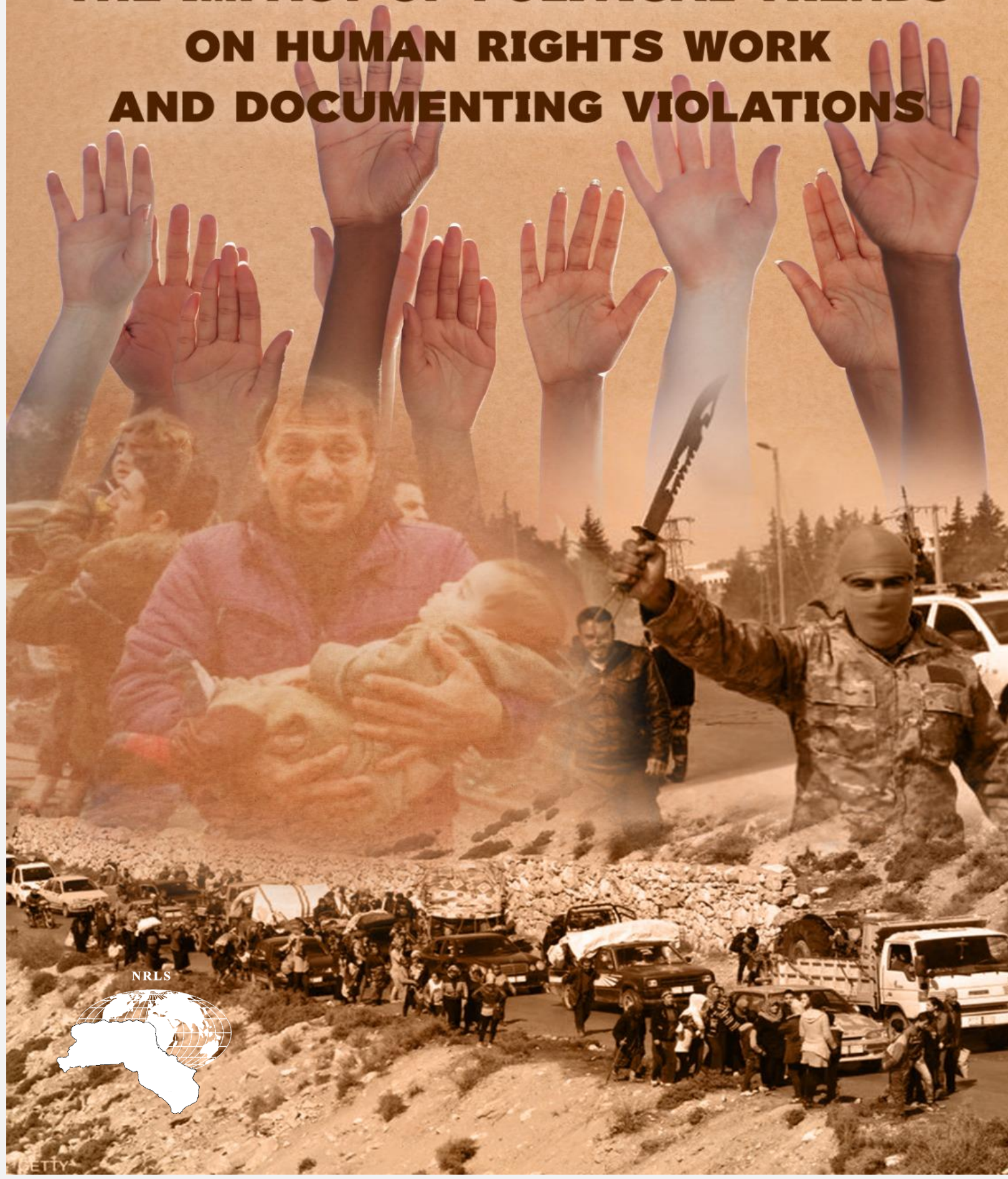
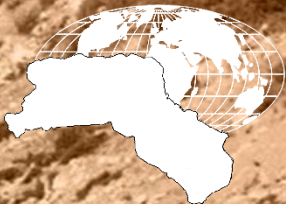
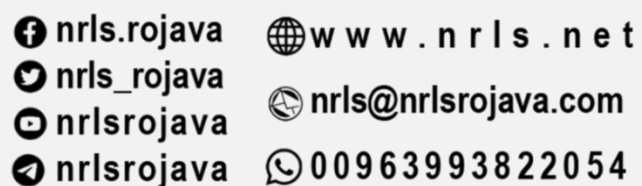


THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL TRENDS ON HUMAN RIGHTS WORK AND DOCUMENTING VIOLATIONS



NRLS





Research Introduction:

The Syrian crisis has entered its fifteenth year amidst political complexities, historical accumulations, and sharp social polarization. Since the outbreak of protests in 2011 and their subsequent transformation into a multi-party armed conflict, the pivotal role of human rights organizations in documenting human rights violations and advocating for accountability and achieving justice has emerged. However, this role has not been without challenges related to impartiality and independence, especially in light of the direct and indirect influences of the political trends of those working on human rights documentation activities.

A set of historical, political, and human rights elements intertwine in the background of this research. The Ba'athist regime has a long record of restrictions imposed on civil society, and the development of the conflict and its transformation into an international crisis has contributed to the formation of human rights organizations linked to various political parties, which has reshaped the nature of human rights work in the country. Thus, the issue of political bias emerges as a controversial human rights concept, rethinking the extent of the human rights activist's neutrality and the impact of his political position on the selection of violations he documents, the methods of presenting them, and the degree of empathy granted to the victims and the parties that commit them.

The importance of this research lies in its ability to deconstruct the relationship between political orientation and human rights objectivity, and in questioning professional practices in the process of monitoring and documenting human rights violations that may produce conflicting narratives about the same violation, which impedes legal accountability efforts and weakens confidence in human rights institutions and organizations and the associations working with victims of human rights violations. This research also aspires to contribute to the formulation of a normative framework that restores the principles of independent documentation, links human rights work to justice rather than alignment, and establishes a critical understanding of the role of human rights organizations and victims' associations in building peace or fueling division, based on the level of their objectivity and the extent of their ability to overcome political agendas in times of war.

The concept of objectivity and neutrality in human rights and documentation work:

Objectivity in human rights and documentation work represents a methodical and ethical approach aimed at producing a narrative based on verifiable truth, not on affiliations or preconceived notions. It stems from respect for the human dignity of every victim of human rights violations, regardless of their political, ethnic, or religious background, and forms a necessary basis for accountability and the activation of justice mechanisms.

In human rights and documentation work, adherence to several elements is essential:

- **Cross-verification:** Gathering information from multiple and independent sources to ensure that the narrative is not influenced by a single party or propaganda.
- **International standards of proof:** Such as the "reasonable grounds" standard, which is used in documenting crimes and violations in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law.
- **Neutrality towards parties to the conflict:** The human rights worker should not adopt a position on the conflict but should be an impartial witness who conveys the facts honestly and faithfully, without alignment or justification.

However, maintaining objectivity does not mean moral neutrality or human rigidity; rather, it is a delicate process that requires balanced interaction with victims and expressing empathy without compromising the accuracy of the narrative or reshaping the truth. Objectivity also becomes a practice of resistance in environments that condemn or criminalize the victim based on political, ethnic, or sectarian affiliation.

In the Syrian case, the political division, the multiplicity of human rights actors, and funding sources and their policies all threaten objectivity and may push some human rights actors to selectively choose facts or obscure certain violations, according to political vision, organizational interest, or sectarian or nationalistic tendencies. Therefore, objectivity is not only a professional choice but a moral and historical responsibility that restores truth as a right of victims and protects the human rights document from falling into the trap of misinformation or political exploitation.

