly civilian detainees to a large percentage of military detainees (who had defected or attempted to defect, or otherwise expressed sympathy with the revolution).



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Table 10. Social and Demographic Backgrounds of Detainees, Before and After the Revolution

	Before the Revolution	After the Revolution
Educational Attainment		
Primary	8,15%	1,93%
Middle school	14,67%	9,18%
Illiterate	4,35%	0,97%
High school	23,37%	9,18%
University	35,33%	74,40%
Postgraduate	1,09%	0,48%
Higher institute	9,78%	3,38%
Literate	3,26%	0,48%
Age at Arrest		
Under 18	2,63%	1,44%
18-27	38,95%	54,55%
28-37	45,79%	33,01%
38-47	9,47%	8,61%
48 years and above	3,16%	2,39%
Governorates		
Homs	3,80%	25,84%
Idlib	13,59%	22,49%
Hama	10,33%	11,48%
Aleppo	22,83%	11,00%
Rural Damascus	8,15%	8,61%
Daraa	2,72%	5,74%
Damascus	5,98%	5,26%
Latakia	2,72%	3,83%
Deir ez-Zor	10,87%	3,35%
Quneitra	1,09%	1,44%
Hasakah	7,61%	0,96%
Raqqa	9,78%	0,00%
Tartous	0,54%	0,00%
Nature of Work at Time of Arrest (Civilian/Military)		
Military	8,51%	75,00%
Civilian	91,49%	25,00%

Figure 30 illustrates the differences in terms of sentences. The sentences of the overwhelming majority of post-revolution detainees were less than 3 years (87.5%), while prior to the revolution only a minority (12%) of detainees had received sentences of less than 3 years.²⁶ It is also notable that the use of Field Military Courts in Sednaya increased dramatically following the revolution: from 24.3% to 87.6% (Figure 31).

Figure 30. Sentences Before and After the Revolution

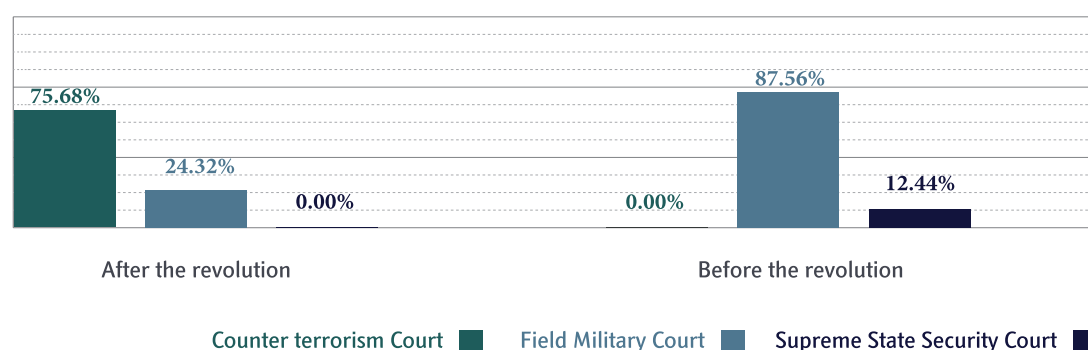
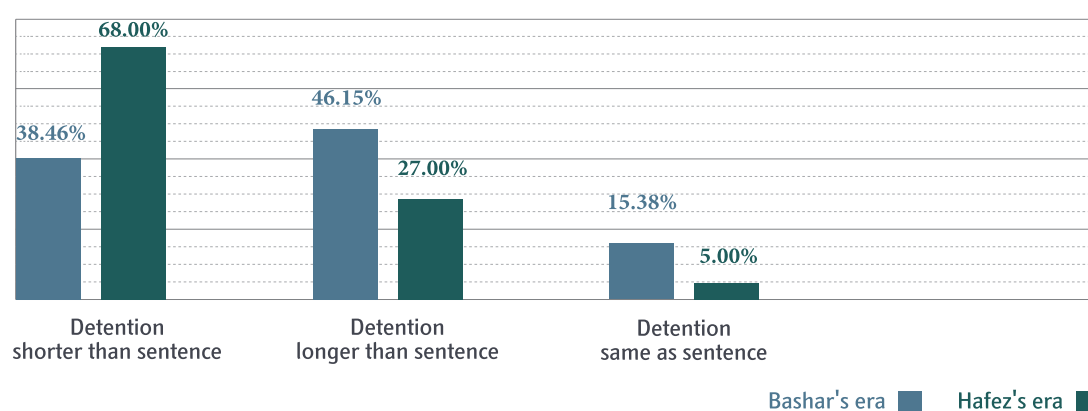


Figure 31. Courts Before and After the Revolution



We also found that during the era of Hafez al-Assad, the majority of the detainees were detained for longer durations than their sentences, a reality that shifted in the era of Bashar, with the majority of detainees during his rule released before serving their full sentences (Figure 32). This may be explained by the large number of detainees who entered Sednaya after 2011, which “required” rapid turnover of inmates, as well as the extermination and mass executions that have taken place thereafter.²⁷ To verify this hypothesis, we found it useful to extrapolate changes in detention procedures during Bashar’s era, both before the revolution (from June 2000) and in its aftermath (from March 2011).

The significant differences we observed regarding detention procedures during Bashar’s rule, whether before or after the revolution, were grounded in the following (Table 11):

²⁶ In our survivor-based sample, no detainee has been sentenced for more than six years. Most of those sentenced to this period or more are still in detention.

²⁷ According to estimates by lawyer Anwar al-Bunni, the number of detainees in Syria between the beginning of the revolution and mid-2015 exceeded 300,000. See: (Arabic) Anwar al-Bunni, “Terrorism of the Courts in Syria: Counterterrorism Court, Field Military Courts, Shari’a Courts and Shari’a Bodies,” Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, 2015.