Human rights organizations between documenting violations and supporting justice pathways in the context of the Syrian crisis:

The Syrian crisis began in March 2011 with peaceful protests in a number of Syrian cities, demanding political reform, freedom, and an end to corruption, as part of the "Arab Spring" wave. The Ba'athist regime met these movements with a violent response, which quickly led to the transformation of the popular movement into a comprehensive armed conflict with local, regional, and international dimensions, making Syria an arena for a complex conflict with multiple parties and interests.

This conflict produced a wide range of actors, including the Ba'athist regime supported by Russia and Iran and Shiite militias such as Hezbollah, armed opposition formations such as the Syrian National Army supported by Turkey, and extremist Islamic factions such as "Jabhat al-Nusra" and "ISIS", in addition to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, which is affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces that received support from the international coalition to fight terrorism led by the United States.

Turkey also intervened militarily in northern Syria alongside factions of the "National Army" and occupied strategic areas through multiple operations in northern Syria, including Afrin, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ain, and Girê Spî/Tel Abyad, where it has committed many violations and crimes in those areas since its occupation and to this day, in addition to violent air strikes carried out by Turkey on vital sites in the areas of the Autonomous Administration in northern and eastern Syria, and the targeting of political and military leaders with drones.

Meanwhile, Israel carried out air strikes against Iranian and allied positions inside Syrian territory. With the increasing complexities, serious violations emerged against civilians from various parties, in the absence of a comprehensive political solution that ends the suffering and restores national sovereignty.

Within this aggravated environment, human rights organizations and victims' associations, whether local or international, play a vital role in supporting justice and accountability pathways, through monitoring and documenting violations, observing patterns of violence, and providing evidence and testimonies to judicial institutions and international human rights and humanitarian organizations.

The importance of human rights organizations and victims' associations lies in their ability to build a reliable human rights archive that reflects the human rights and humanitarian reality objectively and forms the basis for any local or international legal process. They also contribute to empowering victims and survivors by providing legal, psychological, and social support, creating safe spaces for narrating stories of victims and violations, and demanding justice for victims of violations.

With the politicization of the human rights file and the involvement of human rights actors with direct or indirect political affiliations, the need becomes urgent to restore professionalism and independence in documentation and human rights work, which does not side with any party at the expense of the victims but seeks to build a fair narrative that paves the way for transitional justice and sustainable community reconciliation.

The Impact of Political Affiliations and Trends on the Objectivity of Human Rights Reports:

The influence of political affiliations and orientations on the objectivity of human rights reports is a highly significant topic in discussions about the integrity of human rights work, particularly in conflict contexts like the Syrian crisis. Human rights organizations and victims' associations work to monitor and document human rights violations to promote justice, accountability, and redress for victims, paving the way for holding perpetrators accountable. However, human rights organizations may sometimes be influenced by the political leanings of the parties involved in the conflict, which may be reflected in the objectivity of their reports.

The main problem with the impact of political affiliations on the impartiality and objectivity of human rights reports is that organizations that arise within specific political contexts may be susceptible to political influences in directing their attention or analysis of violations. In the Syrian conflict, for example, human rights organizations operating under the umbrella of specific political or governmental entities may have orientations that contribute to minimizing or exaggerating the violations committed by certain parties, or ignoring or overlooking violations by a particular side. For example:

1. **Organizations affiliated with governments or loyalist entities:** These organizations may tend to downplay violations committed by the regime or its allies, while focusing more on violations committed by opposition parties or other armed factions. This bias can distort the image of the conflict and undermine the credibility of reports.

This is the case with organizations associated with the Ba'ath regime. Although these organizations are known as human rights organizations, their work often raises questions about their independence and objectivity, given the political influences that may affect their reports and narratives.

2. **Organizations loyal to or closely aligned with Syrian opposition parties:** Conversely, some organizations that support the opposition may tend to justify certain actions or violations committed by opposition factions, and may sometimes overlook violations that occur within the ranks of the opposition.

Indeed, there are many human rights organizations that adopt the rhetoric of the Syrian opposition or work closely with opposition forces and focus in their reports on violations committed by the Syrian regime, while completely or partially ignoring the violations committed by various Syrian opposition factions in the areas occupied by Turkey, such as Afrin, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ain, and Girê Spî/Tel Abyad. These organizations often seek to document war crimes and humanitarian violations, as well as raise awareness about the situation in Syria at both the local and international levels.

3. **International organizations with political trends:** Some international human rights organizations working in conflict zones may be influenced by the positions of the countries that fund or support them, which may be reflected in how violations are documented. The reports of these organizations may focus on certain violations and ignore others based on political interests.

Many international human rights organizations operate in Syria to document violations, provide support to victims, and advocate for justice and accountability for crimes committed in the Syrian

conflict. These organizations vary in their tasks, ranging from documenting and investigating violations, providing legal and humanitarian support to victims, and demanding accountability for those responsible for crimes and violations committed.

Some aspects of bias in addressing human rights violations:

It can be said that there are no truly independent human rights organizations, whether international organizations affiliated with UN bodies or others, or local human rights organizations or those working in the field of documenting human rights violations. However, this does not mean that all of them lack professionalism or independence and transparency. Rather, it can be said that, according to their political agendas, they highlight certain issues more than others, or address certain aspects of human rights while neglecting others, according to what their agendas dictate or, in some cases, according to the inclinations of their members or employees.

Regarding the killing of lawyer Luqman Hanan from the perspective of various human rights organizations:

1. The killing of lawyer Luqman Hanan in Afrin:

The International Commission of Inquiry on Syria reported on the killing of lawyer Luqman Hanan, 45, in Afrin on the morning of Thursday, December 22, 2022:

"It was reported that another detainee, a Kurdish lawyer with a medical condition, died in the custody of the civil police in Afrin in December. Photos of his body showed bruising, and the Syrian National Army informed the Commission that investigations concluded the cause of death was cardiac arrest."¹

This clearly demonstrates a lack of seriousness in addressing the issue, and it denies that the cause of death was the torture he was subjected to, without citing the torture photos that showed clear signs, and without citing the statements of those close to the lawyer, only relying on the testimony of the Syrian National Army's investigation committee.

2. Discrimination in the distribution of life-saving aid during the February 6, 2023 earthquake in Jindires:

Despite the magnitude of the disaster, with the city of Jindires in Afrin and its villages being among the areas most affected by the February 6, 2023 earthquake, and the accompanying obstruction of the delivery of life-saving machinery and humanitarian aid to those affected, and the diversion of its destination to other places, as well as ethnic discrimination in the distribution of aid to those affected, all of this was not reflected in the International Commission of Inquiry's report, but only mentioned some aspects:

"The Syrian Arab Army also continued to obstruct the delivery of supplies to Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh, two neighborhoods affected by the earthquake inhabited by a Kurdish majority north of the city of Aleppo."²

¹ International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, February 2023, p. 18, para. 87

² Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, August 2023, p. 6, para. 18

In addition to highlighting a small part of the violations of the Syrian National Army, which is the failure to allow the entry of aid provided by the Autonomous Administration to the affected areas in Afrin:

"On February 10, the authorities refused to allow a convoy carrying fuel from the Autonomous Administration linked to the Syrian Democratic Forces in the northeast (referred to as the Autonomous Administration) to enter the local communities in Afrin, which are under the control of the Syrian National Army, fearing politicization of the process."³

Without going into the obstacles and impediments created by the Turkish authorities and the closure of the borders to prevent the entry of aid, while Amnesty International indicated in a statement issued on March 6, 2023 that: **"The Syrian government and armed opposition groups employed political considerations and exploited people's misery to advance their own agendas, and that obstructing vital aid for political motives had tragic repercussions, especially for search and rescue teams that needed fuel to operate machinery."**

It should be noted that many human rights reports have spoken of discrimination in the distribution of aid on an ethnic and sectarian basis. A report by Syrians for Truth and Justice stated: **"Later, on February 10, 2023, 'Jwan Ibrahim' (the Co-chair of the Media Department in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and a member of the Crisis Management Cell formed by the Autonomous Administration) announced that another convoy from Manbij was heading towards the 'Al-Tayha/Abu Kahf' crossing, which connects the areas of the Syrian Democratic Forces with the areas of the Syrian government, in order to reach the areas of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyeh and the Shahba camps mainly. On February 11, 2023, it was announced that both convoys stopped at the contact lines, without being allowed to enter."**⁴

3. The crime of killing four Kurdish youths in Jindires in 2023:

Most human rights organizations operating in northern Syria (in the Syrian opposition areas) did not address the incident/massacre of the killing of four Kurdish youths on the night of Newroz, March 20, 2023, in the town of Jindires in the Afrin region. They ignored the incident, which is considered a flagrant violation of human rights and a crime against humanity, due to the political affiliations of their members, most of whom are supporters of the Syrian opposition, and to appease and avoid fear of the de facto authorities in that region.

The monitoring and documentation of the incident was limited to organizations operating in northeastern Syria (areas of the Autonomous Administration), most of whose members are Kurds with orientations opposed to the Syrian opposition and its violations in the occupied Kurdish regions in northwestern and eastern Syria (Afrin, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ain, and Gire Spi/Tal Abyad). They called for holding the perpetrators accountable and for the Syrian conflict parties to assume their responsibilities. The "Ta'zur for Victims Association," based in the city of Qamishli, published a report on the incident entitled "Northern Syria: Kurds in Afrin Victims of the Absence of Accountability and Continued

³ Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, August 2023, p. 6, para. 19

⁴ Syria/Turkey Earthquake: Preventing and Restricting Access of Vital Aid to the Worst-Affected Areas, Syrians for Truth and Justice, 21 February 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/ar/%d8%b2%d9%84%d8%b2%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%83%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b9-%d9%88%d8%aa%d9%82%d9%8a%d9%8a%d8%af-%d9%88%d8%b5%d9%88%d9%84-%d9%85%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%b9/>

Impunity,"⁵ which included the following recommendation to the United States and the European Union: **"Activate sanctions against entities and leaders in the Syrian armed factions involved in committing human rights violations, and expand them to include the remaining groups and individuals responsible for violations in northern Syria, including Turkish officials who effectively manage those areas."**

Some international human rights committees and organizations superficially shed light on the incident without delving into the precise details and mentioning the circumstances and motives of the crime, as in the reports of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, which merely mentioned the news in its report issued in September 2023, stating:⁶ **"On March 20, local members of the Al-Sharqiyah Army faction of the Syrian National Army shot four Kurdish men outside their home in Jindires, Afrin, and a deaf 15-year-old boy was injured in the incident while the men were celebrating Newroz in their home around a traditional fire. Family members of one of the deceased said that two members of the faction approached the group, shouting at them and calling them fire-worshippers" before a fight broke out and stones were thrown. The two faction members then brought two other members and began shooting with rifles. Three Kurdish men from the same family died immediately, and their bodies were also reportedly shot, and a fourth Kurdish man was wounded and died the next day. A witness said she contacted two local faction leaders to intervene - one of whom called on the men to stop shooting, but to no avail. On March 26, the "Minister of Justice" in the "Syrian Interim Government" announced the arrest of five men for these killings."**

However, Syrian human rights organizations adhered to their principles and worked to document the incident in detail without regard for anyone, preparing their reports with professionalism and according to their moral and legal duty. The organization "Syrians for Truth and Justice" issued a detailed 29-page report on the incident on May 16, 2023, entitled "The Jindires/Afrin Crime on Newroz Night: The Full Story,"⁷ in which it mentioned the circumstances, motives, and causes of the massacre. The report stated: **"A wave of widespread anger swept through the entire Afrin region, to which the town of Jindires administratively belongs, following the crime, as the Kurdish residents of the region revolted against attempts to evade responsibility that dominated the discourse of the de facto authorities in the region. They organized mass demonstrations, especially during the funeral of the dead. The demonstrators demanded the expulsion of the "Syrian National Army" factions from the region and the prosecution of the killers, and raised banners bearing slogans: "No to killing the Kurds," "Five years is enough of injustice," "Five years of injustice, oppression, and demographic change," and "Afrin is Kurdish.""**

One of the recommendations at the end of the report addressed to the United Nations was as follows: **"Take all necessary measures to protect the population in Afrin and throughout Syria, and pressure Turkey, as an occupying power, to assume its legal responsibilities in ensuring public order and public safety, and maintaining law and order."**

⁵ Northern Syria: Kurds in Afrin Victims of Lack of Accountability and Continued Impunity, *Ta'zur *Solidarity*, 30 March 2023, <https://hevdesti.org/ar/kurds-in-afrin-victims-of-lack-of-accountability-and-continued-impunity-ar/>

⁶ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, 14 August 2023, <https://docs.un.org/ar/A/HRC/54/58>

⁷ Jindires/Afrin Crime on Newroz Night: The Full Story, Syrians for Truth and Justice, 16 May 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/ar/%d8%ac%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%85%d8%a9-%d8%ac%d9%86%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%b1%d8%b3-%d8%b9%d9%81%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%84%d9%8a%d9%84%d8%a9-%d9%86%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%b2-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%b5%d8%a9//>

4. Violations by the National Army factions in Afrin:

The patterns of violations by armed factions affiliated with the Syrian National Army have been numerous in the areas of northern Syria occupied by Turkey, especially in the Afrin region after 2018 and in the areas of Sere Kaniye and Tal Abyad after their occupation in 2019. International organizations have documented these violations over the past seven years, which included murder, arbitrary detention, torture, seizure of property, and forced displacement.

Human Rights Watch indicated in a report that: **"Since 2016, Turkey has carried out three military operations in northern Syria with the aim of weakening the Kurdish presence along its borders. In its first operation in 2016, it occupied the majority-Arab area north of Aleppo, which included Azaz, Al-Bab, and Jarablus, which were previously under the control of the "Islamic State" organization (also known as "ISIS"). In its second incursion in 2018, it seized Afrin, a majority-Kurdish area located directly west of Azaz that had been under the control of Kurdish-led forces since 2012. In its third incursion in 2019, Turkish armed forces seized control of a narrow strip, 150 kilometers long and 30 kilometers deep, between Tel Abyad and Ras al-Ain (Kurdish name: Sere Kaniye) in northeastern Syria from Kurdish-led forces."**⁸

The organization confirms the occurrence of widespread violations and abuses against the peaceful population of the Afrin region, stating: **"The military incursions led to mass displacement and were fraught with serious violations of both human rights law and humanitarian law, including indiscriminate bombing, extrajudicial killings, unlawful arrests, torture and enforced disappearance, systematic looting, and unlawful seizure of property."**⁹

In addition, the International Commission of Inquiry has indicated in all its reports the systematic violations committed by the armed factions affiliated with the so-called Syrian National Army, supported by Turkey, against civilians from the original inhabitants in the areas of Afrin, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ain, and Gire Spi/Tel Abyad. One of its reports, issued on September 14, 2022, stated: **"The commission also collected new credible accounts from male and female survivors, including minors, of beatings and other forms of torture by Syrian National Army individuals, including rape and other forms of sexual violence that occurred in temporary detention centers between 2018 and 2021... Severe torture and other ill-treatment committed by Syrian National Army members led to the deaths of a number of detainees."**¹⁰

For their part, neutral Syrian human rights organizations and local civil organizations have documented these violations in many of their reports. The "Ta'zur Association for Victims" has documented the violations of armed factions in Afrin, Sere Kaniye, and Tel Abyad in many of its reports. It published a report entitled **"Lost Justice: Continued Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance in Syrian National Army Areas,"**¹¹ which documents the systematic and continuous pattern of arbitrary

⁸ Everything by Force of Arms, Human Rights Watch, March 29, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2024/02/29/387395>

⁹ Previous source.