First: Location of arrest. Before the revolution, arrests were carried out in multiple locations, including home, workplace, and border crossings, among others. After the revolution, most arrests occurred in the workplace. This can be attributed to the large proportion of defected military personnel and those who had attempted or considered defection.

Second: Before the revolution, the majority of trials were based on the Syrian Penal Code (61.3%). After the breakout of the revolution, the situation seems to have shifted entirely, as only a very small proportion reported trials according to the provisions of the law (5.5%).²⁸ We also noted that during the rule of Hafez al-Assad, half of all trials with legislation and decrees outside the Penal Code were based on Article 1 of Law No. 49 of 1988 on the Muslim Brotherhood, and the other half according to Decree No. 6 “on opposing the aims of the revolution.” During the rule of Bashar, and up until the 2011 revolution, the majority of detainees had been tried according to Article 1 of Law 49.²⁹ The situation has changed entire thereafter, as all trials became likely to take place under Law No. 19 of 2012 “on counterterrorism.”³⁰

Third: Announcement of sentences. Before the revolution, the judge used to notify the detainee of their sentences in the majority of cases (77.8%). After the revolution, this ceased to happen (in almost all cases); only 4% said the judge had notified them of the terms of their sentences, and the rest (96%) reported non-notification.

Fourth: Confiscation of property. The majority of those detained in Sednaya during Bashar’s rule before the revolution (72.2%) reported that their property had not been confiscated, while more than half of the detainees after the revolution had their properties and assets seized.

Fifth: The entity which confiscates property. Between the pre- and post-revolution detainees, we noted a significant increase in the percentage of those who said confiscations and seizures of their properties and assets had been carried out by the court. This suggests the likelihood of state-mandated decisions aimed at seizing the properties of the detainees, in addition to depriving them of their freedom.

28 The number of trials according to this law during both under Hafez al-Assad and under Bashar after the revolution were very few, so we presented them in a separate table in the Appendix (Table B). During the era of Hafez al-Assad, Article 306, which pertains to membership of banned associations, was the most prominent provision of this kind. Later, in the era of Bashar al-Assad, Articles 285 and 287, concerning the incitement of sectarian strife and the dissemination of false news abroad, rose to similar prominence. This may be explained by the proliferation of the Internet in households at that time, with Bashar introducing himself as a sponsor of modernization and information technology, and therefore tightening the tools of online censorship. Facebook, for example, and even Arabic Wikipedia, were blocked in Syria. Many young men were subsequently arrested in 2006, then known as Internet detainees. After the revolution, however, Article 305 on terrorism was introduced to legitimize mass executions.

29 The text of the article: “Every member of the organization of Muslim Brotherhood shall be considered a criminal and punished by death” (see the full text of the law in its entirety in the Appendix).

30 For the text of Law No. 10 of 2012 see: (Arabic) Syrian Arab Republic, Presidency of the Council of Ministers website, <https://bit.ly/2qIRGci>.

Table 11. Location of Arrest Under Bashar al-Assad, Before and After the Revolution

	Before the Revolution	After the Revolution
Location of Arrest		
Workplace	24,41%	68,57%
Checkpoint	0,00%	9,52%
Ambush	10,24%	7,62%
Home	25,20%	6,19%
Street	3,15%	3,33%
Borders	14,17%	0,95%
Summoning to branch	15,75%	0,95%
Hotel	0,00%	0,48%
Mosque	0,00%	0,48%
Airport	2,36%	0,48%
Government service	0,00%	0,96%
Extradition from another state	2,36%	0,00%
Self-surrender due to the arrest of one or more family members	0,79%	0,00%
University or school	1,58%	0,48%
Trial Under Penal Code		
No	10,92%	55,22%
I don't know	27,73%	39,30%
Yes	61,34%	5,47%
Trial in Accordance with Decrees and Legislation Outside the Penal Code (by number)		
Article 1 of Law No. 49 of 1980 on the Muslim Brotherhood	12	0
Article 2 of Law No. 19 of 2012 on combating terrorism	0	2
Article 6 of Law No. 19 of 2012 on combating terrorism	0	1
Decree No. 6 "on opposing the aims of the revolution"	4	0
Notified of the Term of Their Sentences		
No	22,22%	96,00%
Yes	77,78%	4,00%
Confiscation of Property		
No	72,22%	40,38%
I don't know	9,52%	8,17%
Yes	18,25%	51,44%
Method of Confiscation		
Seizure	78,26%	59,09%
Expropriated by court	13,04%	38,18%
Other	8,70%	2,73%

What is worth noting here is the large increase in the extortion of funds from detainees and their families, by contrasting the eras of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, and then the periods preceding and following the breakout of the revolution. Of those detained during Hafez's reign, 13.33% reported that they (or their parents) had paid money in return for promises of their release. This percentage rose to 31.4% in the years 2000-2011 before it reached 38.0% after the revolution, suggesting that receiving money in exchange for promises of release was much less prevalent under Hafez. Then, money was often paid for information about the fate of detainees, or to secure a visit, and only at a rate of 32.8%, while during Bashar's rule, more than half of those detained before the revolution (or their parents) paid for these purposes, and an even larger majority (67.9%) did that after the revolution (Table 12). All of this reinforces our previous hypothesis regarding the implementation of systematic extortion by the state in Bashar's era, especially after the revolution.³¹

Table 12. Payment of Money Between Three Eras: Hafez, Bashar-Before the Revolution, Bashar-After the Revolution

	Hafez	Bashar	
		Before the Revolution	After the Revolution
Paying Money for Promises of Release			
No	81,67%	66,94%	56,73%
I don't know	5,00%	1,61%	5,29%
Yes	13,33%	31,45%	37,98%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
Paying Money for Information or Visits			
No	62,30%	46,46%	27,27%
I don't know	4,92%	2,36%	4,78%
Yes	32,79%	51,18%	67,94%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

During Bashar's rule, a quarter of those detained before the revolution were released under a general amnesty, and more than a third were released after serving the entirety of their sentences, at times serving an additional period too. About a quarter had their sentences commuted by three quarters. As for post-revolution detainees, more than two thirds were released under a general amnesty (compared to one third under Hafez), a mere 3.3% were released after the end of and their sentence, and a similar percentage were released with a quarter of their sentences left (Table 13). By examining difference during the Bashar's rule (before and after the revolution), it appears that after the revolution, Bashar returned to his father's approach of granting general amnesties for civilians, as the proportion

³¹ Analysis of many documents issued by the Syrian regime after the revolution supports our claim in this regard. Assad personally issued Decree No. 63 of 2012 and Decree No. 203 of 2016, Law No. 1 in 2016, both of which legitimize the seizure of dissidents' property. Mansour al-Omari asserts that, "The organization of the process of issuing precautionary seizure orders, and the preparation of an integrated electronic system for this purpose, indicates the sheer number of such decisions as to require their organization. This also confirms the intention of the regime and its government to continue confiscating property and violating property rights guaranteed by all laws. Therefore, the regime uses these decisions to pressure dissidents, journalists, politicians, artists, and others as a means of reprisal and deprivation of property for having expressed political views or actively participated in political opposition, or even defended themselves and their families against murder and forced detention." See: (Arabic) Mansour Al-Omari, "Syria's Land-Looting Campaign for Reconstruction," Enab Baladi, 2019.

of those released in this manner during both Hafez's and post-revolution Bashar's eras is almost identical. Furthermore, the proportion of those released with a quarter of their terms of sentences remaining has also decreased after the revolution, matching the percentages in Hafez's time, whereas it had risen significantly before the revolution, reaching about a quarter of all Sednaya detainees. After examining the charges leveled against them, we found that most of them related to Salafist groups, specifically Jund al-Sham³² and Hizb ut-Tahrir.³³

Table 13. Methods of Release Between Three Eras: Hafez, Bashar-Before the Revolution, Bashar-After the Revolution

	Hafez	Bashar	
		Before the Revolution	After the Revolution
Prison takeover by armed opposition	0,00%	3,17%	1,44%
Release	0,00%	3,17%	4,31%
Acquittal	1,61%	0,00%	0,96%
Quarter of sentence remaining	4,84%	25,40%	3,35%
Prisoner exchange	3,23%	0,79%	4,31%
Public charge dropped	0,00%	0,00%	0,48%
Retrial	3,23%	1,59%	3,35%
Finished sentence and served longer than its duration	22,58%	14,29%	0,00%
Under a pardon by name	3,23%	0,00%	0,48%
Under a special amnesty	8,06%	2,38%	2,39%
Under a health amnesty	3,23%	0,00%	0,00%
Under a general amnesty	33,87%	23,81%	67,94%
Pending trial	0,00%	6,35%	3,35%
Upon serving full sentence	14,52%	19,05%	4,78%
For lack of evidence	1,61%	0,00%	2,87%

32 The Jund al-Sham organization in Syria emerged out of a meeting held in 2004 between several Salafist-jihadist groups in various parts of the country. The largest of these was the group led by the leader to-be of the organization, Abu Shaheer (Muhammad Haysiya), in peripheral Hama neighborhoods and some of its villages. Other groups were located in eastern Syria, Madaya and the Palestinian refugee camps in Damascus, among other areas. Members of the organization were characterized by zeal and lack of education and experience, which facilitated their infiltration by the Political Security through two informants. When the Military Security grasped a serious threat in the case in 2005, the rivalry between the two security apparatuses grew fiercer, along with competition over possession of this case. To this end, Military Security strove to exaggerate the threat of the group and greatly expanded pertinent arrests, both from the milieu of its members and from other separate cases which were attached to it, until the case finally came into its mandate. Within the organization itself, options were not yet settled between supporting jihad in Iraq, where Jund al-Sham already had a training camp, or discreet preparation for action against the Syrian regime. There were meetings between the organization's leaders and envoys from Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, but they did not result in a comprehensive organizational link to al-Qaeda. Although the number of actual members may not have exceeded 100, more than 400 persons were detained under the pretext of membership to it, of whom about 300 were imprisoned in Sednaya. Roughly a quarter of these were released after a year and a half, while others remained pending trial due to a lack of evidence to convict most of them. Many were later released, especially after 2011, and there are still detainees pertaining to this case until today.

33 Hizb ut-Tahrir has long existed in Syria, and the Syrian regime has for years overlooked its activities. A large number of Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters were arrested in Syria in 1999, following accusations of a coup plot by a limited number of officers affiliated with it. See: (Arabic) Tarek Ahmed, Readings on the Islamic Movement in the Syrian War (2), Suwar Magazine, 2016.

Table 14. Methods of Release of Civilians and Military Personnel Across Three Periods: Hafez, Bashar-Before the Revolution, Bashar-After the Revolution

	Civilian (percentage)			Military (number)		
	Hafez	Bashar - Before the revolution	Bashar - After the revolution	Hafez	Bashar - Before the revolution	Bashar - After the revolution
Prison takeover by armed opposition*	0,00%	3,33%	3,85%	0	0	1
Release	0,00%	3,33%	13,46%	0	0	2
Quarter of sentence remaining	3,77%	26,67%	3,85%	1	0	5
In a prisoner exchange	3,77%	0,83%	5,77%	0	0	6
After serving longer than sentence	18,87%	14,17%	0,00%	0	1	0
Under a special amnesty	11,32%	2,50%	5,77%	4	0	3
Under a health amnesty	3,77%	0,00%	0,00%	1	0	0
Under a general amnesty	39,62%	22,50%	42,31%	0	3	120
Pending trial	5,66%	8,33%	23,08%	1	0	11
Upon serving full sentence	13,21%	18,33%	1,92%	2	2	9
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	9	6	157

* For clarification, it ought to be mentioned that this data is based on the date of arrest, not the date of release from prison, and thus it includes detainees from before and after the revolution. Some of those included were arrested before the revolution and only left after the fall of the prison in the hands of the opposition after 2011.