¹⁰ Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, United Nations website, 17 August 2022, <https://docs.un.org/ar/A/HRC/51/45>

¹¹ Ta'zur website, Lost Justice: Continued Arbitrary Detention and Enforced Disappearance in SNA-controlled Areas, Ta'zur Association for Victims, 23 December 2023, <https://hevdesti.org/ar/arbitrary-detention-and-enforced-disappearance-continue-in-sna-controlled-areas/>

detention, enforced disappearance, and torture practiced by the Syrian National Army factions, with direct support and funding from the Turkish government, against the population in the Ras al-Ain/Sere Kaniye and Tel Abyad regions of northern Syria. It also reviews the profound effects of these violations on victims, survivors, and their families, focusing on the humanitarian and social dimensions of these crimes.

For its part, the "Pel - Civil Waves Organization" issued a report in 2023 on property rights violations in the Afrin region under the title "Violations of Housing, Land and Property Rights in Afrin after 2018,"¹² which seeks to demonstrate the extent of abuse and oppression suffered by the Kurdish population in the Syrian Kurdish region of Afrin, and the crimes and violations experienced by the remaining original inhabitants there at the hands of Syrian opposition factions and groups supported primarily by the Turkish government.

5. The issue of seizing villages in the Shuyukh area of Kobani:

The "Shuyukh Fawqani" area witnessed a large displacement in September 2014 after ISIS took control of the region. However, after the area was liberated from ISIS in 2015, the military authorities in the area did not allow the displaced Arab families to the Manbij and Jarabulus region to return to their villages, despite the end of military operations. Hundreds of Arab families from the town of "Shuyukh," who were displaced, appealed for a solution to their issue, even though they had submitted numerous requests to return to their villages.

The organization "Syrians for Truth and Justice" published a report entitled "Ain al-Arab/Kobani: Displaced Arab families appeal to local authorities to return to their villages,"¹³ which highlighted the issue of displaced people from the villages of the "Shuyukh Fawqani" area of the Kobani region. It stated: **"Displaced Arab families from the villages of the Shuyukh Fawqani area of the Ain al-Arab (Kobani) region in the Aleppo Governorate appealed to the Autonomous Administration to allow them to return to their villages from which they were displaced in 2015, and they are still prohibited from returning..."**

However, this humanitarian issue did not receive attention from human rights organizations and victim associations working in the areas of the Autonomous Administration in northern and eastern Syria. No organization issued a report on this matter, nor did it discuss the issue with the concerned parties to shed light on the humanitarian plight of the displaced and work to find effective solutions that would do them justice.

6. The issue of ISIS detention centers and camps for ISIS fighters' families:

Some human rights organizations deliberately raise the issue of ISIS detention centers in the areas of the Autonomous Administration in northern and eastern Syria, arguing that the Syrian Democratic

¹² PEL website, Violations of Housing, Land and Property Rights in Afrin 2018, PEL - Civil Waves Organization, Date of Publication: 24/7/2023, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://pel-cw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/HLPeLreport-Ar-Final.pdf>

¹³ Syrians for Truth and Justice website, Ain al-Arab/Kobani: Displaced Arab families appeal to local authorities to return to their villages, Syrians for Truth and Justice, 22 May 2023, <https://stj-sy.org/ar/%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D9%83%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%87%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%86/>

Forces, which guard those detention centers, practice torture and detention outside the scope of the law. Other circles working outside the areas of the Autonomous Administration, as well as some international organizations such as Amnesty International,¹⁴ raise the issue of detaining ISIS fighters' families in Al-Hol camp in Al-Hasakah, considering this contrary to international norms and laws. They published a report entitled "After the defeat of the Islamic State group: injustice, torture and death in detention in north-east Syria," which stated in the report: **"The main partner of the US government in north-east Syria is involved in a systematic and widespread violation of the rights of more than 56,000 people held in its custody. Many are held in inhumane conditions and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, such as severe beatings, being forced to remain in stressful positions, electric shocks, and gender-based violence."**

For its part, the Autonomous Administration responded through the Foreign Relations Office with a clarification statement¹⁵ regarding its readiness to cooperate with all parties concerned with human rights with transparency and integrity, and announced its reservation on some of the accusations and terms used in the report, saying: **"Amnesty International was able to issue its report despite our reservation on some of the accusations and terms that were used in the report, which should have been verified well, especially since the issue of ISIS fighters in detention centers and their families in the camps has international dimensions. ISIS is a transnational terrorist organization, and most of the detainees are foreigners and citizens of many countries. They participated in several battles and in different regions. The Autonomous Administration alone cannot bear the consequences of this complex file."**

The Autonomous Administration also indicated in its statement that: **"It is worth mentioning that the Amnesty International team did not visit the two detention centers in the Chinese Camp in Al-Shaddadi and Al-Panorama in Al-Hasakah, which are run by the Syrian Democratic Forces. It seems that they relied mainly on interviews and testimonies of people who may belong to ISIS or its sleeper cells, who may have been met by the Amnesty International team outside the two detention centers."**

This means that the organization's report is politicized and comes from an ideological background hostile to the Autonomous Administration. This grave error committed by an organization the size of Amnesty International places it before its legal, humanitarian and ethical responsibilities to adhere to professional human rights standards.

7. Human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni holds a lecture on human rights in occupied Afrin:¹⁶

On May 24, 2021, a wave of reactions and criticisms arose following the acceptance of Syrian human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni to participate in a seminar entitled "Forced Displacement and the Legitimacy of Elections," organized by what is called the "Syrian League for Citizen Dignity" in the occupied city of Afrin.¹⁷ Al-Bunni, head of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, posted on

¹⁴ Amnesty International website, After ISIS's defeat: injustice, torture and death in detention in northeastern Syria, Amnesty International, 17 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/documents/mde24/7752/2024/ar/>

¹⁵ External Relations Department of the Autonomous Administration website, Clarification statement to the public regarding the Amnesty International report, April 2024, <https://kar-derve.com/?p=5517>

¹⁶ North Press, "Forcibly Displaced"... Harsh criticism directed at a Syrian lawyer participating in a symposium in the Afrin region, dated 25/5/2021, <https://npasyria.com/68563/>

¹⁷ Amnesty International website, After ISIS's defeat: injustice, torture and death in detention in northeastern Syria, dated 17 April 2024, <http://afrinpost.net/ar/archives/15468>

his Facebook page the announcement for this seminar, which will be held on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, on Rajo Street – above Abu Imad Bakery in the city of Afrin.

Criticism focused on the topic of the seminar (forced displacement) and its location (the city of Afrin), which suffers from war crimes and crimes against humanity against the remaining original inhabitants after the displacement of most of them more than three years ago, following the Turkish invasion of the region in March 2018.

Some human rights activists and journalists also criticized the entity that supervised the organization of the seminar, which is what is called the "Syrian League for Citizen Dignity," founded in December 2018 by "Labib al-Nahas," a former leader and founder of the "Ahrar al-Sham" militias, who faces accusations of corruption and committing human rights violations that amount to war crimes.

The organizing entity of the seminar, "The Syrian League," defines itself as:¹⁸ **"Concerned with spreading and establishing the principles of human rights among the Syrian people and rebuilding the legal structure of the Syrian state. It also works to establish the principles of justice by providing legal support and assistance to victims of violations, defending prisoners of conscience and opinion in Syria, and working to stop violations and hold perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity accountable."**

However, in following the statements and reports of the League, we will not find a single report that addresses the conditions of approximately 300,000 people forcibly displaced from Afrin who are prohibited from returning, and it has not published any reports on monitoring and documenting the violations committed by the armed factions affiliated with the Syrian National Army against the original inhabitants of the Afrin region, including violations against nature such as cutting down trees, burning forests, excavating archaeological sites, stealing antiquities, and so on.