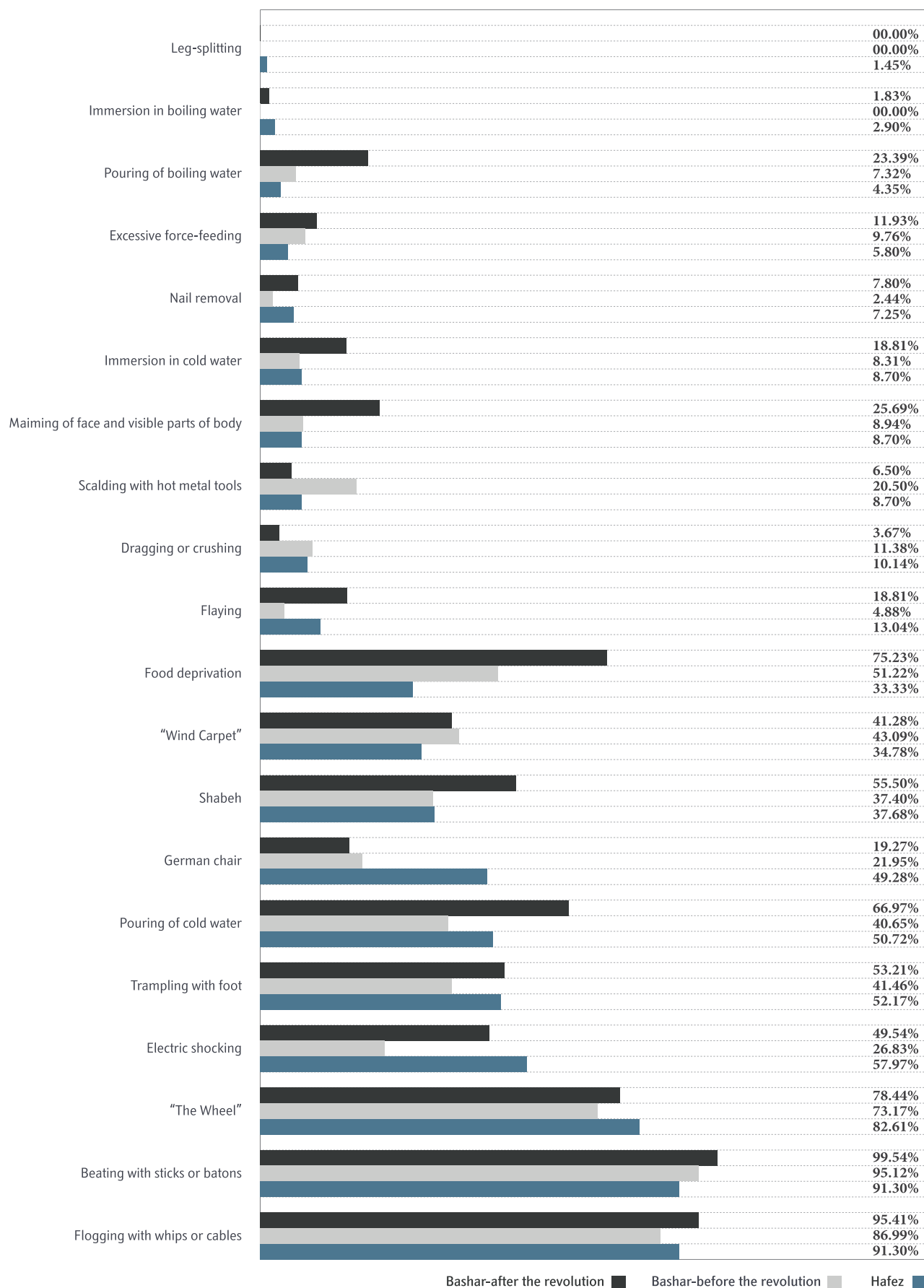
This pertains to civilians, but how did the detained soldiers get out after the revolution? Often under a general amnesty (about three quarters). The military personnel detained before them were few in our sample, making it difficult to construct a precise picture of their exit routes. However, it should be noted that none of those detained during Hafez's era were released under a general amnesty (Table 14).

In short, these disparities point to shifts on two main fronts: the first is the arrest procedures, whereby arrest from the workplace became very prevalent due to defection, repeated attempts at defection, or even mere "contemplation of defection," as later amnesty decrees targeted more military personnel than civilian detainees in Sednaya. The second is trial proceedings, which were later carried out more swiftly, and with more violations (for example, most convicts were not notified of the terms of their sentences). Moreover, it seems that the property and assets of detainees were a more recurrent target of state seizures after the revolution, largely for covering the regime's severe shortage of financial resources. What supports this claim is that most property confiscations were carried out by court orders, suggesting the existence of decisions to this effect from the higher authorities.