8. Turkish attacks on areas of northern and eastern Syria:

The air campaigns launched by the Turkish army in the last third of 2023 and thereafter deliberately targeted infrastructure throughout the Autonomous Administration regions of northern and eastern Syria. Among the targets were electricity transfer stations and energy facilities for oil and gas, including the Al-Suwaidiya station, and sites in the Al-Awda oil field, completely disabling them. These attacks resulted in the death and injury of dozens of civilians working in those stations and facilities. Political and military figures in the Autonomous Administration were also targeted by drones.

For its part, the organization "Syrians for Truth and Justice" issued a report entitled "As if an Earthquake Happened: Turkish Attacks Kill Life in Northern and Eastern Syria," which was a detailed investigation into the numbers and vital sites that were targeted at different times and the material and human damage resulting from the attacks. The report stated: **"The Turkish air bombardment on the 5th of the month (October 2023) caused a partial displacement of the people of the targeted or surrounding areas to the countryside for fear of their lives, while the attacks as a whole created a motivation to emigrate out of the country, seeking security, especially in light of the lack of life-supporting conditions after the bombardment."**¹⁹

¹⁸ Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research website, About Us, <https://sl-center.org/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86/>

¹⁹ Syrians for Truth and Justice website, As if an Earthquake Had Happened: Turkish Attacks Kill Life in Northeastern Syria, dated June 25, 2024, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://stj-sy.org/wp->

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria also published a statement regarding those attacks, saying: **"Turkish air strikes against power stations deprived a million people of water and electricity for weeks, in violation of international humanitarian law. Civilians were also killed in targeted air strikes, as part of a pattern of Turkish drone attacks, and such attacks may amount to war crimes."**²⁰

Meanwhile, human rights organizations operating in the northwestern Syrian regions (areas under the control of the Syrian opposition) remained silent and neutral, or gave justifications for those attacks and the bombing by warplanes and drones.

[content/uploads/2024/06/%D9%88%D9%83%D8%A3%D9%86%D9%91-%D8%B2%D9%84%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8B-%D9%82%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB %D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/ar/press-releases/2024/03/un-commission-inquiry-syria-too-desperately-needs-ceasefire)

²⁰ United Nations website, UN Commission of Inquiry: "Syria too, desperately needs a ceasefire", dated March 11, 2024 <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/press-releases/2024/03/un-commission-inquiry-syria-too-desperately-needs-ceasefire>

The Political Context and Its Impact on human rights coverage:

In light of the complex Syrian crisis, human rights work increasingly overlaps with intertwined political contexts. The data available above indicates that some human rights organizations and victims' associations working to document human rights violations, whether international or local, formulate their reports and direct their attention based on the specific political orientations of the organization itself or, sometimes, the political leanings of its staff.

In this context, the Ba'athist regime's violations are often highlighted as having committed the largest proportion of violations in Syria since 2011, which sometimes reinforces a stereotype that portrays it as the sole actor in the violations. Meanwhile, violations committed by other parties and in other parts of Syria, such as Turkey and its allied Syrian armed factions, receive less attention or are overlooked, considering they committed only a small number of violations compared to the scale of violations committed by the Ba'athist regime.

This bias cannot be separated from the influence of political factors on the performance of human rights organizations. Multiple factors, such as funding, international relations, political influence, and the political affiliations of organizations or their staff, play a pivotal role in directing their priorities, shaping their human rights discourse, and the documentation mechanisms they adopt. Furthermore, not all human rights work and activities can be considered absolutely reliable. These activities are influenced by these factors, in addition to the influence of donors, which may play a role, including focusing on certain issues over others, sometimes less urgent.

Analysis indicates that the political bias of human rights workers can lead to unbalanced coverage of violations, particularly in northwestern Syria. This contributes to reinforcing political narratives at the expense of presenting a comprehensive and fair picture of the human rights situation. This imbalance negatively impacts the credibility of human rights work and affects the trust of the target audience, particularly victims and local communities. It is clear in the reports of some human rights organizations that there is a bias towards some issues over others, as in some reports of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria regarding violations by armed factions in occupied areas such as Afrin.

Ras al-Ain and Tal Abyad, as well as what was stated in an Amnesty International report on violations in the areas of the Autonomous Administration against members of the terrorist organization ISIS, without relying on factual evidence.

This problem is clearly evident in the Syrian situation, specifically in the areas occupied by Turkey, such as Afrin, Sere Kaniye/Ras al-Ain, and Gire Spi/Tal Abyad, which have witnessed complex human rights conditions for more than seven years after the occupation by Turkish forces and their affiliated armed factions. Many human rights organizations active in the areas of northwestern Syria, which are administratively affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government or the "Salvation Government," have not taken the initiative to document the violations taking place in Afrin, despite their gravity and their persistence to this day. This is due, in part, to the fact that the headquarters of these organizations are located in Turkey, and that many of their cadres belong to the Islamist-leaning opposition spectrum, whose discourse has shifted in recent years from focusing on opposing the regime to confronting other components of Syrian society, most notably the Kurdish component.

In this context, areas such as Afrin, Sere Kaniye (Ras al-Ain), and Gire Spi (Tal Abyad) have not witnessed significant human rights activity documenting violations committed by armed factions against indigenous populations. These violations include identity-based killings, arbitrary arrests of men and women, seizure of private property, forced displacement, and cases of torture in detention centers that

have led to death, as happened with lawyer “Luqman Hanan”, who died under torture at the civil police headquarters in Afrin. Despite this, these organizations have not issued an explicit condemnation of this crime, and many activists working in northwestern Syria have not issued any public position. Some have even gone so far as to justify what happened, raising serious questions about the independence of these human rights positions.

In this context, an attempt to hold a forum titled "Forcibly Displaced Persons and the Legitimacy of Elections" in the city of Afrin, organized by renowned human rights activist Anwar al-Bunni, in cooperation with the Syrian Association for Citizens' Dignity, sparked a wave of resentment among human rights and media circles, including civil society activists. This resentment stemmed from the apparent disregard for the reality of forced displacement in Afrin and the ongoing violations against its indigenous population by armed Syrian opposition factions. Although the forum was later canceled under pressure, the initiative itself was considered an ethical breach of human rights standards and raised questions about double standards.

The murder of four young men from one family in the town of Jandarisi in 2023, at the hands of armed members of the "Army of the East" loyal to the Syrian National Army, did not receive sufficient attention from human rights organizations operating in northwest Syria. Some simply described the crime as an "individual crime," without mentioning its political and ethnic context. This was despite the fact that the case was referred to a court that many considered a formality, while the victims' families were subjected to threats and pressures that prevented full justice. Many observers agree that the handling of this case would have been different had it occurred in areas under regime control, or in another political context. The experience of the emergency response to the February 2023 earthquake disaster can also be drawn upon. Despite the magnitude of the disaster, the city of Jandarisi in Afrin and its surrounding villages were among the areas most affected by the earthquake, which also included obstructions to the delivery of aid to those affected, diversions, and ethnic discrimination in the distribution of aid to those affected. This was documented by numerous local human rights organizations operating outside of northwestern Syria. However, none of this was reflected in the reports of organizations in northwestern Syria, which instead ignored addressing these violations and transgressions for reasons and motives we mentioned above.

In contrast, some human rights organizations, including feminist organizations, are working in northeastern Syria to document violations committed by armed factions, Turkey, and ISIS. However, they are also reluctant or negligent in documenting violations occurring in their areas of power. For example, the issue of employing underage girls to load and transport goods—a common phenomenon in cities such as Qamishli, Hasakah, Derik, and Raqqa—remains underreported, despite the negative psychological, social, and economic impacts that accompany this phenomenon.