Furthermore, we noted differences in the forms of torture (Figure 33):

Physical torture: The "tire" and beatings (with sticks, batons, whips, or cables) remained the preferred method of torture during the eras of both Hafez and Bashar. Some methods seem to have receded in the era of Bashar's rule and before the revolution, compared to Hafez's era, but most re-emerged significantly after the revolution: electric shocking, trampling with feet and the pouring of cold water. The use of the "German Chair" greatly declined in Bashar's era, both before and after the revolution, compared to Hafez's era, which seems to have been replaced by Shabeh (body suspension), the percentage of which rose from about a third before the revolution to more than half after it. Resorting to the "wind carpet" method remained relatively unchanged (about one third in Hafez's time and up to 40% in Bashar's, both before and after the revolution). What is notable about physical torture is the significant

Figure 33. Physical Torture Between Three Eras: Hafez, Bashar-Before the Revolution, Bashar-After the Revolution



rise in practices that leave visible and long-term physical marks on the detainees after leaving the prison: flaying, pouring of boiling water, scalding with hot metal, maiming of faces and maiming of visible parts of the body, and deprivation of food. Three quarters of those detained after the revolution were deprived of food, comparing to about half of those detained during Bashar's era before the revolution, and to about one third under Hafez. Perhaps this can be attributed to the regime's active terrorizing of the population rebelling against its rule. Such practices are reminiscent of the deaths of Hamzah al-Khatib, Ghiath Matar, and others whose bodies were deliberately mutilated and sent to their families.

As for sexual torture, we noted that beating of sexual organs was a preferred method under both Assads, but differences exist:

1. A probably significant increase in sexual torture during Bashar's era after the revolution; about a quarter of detainees before the revolution (in the eras of Hafez and Bashar) were subjected to this form of torture, compared to more than a third of those detained after 2011.
2. A significant increase in the use of the following methods; beatings targeting sexual organs, harm of sexual organs or sensitive body parts, and forced sexual positions. More than half of the detainees who reported being subjected to sexual torture during Hafez's era said they were beaten on the genitals, compared to an overwhelming majority (about 85%) during Bashar's era. In the case of harm of sexual organs and forced sexual positions, about one third said that they were subjected to these methods of torture. The increase in forced sexual positions may have been an indication of increased use of rape. These positions are often accompanied by the insertion of pipes or sticks or other items into the anus. This may help to understand the significant decline in the reporting of "threats of rape," as such methods of torture were likely to turn into actual rape.

We should restate the fact that most detainees avoid talking about this form of torture (beatings may be mentioned, but not other methods of sexual torture). Therefore, the numbers of detainees in our sample who reported this form of torture were few, both during Hafez's and Bashar's eras. This means that the findings must be examined with caution, for which reason we have presented the tables of percentages and figures. These figures are likely to be much lower than actual cases, but their utility lies in their confirmation of the existence of this form of torture and of these methods of carrying it out. They also allow us to compare the prevalence of these methods across different periods of time. Generally, the subject of sexual torture requires further research and other methods of collection and analysis (Table 15).

Table 15. Sexual Torture Across Three Periods: Hafez, Bashar – before the Revolution, Bashar – after the Revolution

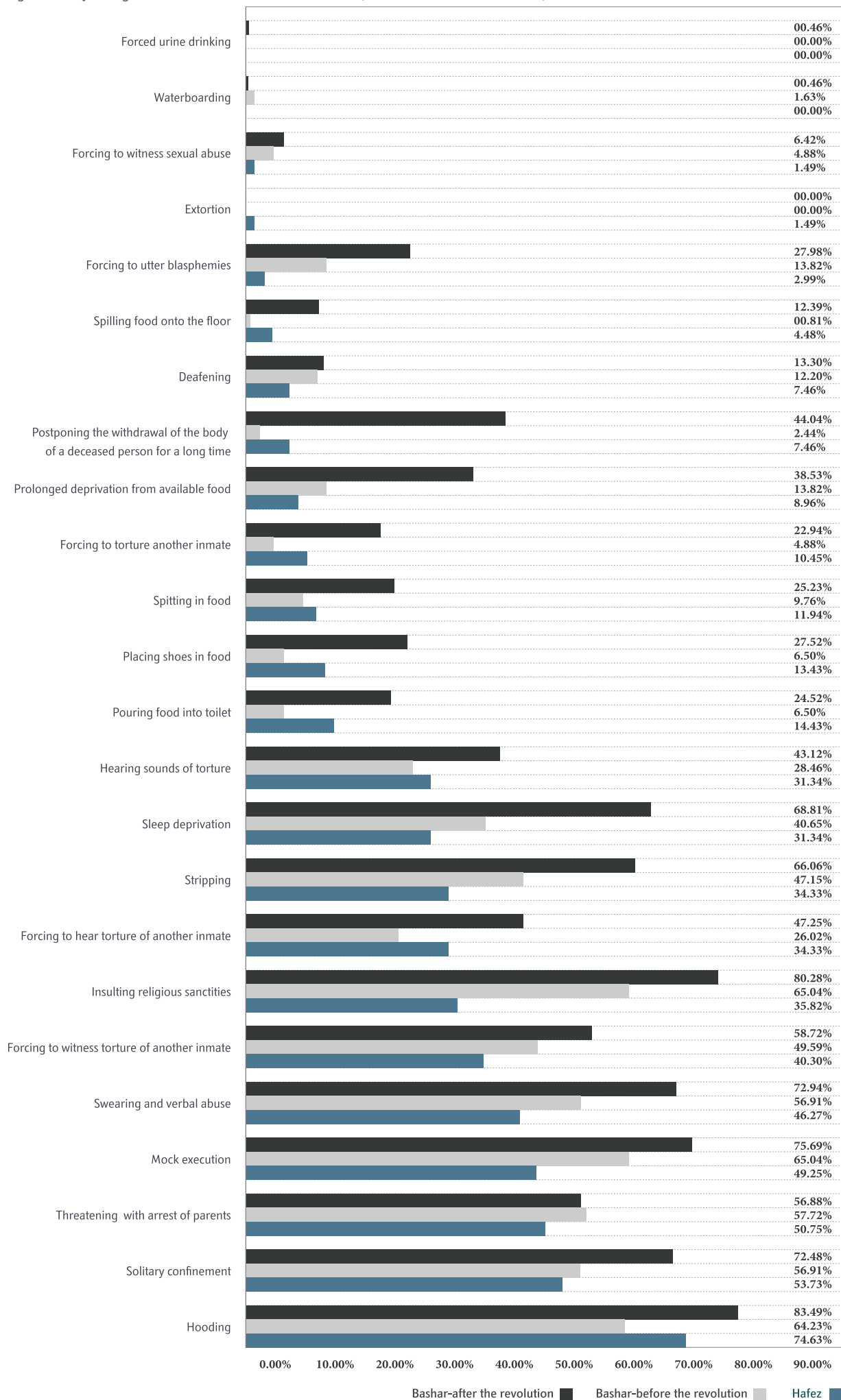
	Hafez		Bashar - before the revolution		Bashar - after the revolution	
Beatings of sexual organs	56,25%	9	86,21%	25	84,81%	67
Threat of rape	25,00%	4	10,34%	3	3,80%	3
Harm to sexual organs or sensitive body parts	18,75%	3	31,03%	9	32,91%	26
Tying or tightening of sexual organs or sensitive body parts	12,50%	2	34,48%	10	11,39%	9
Forced sexual positions	6,25%	1	10,34%	3	30,38%	24
Molestation	6,25%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0
Connecting electric wires to sexual organs and shocking them	6,25%	1	0,00%	0	0,00%	0
Insertion of a pipe or stick into the anus	0,00%	0	3,45%	1	3,80%	3

Psychological torture was extensively used, both before and after the revolution, and hardly any detainee escaped this particular form of torture. The main difference to be noted here is the variety of its methods; as there was a notable increase in the use of all methods during Bashar's era and after the revolution (Figure 34). In general, the proportion of detainees who have been subjected to each and every method rose significantly after the revolution compared to earlier periods. Particularly noteworthy are the postponement of the withdrawal of the body of a deceased person for an extended period of time, with the proportion of detainees who reported this reaching 44% (compared to less than 8% under Hafez, and less than 3% under Bashar before the revolution). On the one hand, this indicates a very sharp increase in the number of detainees who died in Sednaya, and on the other, it suggests that there was a systematic practice of employing the bodies of deceased detainees in torturing those who were still living. To sum up, there has been a great increase in the use of all forms of physical, psychological, and sexual torture after 2011. If we were to give a general character to physical torture during this period, one which distinguishes it from earlier times, it is that physical torture after the revolution was intended to leave significant physical marks that would accompany the detainee for a long time after their release, thereby terrorizing rebelling communities. Another practice characteristic of post-revolution psychological torture was the use of the bodies of deceased detainees to torture the living ones. What distinguishes sexual torture after the revolution is its intent to leave as many long-term physical and psychological effects on the detainee as possible (a significant increase in direct genital beatings and forced sexual positions). Since the era of Hafez al-Assad, torture was not intended to extract confessions, but rather to crush the spirit of the detainee and to terrorize broader Syrian society. This latter goal has in recent years gained particular significance, which is reflected in the increased use of torture methods that leave long-term marks, serving as a clear expression of the slogan "Either Assad or we burn down the country." Many detainees who entered and left Sednaya in relatively short periods of time carried marks of torture on their bodies, and they recounted stories about their horrifying experiences and the deaths of many of their fellow inmates. All this indicates that Bashar al-Assad feels secure, and therefore pays little attention to the spread of news of torture and mass extermination of detainees. The regime has deliberately publicized such stories, deeming them to be means of quelling the revolution of the Syrian people and intimidating dissidents with the threat of human slaughterhouses.



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Figure 34. Psychological Torture Across Three Periods: Hafez, Bashar-Before the Revolution, Bashar-After the Revolution





Executive Summary and Recommendations

Beyond information on the tragic conditions in which detainees are held in Syrian prisons generally, and in Sednaya Prison especially, this report and its underlying testimonies present insights into the issue of political detention in Syria and its transformations, as well as the overall political and social circumstances associated with it. We believe that understanding these social and political dynamics provides for a better awareness of the methods and modus operandi of the regime's security institutions, and how they use detention, torture, and extermination as means of terrorizing and subjugating Syrian society as a whole. This can contribute to a deeper understanding of the Syrian regime's security architecture, holding accountable those responsible for engineering and running these systems of dehumanization, and bringing justice to their victims.

The path towards dismantling these security institutions and holding accountable the perpetrators of their atrocities requires a serious effort aimed at achieving justice for the victims. This remains unattainable due to the unlimited and unconditional support the Syrian regime still receives from its allies, as well as the failure of current international legal institutions which are contingent on international balances and conflicts. While this is the case, interviewers and those documenting testimonies have received frequent questions from survivors about the utility of collecting, documenting, and analyzing such data while the trials of the violators are unforeseeable, and those responsible for atrocities are still in power with no prospects of them being brought to legal accountability.

There are many answers to these questions, including that the rights of the victims of such crimes are not subject to the statute of limitations, nor are they dropped through political agreements granting immunity to perpetrators; that the struggle for justice must go on; that the current situation could change; that there are legal cases being prepared to try perpetrators before international courts or national courts in countries whose judiciaries have universal jurisdiction over war crimes and crimes against humanity.

While these answers are not sufficient to alleviate the pain of the victims, who witness the persistence of the crimes and the impunity of the criminals, they are still a motivation to continue the documentation and collection of testimonies and study them. Someday, perhaps, this can serve as a means of holding perpetrators accountable and bringing about justice for the victims. For now, such a study is but a means of understanding the mechanisms in which these crimes were committed, in the hope of preventing their recurrence in the future.