Likewise, the issue of the forced displacement of residents of the “al-Shuyukh al-Tahtani” district in Kobani, who have not been allowed to return to their areas since the terrorist ISIS attack in 2015, has not received sufficient attention from human rights organizations operating in the autonomous administration areas, despite the continued suffering of these residents to this day.

Accordingly, it can be said that human rights and documentation work in the Syrian context, despite its importance, faces fundamental challenges related to the commitment of its actors to impartiality and professionalism. Whenever human rights coverage remains subject to political tensions or external influences, it will lose its primary function, which is to defend human dignity and justice, regardless of the party violating them.

We can conclude that the influence of the political orientation of some human rights workers leads to:

- **Selective selection of violations:** Reports focus excessively on violations committed by the regime, resulting in the ignoring or overlooking of crimes committed in areas of northern and eastern Syria by Turkey and its affiliated Syrian armed factions.

- **Excluding a comprehensive perspective:** This approach presents an unbalanced picture of the crisis, where documented violations become only part of the overall picture. In this case, some workers become what might be called "false witnesses" because their reports do not cover all aspects of the violations.

- **Justifying biased coverage:** For example, we see the case of human rights activist "Anwar al-Bunni". During a lecture on human rights in the city of Afrin, which witnessed the forced displacement of most of its residents, this lecture may appear to justify or downplay the violations committed by the parties controlling the occupied city of Afrin. This type of rhetoric reflects a bias that goes beyond mere negligence and extends to justifying actions that may be serious in the context of human rights.

- **Loss of trust:** The principles of human rights and documentation work are questioned when organizations' reports are perceived as biased and incomprehensive, which can undermine trust among local and international audiences.

- **Serious impact on policy-making:** Since international and domestic policies are often based on political and human rights reports, the bias of these reports may lead to decisions being made based on a distorted picture of the truth, leaving a dangerous gap that obscures justice for victims in other affected areas.

Proposals:

After analyzing the various influences of the political trends and inclinations of human rights workers on human rights reports, we can put forward a set of proposals that would regulate human rights work in documenting human rights violations in Syria:

1-Adopting an integrated documentation approach based on multiple sources: Events and violations must be monitored using independent sources and direct testimonies (photos, videos, field reports) to ensure the comprehensiveness of information and the accuracy of documentation, rather than relying on a single entity or official reports that may carry political agenda.

2- Enhancing transparency and impartiality within human rights organizations: by proposing the establishment of internal and external oversight committees, and adopting transparency rules for presenting funding sources and decision-making mechanisms, to reduce the impact of political pressure.

3- Using discourse and text analysis methodologies: This is done by applying text analysis methods to study the language of reports, distinguish between the selection of events and data, and identify biases or overlooking certain violations.

4- Enhancing training and professional qualification for workers: and investing in specialized training programs for those working in legal documentation, focusing on the principles of neutrality and objectivity and how to deal with complex facts, away from the influence of political trends and inclinations or bias.

5- Expanding the scope of documentation to include all aspects of violations: Organizations must strive to prepare comprehensive reports that do not overlook crimes and violations committed by all parties, whether the Baathist regime, Syrian opposition factions, or external parties (such as Turkey and Iran), in order to ensure a complete and comprehensive picture of events.

6- Developing and strengthening dialogue with stakeholders on the ground: Building open communication channels with local witnesses and affected communities contributes to enriching reports with facts and firsthand experiences, which enhances their credibility and reduces bias.

7- Holding a human rights forum: or training workshops for activists and workers in the field of human rights and legal documentation on documentation principles and mechanisms, and methods and techniques for preparing human rights reports, with the aim of developing and improving standards for evaluating human rights performance.

These proposals and recommendations aim to enhance the credibility of human rights reports and achieve greater transparency and impartiality in covering human rights violations in various Syrian regions and by various parties to the conflict.

Research Conclusion:

This research highlights the problematic objectivity of human rights workers' activities within the context of the Syrian conflict. It reveals the impact of political orientations on documentation processes, the selection of violations, and the nature of the human rights narrative presented to victims and the international community. The study demonstrates that political bias—even if undeclared—weakens the effectiveness of human rights work, threatens its credibility, and sometimes contributes to the reproduction of polarizing discourse within a field that is supposed to be exclusively humanitarian.

The research also concludes that a commitment to objectivity in human rights work is not a negative or neutral stance toward crimes, but rather constitutes a professional and ethical practice that places truth at the center of human rights action, protects reports from political manipulation, and grants victims their right to a fair, non-selective, and non-politicized narrative. The study concludes that it is necessary to reconsider the mechanisms for building human rights teams, training staff, and developing standards for evaluating human rights performance to ensure its independence and methodology. In light of the above, this issue opens the door to several future paths, most notably:

- Developing standardized guidelines to measure the objectivity of human rights actors in conflicts.
- Strengthening partnerships between human rights actors and academic centers to build neutral critical analysis tools.
- Pressing for the establishment of an independent international mechanism to monitor the documentation of violations in politicized contexts such as Syria.

The issue of objectivity, neutrality, and transparency in human rights work and the documentation of violations remains an open one, one in which ethical, political, and professional questions intersect. It calls for continuous questioning of practices and a renewed vision that links human rights work, justice, and sustainable peace.

(attached section)

Human Rights Organizations (International and Local) Working to Document Violations in Syria:

Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011, human rights organizations have played a pivotal role in monitoring and documenting the grave violations suffered by civilians by various parties to the conflict. These organizations range from international institutions with advanced monitoring and investigation tools to local organizations that emerged in the midst of the crisis and possess precise knowledge of the situation on the ground.

At the international level, Human Rights Watch is one of the most prominent organizations monitoring the Syrian conflict, issuing periodic reports documenting crimes of indiscriminate bombing, torture, enforced disappearances, and violations committed against civilians in various regions. Amnesty International has played a similar role, focusing on violations inside regime detention centers and prisons, as well as violations committed by other armed factions.

Human rights organizations have also been established during the Syrian crisis, working to monitor and document human rights violations across Syria committed by various parties to the conflict. Human rights organizations operating in the Syrian context can be classified into international and local organizations, which in turn can be divided according to geographic scope or political leanings.

First - International Human Rights Organizations:

1- **The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria**²¹: The Human Rights Council established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria on August 22, 2011, pursuant to resolution S-17/1. The Commission's mandate is to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The Human Rights Council also tasked the Commission with establishing the facts and circumstances that may amount to these violations and crimes committed, and identifying those responsible, where possible, with a view to ensuring accountability for the perpetrators of these violations, including violations that may constitute crimes against humanity.

2- **Amnesty International**²²: A global movement of more than 10 million people in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end human rights violations. Amnesty International is one of the oldest and most important human rights organizations in the world and plays a key role in documenting violations in Syria. The organization publishes annual reports on the human rights situation in Syria, documenting violations such as arbitrary detention, torture, unlawful killings, and forced displacement. The organization consistently demands that perpetrators of these violations be brought to justice and that Syrian civilians be protected.

3- **Human Rights Watch (HRW)**²³: A non-governmental, non-profit human rights organization. Since its founding in 1978, HRW has been known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of the media, and targeted advocacy, often in partnership with local human rights organizations. HRW publishes more than 100 reports and briefings annually on human rights conditions in some 90 countries, which receive extensive coverage in local and international media. HRW consistently calls for international investigations into these violations and for those responsible to be held accountable.