Reports of this kind typically conclude with a series of recommendations addressed to actors, including those perpetrating the violations themselves, who are urged to change their conduct. They also involve messages to the UN Security Council, pleading with it to take action. Yet it ought to be abundantly clear that the present impasse, and the prevailing international power balances, render the prospects of changing the Syrian regime's behavior, or activating the role of the UN Security Council, to be next to nil. Accordingly, we appeal to all civil society organizations, peacemakers, human rights activists around the world, and all who believe that what is happening in Syria at the hands of the regime is a grave violation of human dignity. We urge them to:

1. Press their governments, wherever they may be, to take practical measures to hold accountable those responsible for these violations and crimes, and to regard the issue of detainees and missing persons as a priority in any negotiations or agreements regarding Syria's future. We also recommend pressuring the regime and its allies to allow independent international inquiries and fact-finding missions into detention centers in Syria.
2. Have representation for survivors in any future plans or projects pertaining to justice in Syria, and not ignore their voices and aspirations by opting for prepackaged concepts and models of "transitional justice." This requires support by former detainees themselves, by way of organizing themselves and enhancing their participation and training, as well as conducting further studies to reveal what has happened in other detention centers (Tadmor, for example), while securing all their protection needs, of course. In addition, we recommend seeking all possible means of bringing legal action in states whose courts have universal jurisdiction over war crimes and crimes against humanity.
3. Provide all possible support, not only to victims but also to the families of detainees and missing persons. The findings of this study demonstrate that the psychological impacts of detention accompany detainees long after their release, and also affect their families. The provision of psychological support to former detainees must therefore be a priority.

The testimonies on which this report is based provide detailed information on how violations and crimes against humanity have been committed, as well as the names and ranks of some of the perpetrators. They also provide explanations of how orders are issued and executed within the security regime. Most witnesses indicated their willingness to testify before courts, as long as trials take place within a credible and transparent legal track and provide protection for them and their families. Pending the conditions for such a path towards justice, the ADMSP will continue to work on all testimonies, documenting their content, analyzing their data and attempting to extract conclusions from them.



Appendix

Table A. Security Apparatuses and Their Branches

Political Security Directorate	Military Intelligence Directorate	General Intelligence Directorate (State Security)	Air Force Intelligence Directorate
Central Interrogation Branch (Fayhaa Branch)	Branch 291 (Administrative Branch, Headquarters Branch or Personnel Branch) (Qaboun)	State Security Branch (Kafrsousse)	Interrogation Branch (Mezzeh)
Rural Damascus Branch	Branch 293 (Officers Affairs or Officers Security Branch)	Branch 322 (State Security Branch, Aleppo)	Airport Branch (Mezzeh)
Central Investigation Branch (Fayhaa Branch)	Branch 227 (Region Branch)	Branch 285 (Investigation Branch) (State Security)	Northern Region Branch (Aleppo) (Air Force Security)
Political Security Branch in Aleppo	Branch 235 (Palestine Branch)	Branch 251 (Internal Branch or Khatib Branch)	Southern Region Branch (Region Branch, Harasta) (Air Force Security)
Political Security Branch in Deir ez-Zor	Branch 248 (Military Interrogation Branch)	Branch 331 (State Security Branch in Idlib)	Central Region Branch (Homs) (Air Force Security)
Political Security Branch in Hama	Military Security Branch in Deir ez-Zor	Branch 325 (State Security Branch in Latakia)	Coastal Region Branch (Latakia) (Air Force Security)
Political Security Branch in Hasakah	Military Security Branch in Suwaida	Branch 327 (State Security Branch in Deir ez-Zor)	Information Branch (Air Security)
Political Security Branch in Idlib	Military Security Branch in Homs	Branch 320 (State Security Branch in Hama)	Directorate of Air Force Intelligence (Qassaa)
Political Security (City Branch, Maisat)	Military Security Branch in Qamishli	Branch 335 (State Security Branch in Raqqqa)	Eastern Region Branch (Deir ez-Zor) (Air Force Security)
Political Security Branch in Daraa	Military Security Branch in Daraa	Branch 318 (State Security Branch in Homs)	Aviation Central Command
Political Security Branch in Homs	Military Security Branch in Idlib	Branch 330 (State Security Branch in Qamishli)	
	Branch 290 (Military Security Branch, Aleppo)	Branch 300 (Counterintelligence Branch)	
	Military Security Branch	Branch 279 (External Branch)	
	Quneitra Intelligence Branch (Sa'sa')	General Intelligence Department	
	Branch of Military Security in Latakia	Branch 295 (Counterterrorism Branch)	
	Military Security Branch in Hama		
	Branch 215 (Raids and Storming Company)		
	Military Security Branch in Tartous		
	Al-Badia Branch (Tadmor Branch)		
	Patrols Branch (Military Security)		

Table B. Articles of the Syrian Penal Code Under Which the Detainee is Tried Between Hafez's and Bashar's eras

	Hafez's Era		Bashar's Era			
			Before the Revolution		After the Revolution	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Article 267	1	5,88%	3	2,78%	0	0,00%
Article 271	0	0,00%	1	0,93%	0	0,00%
Article 272	0	0,00%	1	0,93%	0	0,00%
Article 273	0	0,00%	0	0,00%	1	14,29%
Article 278	1	5,88%	7	6,48%	1	14,29%
Article 285	1	5,88%	26	24,07%	1	14,29%
Article 286	1	5,88%	3	2,78%	0	0,00%
Article 287	1	5,88%	14	12,96%	1	14,29%
Article 288	0	0,00%	2	1,85%	0	0,00%
Article 297	1	5,88%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Article 304	1	5,88%	2	1,85%	0	0,00%
Article 305	0	0,00%	5	4,63%	3	42,86%
Article 306	10	58,82%	40	37,04%	0	0,00%
Article 307	0	0,00%	4	3,70%	0	0,00%
Total	17	100,00%	108	100,00%	7	100,00%

* For more details on the articles of the Syrian Penal Code, see the official website of the Ministry of Justice: <https://bit.ly/2MEPOUY>

Law No. 49 of 1980 on the Muslim Brotherhood

President of the Republic

Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution

And as approved by the People's Assembly session held on 24/8/1400 A.H. corresponding to 7/7/1980 A.D.