²¹ United Nations, Human Rights Council, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, <https://www.ohchr.org/ar/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/co-i-mandate>

²² Amnesty International, About Us <https://www.amnesty.org/ar/who-we-a>

²³ Human Rights Watch website, About Us <https://www.hrw.org/ar/about/about-u>

4- **International Justice Mission (IJM):** An international non-governmental organization focused on combating human rights crimes such as human trafficking, slavery, and arbitrary detention. IJM works in conflict zones such as Syria to provide support to victims, including women and children who have been trafficked or exploited, and to help strengthen legal justice mechanisms.

5- **International Civil and Political Rights Organization:** The International Civil and Political Rights Organization is a human rights organization focused on promoting and protecting civil and political rights in Syria, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the right to peaceful assembly. This organization seeks to improve the human rights situation in Syria at the political and legal levels.

6- **International Law Organization:** This organization provides legal support in contexts of armed conflict, including the Syrian conflict. The organization seeks to provide legal analysis on the situation in Syria and supports international accountability efforts through international criminal courts regarding war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria.

7- **The International Criminal Justice Organization (CJI):** The International Criminal Justice Organization focuses on supporting investigations and prosecutions related to war crimes in Syria. The organization works to promote criminal accountability at the international level and seeks to strengthen domestic and international efforts to ensure the prosecution of those responsible for crimes committed in Syria.

8- **Justice and Accountability Foundation (JAR):** An independent international organization focused on promoting justice and accountability in contexts of conflict and human rights crises. JAR aims to develop the capacity of local lawyers and human rights defenders in Syria to bring cases of human rights violations before international courts and to assist victims in obtaining redress through international legal mechanisms.

9- **Care International:** Care International is one of the organizations working to provide humanitarian and human rights support in Syria, including food, shelter, and education, in addition to programs for women and children affected by the conflict. The organization focuses on protecting human rights and documenting humanitarian violations, particularly in areas affected by violence.

10- **Ceasefire Center for Civil Rights²⁴:** An international initiative to develop civilian monitoring of violations of international humanitarian law or human rights, to ensure accountability and redress for such violations, and to advance the exercise of civilian rights. It works to achieve justice and accountability in armed conflict, including the Syrian conflict.

11- **The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)²⁵:** is an independent, non-profit legal and educational organization dedicated to the enforcement of civil and human rights worldwide. Founded in 2007 by Wolfgang Kaleck and other international human rights lawyers, ECCHR aims to protect and enforce the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other human rights declarations and national constitutions, through legal means.

Local human rights organizations:

²⁴ Seafire website, About us <https://www.ceasefire.org/ar>

²⁵ European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights website <https://www.ecchr.eu/en>

These can be classified into three categories: organizations operating in Syrian opposition areas, organizations operating in areas controlled by the Ba'ath regime, and organizations operating in areas under the autonomous administration.

First, human rights organizations operating in areas controlled by the Ba'athist regime:

1- **The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)**²⁶: An independent human rights organization, SNHR monitors and documents human rights violations in Syria. It mobilizes efforts to mitigate these violations, contributes to preserving the rights of victims, exposes perpetrators of violations, and holds them accountable. SNHR also raises awareness among Syrian society about its civil and political rights, strengthens the human rights situation, advances transitional justice, supports democratic change, achieves justice and peace in Syria, and preserves and records the narrative of events. The network has been continuously monitoring and documenting human rights violations in Syria since 2011. It has established databases to archive and categorize incidents of violations, and is continually developing them to take into account developments and their context in Syria. The databases record the greatest possible amount of information on various types of gross human rights violations, according to a methodology developed to suit the nature of the non-international armed conflict in Syria and the international human rights standards, declarations, covenants, and conventions issued by the United Nations.

2- **The Syrian Human Rights Organization (SHRO)**: A local human rights organization based in Damascus, SHRO is run by individuals believed to be close to the government. The organization has been criticized for not comprehensively documenting violations committed by the Syrian regime and for producing reports that portray the Syrian regime in a less critical light.

3- **Syrian Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights**: Its reports focus on issues related to constitutional reform, but they often neglect to document the regime's gross violations against civilians in various regions of Syria.

4- **Syrian Human Rights Committee**: The committee focuses on conveying the regime's perspective on the challenges it faces from armed groups, and its reports often present a narrative that favors the regime.

5- **Human Rights Association in Syria - Maysan**: It adopts positions defending the stability of the Syrian state in the face of what it describes as "foreign interference."

Through the reports issued by these organizations, the former Syrian government seeks to justify its repressive policies and present a distorted image of the situation in Syria internationally, thus strengthening its position in the face of external pressure. In this context, these organizations serve as propaganda tools used by the Syrian authorities to criticize opposition parties and present themselves as supporters of human rights in Syria, while obscuring the actual violations being committed.

Second-Organizations operating in areas controlled by the Syrian opposition:

At the local level, Syrian human rights organizations have emerged and played an effective role in documenting violations from within local communities. These include the Syrian Center for Media and

²⁶ Syrian Network for Human Rights website, About us, (No justice without accountability)
<https://snhr.org/arabic/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86>

Freedom of Expression, the Syrian Network for Human Rights²⁷, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison. These organizations rely on direct testimonies, photos, video clips, and medical reports to document their violations. They also work to raise human rights awareness and contribute to building files that can be used in future prosecutions of perpetrators before international judicial bodies.

These organizations, despite their varying capacities, constitute an important bridge between the reality on the ground and international decision-making centers. They contribute to preserving the human rights memory of the Syrian conflict, paving the way for justice and accountability in the post-conflict phase.

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ)²⁸: An independent, impartial, and non-profit human rights non-governmental organization. The project began by publishing the stories of Syrians who were subjected to arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture. It has subsequently grown into a well-established human rights organization, licensed in the Middle East and the European Union, committed to exposing all human rights violations across Syria and by all parties to the conflict. It publishes accurate, qualitative reports that shed light on overlooked issues, such as repressive practices, discrimination, and violations against minorities. It is an independent Syrian human rights organization that aims to document human rights violations in Syria by collecting evidence and testimonies and supporting victims in the context of human rights and reconciliation. It primarily seeks to hold accountable those responsible for the major violations committed by the Syrian regime, in addition to supporting the political rights of the opposition.

The Day After (DA)²⁹: is a Syrian non-profit organization working to confront tyranny and support democratic transition in Syria. It embraces human rights values in accordance with international conventions and treaties. It was founded in August 2012 by a group of Syrians representing a broad spectrum of the Syrian opposition, representing all major political trends and components of Syrian society, to participate in independent planning for Syria's transition. They issued a comprehensive report on managing the challenges of a post-Assad transition in Syria. The Day After: Supporting a Democratic Transition in Syria. The Day After's vision is based on the rights of Syrians, peace, stability, and prosperity, justice, and gender equality, which can only be achieved through a democratic political transition and a comprehensive national transitional justice program that lays the foundations for justice and reconciliation. The Day After also believes that local communities and civil society organizations are the key actors for achieving resilience, recovery, and democracy in Syria. Its mission focuses on strengthening Syrian civil society, addressing the legacy of political and societal tyranny, including discrimination against women, and influencing decision-makers to advance democratic transition and justice in Syria. The organization operates in northwestern Syria, with its main headquarters in Turkey.

Women Now³⁰: A civil society organization that aims to create a democratic, free, and just society—a society in which women play a meaningful role in daily life in Syria. We train, educate, and support Syrian women economically, professionally, socially, and culturally; combat illiteracy; and work to

²⁷ موقع الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان، من نحن، (لا عدالة بلا محاسبة) <https://snhr.org/arabic/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86>

²⁸ Syrians for Truth and Justice website, about us <https://stj-sy.org/ar>

²⁹ The Next Day website, vision and goals <https://tda-sy.org/our-mission/?lang=ar>

³⁰ Women Now, About Us <https://women-now.org/ar/>

increase women's employment opportunities, financial independence, and entrepreneurship. We protect women who have been victims of war or gender-based violence (rape, child marriage, domestic violence, terrorism, etc.). We protect women legally and psychologically by providing safe spaces for all beneficiaries; enable the protection and education of children, especially girls; document and collect experiences and testimonies; conduct in-depth qualitative and quantitative research and analysis; and raise local and international awareness on women's rights, women-led activist movements, and feminist civil society initiatives.

Ta'afi Initiative³¹: An initiative founded by survivors of arbitrary detention in Syria, it aims to provide support and protection to individuals who have escaped the shackles of detention and are facing the challenges of forced disappearance. Its immediate goal is to help them recover and reintegrate into active life, thereby supporting their ongoing struggle for human rights in Syria. Its vision is to establish a free and democratic Syria committed to protecting freedom of expression in a just and equal society, where all citizens enjoy fundamental freedoms and human rights without discrimination or violation, and to end arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and summary executions.

Justice for Syria: A non-governmental organization that focuses on documenting crimes committed by the Syrian government and promoting international accountability in human rights cases. This organization embraces opposition discourse and works to document evidence supporting claims of war crimes against the Syrian regime.

Etlaf (Syrian Media Union): An organization that documents violations against media professionals and journalists in Syria. The organization focuses primarily on violations committed against the press and media by the Syrian regime, with an emphasis on the importance of press freedom in the Syrian context.

Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research: An independent, non-governmental, non-profit human rights organization dedicated to promoting and establishing human rights principles among the Syrian people and rebuilding the legal structure of the Syrian state through the publication of legal research and studies. It also works to establish principles of justice by providing support and legal assistance to victims of violations, defending prisoners of conscience in Syria, and working to stop violations and hold perpetrators of crimes accountable.

War and crimes against humanity by preparing files, submitting them to the relevant judicial authorities, and building the capacity of Syrian legal professionals to do so. To achieve its goals, the center pressures governments, decision-makers, and international bodies, and influences public opinion to stop violations and hold criminals accountable in Syria. The center's structure consists of a board of directors consisting of: Attorney Anwar Al-Bunni, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and the Executive Director.

Third - Organizations operating in the autonomous areas:

In areas of northeastern Syria, most of which are under the control of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, a group of local Syrian human rights organizations are active.

³¹ Ta'afi Initiative website, About us:
<https://www.taafi-sy.org/>

They have taken it upon themselves to document violations and monitor the humanitarian and human rights situation in a politically complex, multi-ethnic, and multicultural region that has been significantly impacted by the consequences of the Syrian conflict. The most prominent of these organizations are:

1-Ta'zur Association for Victims³²: A community-based initiative that aims to achieve justice for all victims in Syria by empowering them to represent themselves, demand their rights, and actively participate in accountability efforts and achieve justice. Founded on March 11, 2021, by a group of Syrian victims, the association follows a community-based organizing approach to organize victims and survivors, develop their capacities, and engage them in developing plans, policies, and implementing activities. It works for all victims of violations in Syria, such as killing, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, forced displacement, violations of housing, land, and property rights, violations of freedom of opinion and expression, demographic change, and other human rights violations. It also seeks to empower victims of violations and strengthen their voices in transitional justice processes through documentation, advocacy, and building support networks for survivors, particularly those affected by detention, torture, and enforced disappearance.

2- Insight Organization³³: An independent, non-profit organization dedicated to monitoring and documenting human rights violations in Syria. Our mission includes collecting information, accurately recording it in dedicated databases, analyzing it, and presenting it in periodic, thematic reports based on statistics and data analysis. We rely primarily on a network of field reporters and investigators. We aim to contribute to uncovering, highlighting, and advocating for human rights violations in Syria, and calling for the necessary measures to stop these violations and achieve justice. We also aim to amplify the voices of Syrian victims and break their societal vulnerability by sharing their stories, defending their causes, reducing impunity for perpetrators of violations, and promoting justice and equity for survivors and victims of the Syrian conflict, with a focus on women and children. We also seek to provide legal support to victims by integrating professionalism and community engagement to protect and promote the human rights of individuals and communities alike.

3- Dar Association for Victims of Forced Displacement: An organization that emerged in response to the suffering of tens of thousands of civilians who were forcibly displaced from their areas, particularly from Afrin. It works to document violations related to displacement, property confiscation, and systematic violations against civilians.

4- Afrin Human Rights Organization³⁴: Its work documents ongoing violations since the Turkish-backed Syrian opposition factions took control of the city. It issues periodic reports on arbitrary arrests, attacks, and systematic discrimination against the indigenous population. It is close to the Kurdish National Council.

5- Justice for Life Organization (JFL)³⁵: Justice for Life is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit human rights organization dedicated to promoting and disseminating human rights. Founded in 2015, the organization aims to defend human rights by strengthening its presence in local communities at the cultural, social, and political levels. It adopts a community-based approach that engages various

³² Ta'zur Association for Victims website, about us <https://hevdesti.org/ar/about-us/>

³³ Insight website, About us, https://insight-md.org/?page_id=12

³⁴ Afrin Human Rights Organization website, <https://afrin-humanrights.com>

³⁵ Justice for Life website, about the organization <https://jfl.ngo/%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A9-jfl>

societal groups in the process of long-term change. The organization defends human rights and advocates for survivors and victims' families in accordance with international standards, and works to increase participation. Political and civil society. It seeks to exchange knowledge and skills related to human rights, elections, citizenship, transitional justice, and women's rights and empowerment by providing capacity-building programs and initiatives to increase understanding and practice of these issues by local community members and actors. Its work is focused on the areas of Deir ez-Zor under the control of the Autonomous Administration and the areas under Syrian government control.

6- Human Rights Organization - Afrin: Founded in Afrin in 2014, it documents human rights violations in Afrin and against the people of Afrin in areas of forced displacement. It issues periodic reports on arbitrary arrests, attacks, and systematic discrimination against indigenous peoples. It is close to the Autonomous Administration.

7- Human Rights Organization in Al-Jazira Region: An organization working to defend fundamental human rights and freedoms. It takes the United Nations Charter on Human Rights as the basis for its work. It also works to guarantee human rights in the Charter of the Social Contract of the Federation of Northern Syria and organizes its work accordingly.

8- Women's Rights Research and Protection Center: Founded in 2014 2020 and obtained a license in Brussels in 2022. The center's main areas of work focus on women and children under the age of 18, documenting human rights violations committed against women (killing, injuries, rape). A priority of the center's work is caring for female survivors of detention and providing them with psychological support, particularly those who have survived prisons run by armed factions in the Afrin region. It also prepares power of attorney for Syrian lawyers who send files to the center in Brussels to file lawsuits against violating parties.

9- Violations Documentation Center in Northern Syria³⁶: It collects data on violations against civilians, including arbitrary detention, forced conscription, confiscation of property, and violations against women and children. The Violations Documentation Center in Northern Syria has been operating since March 2018 to ensure accurate and independent documentation of all types of human rights violations taking place in northern Syria. This goal is to establish a basic reference for these violations. The center operates through field monitors deployed on the ground in northern Syria. The work focuses on various regions in northern Syria, within the context of good access to information.

In addition, local organizations that emerged from within Kurdish and Arab civil society operate in the region, including the Adl Center for Human Rights, and feminist and human rights organizations concerned with women's, children's, and minority rights issues, such as the Sara Organization for Combating Violence Against Women and the Human Rights Organization in the Euphrates Region. These organizations are active in raising human rights awareness and documenting violations occurring within the autonomous administration areas.

There are also human rights organizations working to monitor and document violations throughout Syria, most notably the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors developments in northern and eastern Syria. Although its headquarters are outside the country, it relies on a wide network of local correspondents.

³⁶ Violations Documentation Website, About Us <https://vdc-nsy.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86%d8%9f>