Issues the following:

Article 1

Every member of the organization of Muslim Brotherhood shall be considered a criminal and punished by death.

Article 2

A. Any person who is a member of this group shall be exempted from the penalty stipulated in this law or any other law if he declares his withdrawal from it within one month from the date of entry into force of this law.

B. The withdrawal is declared via a written statement personally submitted to the Governor, or to the Ambassador for those outside the country, as of the date of issuance of this law.

Article 3

The penalty of criminal offenses that were committed by the member of the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood before the entry into force of this law with the aim of achieving the objectives of the group shall be reduced if he turned himself in within one month from the date of entry into force of this law for those inside the country, and within two months for those outside, according to the following:

A. If the act is liable to execution, hard labor, or life imprisonment, the penalty shall be a maximum of five years' imprisonment with hard labor.

B. If the act constitutes one of the other offenses, the penalty shall be imprisonment from one to three years.

Article 4

Every member of the group shall be exempted from the penalty of criminal misdemeanors committed before the entry into force of this law with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood organization if he surrenders within one month from the date of entry into force of this law for those inside the country, and within two months for those outside.

Article 5

Those who are under arrest or trial do not benefit from the reduction and amnesty provided for in this law.

Article 6

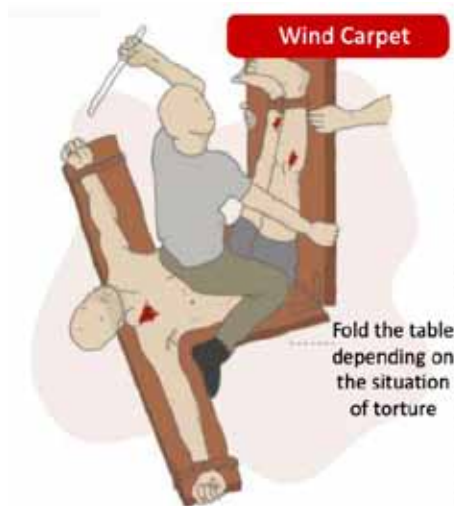
This law shall be published in the official gazette and shall come into effect from the date of its issuance.

Damascus on 25/8/1400 A.H. corresponding to 8/7/1980 A.D.

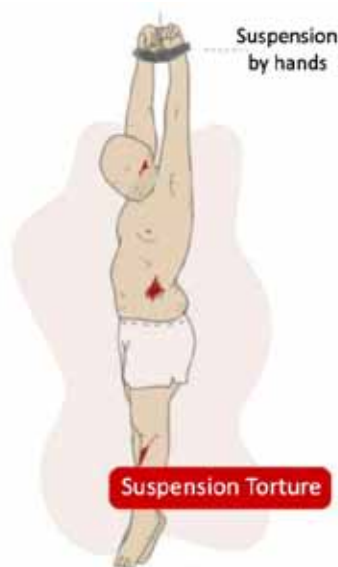
President of the Republic

Hafez al-Assad

Figure A. Methods of Physical Torture



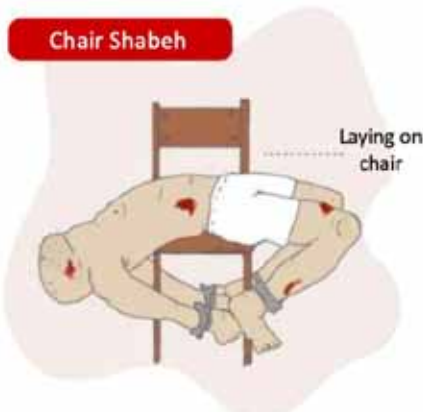
Some prisoners described being tortured with the "wind carpet." This method involves binding the hands onto a flat surface so that the bound person cannot protect themselves, with their head suspended in the air.



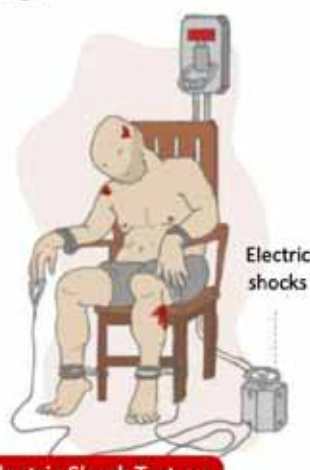
Some call the suspension torture method *strappado*. The prisoner is tied and hung by their wrists with a rope dangling from the ceiling.



The prisoner is forced to bend their body and insert their head, neck, and legs into a car tire, thus becoming paralyzed. Then begin beatings with batons, whips and other instruments to the back, legs and head.



The *shabeh* method involves forcing the prisoner to lay horizontally atop a chair for long hours, their hands and feet down, causing unbearable pain to the back muscles, neck and legs.



The detainee is fastened to a chair or an iron bed and then subjected to electric shocks.



A metal chair with movable parts, to which the victim is bound by the hands and feet. The interrogator bends the chair back to create hyperextension in the spine, putting severe pressure on the victim's neck.

Torture methods documented by Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations are not limited to the above. Dozens of other methods, including beatings with batons, hammers, and metal wires, as well as rape, burning with boiling water or cigarettes, and applying salt to wounds.

Source: www.hrw.org



Detention in Sednaya: Report on the Procedures
and Consequences of Political Imprisonment
November 2019
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