

# Human Rights Watch

## Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/03/syria-torture-centers-revealed>

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For 27 Detention Sites: Locations, Commanders Names, Torture Methods

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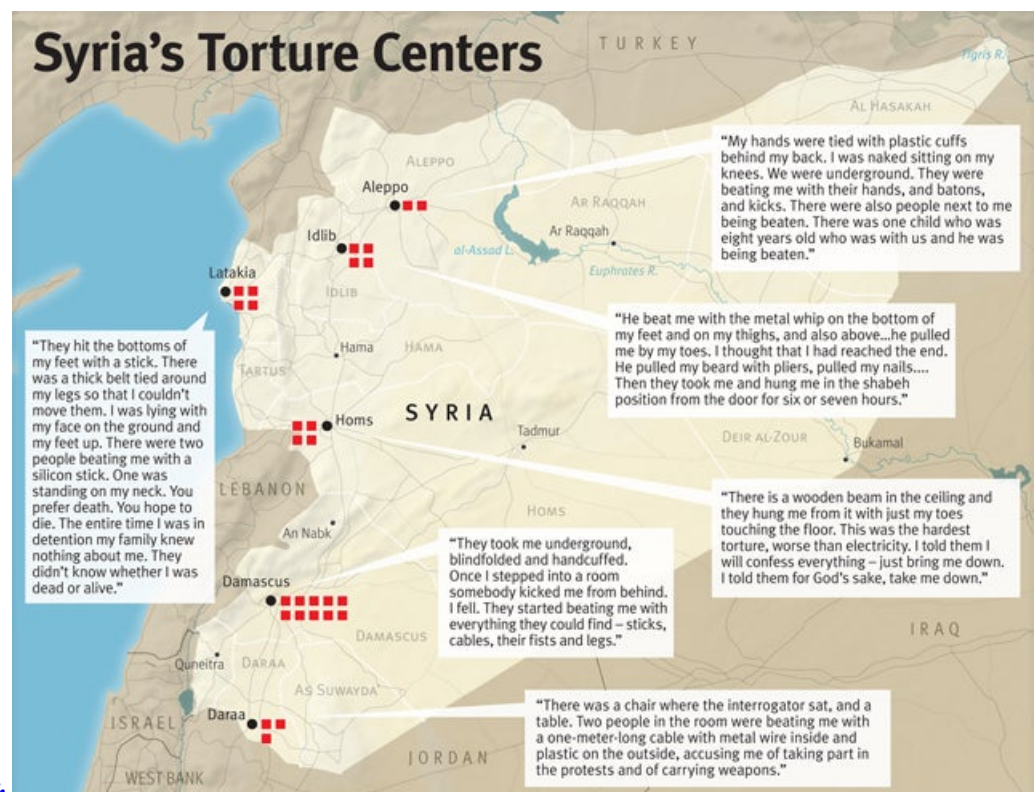
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(New York) Former detainees and defectors have identified the locations, agencies responsible, torture methods used, and, in many cases, the commanders in charge of 27 detention facilities run by Syrian intelligence agencies, Human Rights Watch said in a multimediareport released today. The systematic patterns of ill-treatment and torture that Human Rights Watch documented clearly point to a state policy of torture and ill-treatment and therefore constitute a crime against humanity.



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The 81-page report, [Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011](#) is based on more than 200 interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch since the beginning of anti-government demonstrations in [Syria](#) in March 2011. The report includes maps locating the detention facilities, video accounts from former detainees, and [sketches](#) of torture techniques described by numerous people who witnessed or experienced torture in these facilities.

The intelligence agencies are running an archipelago of torture centers scattered across the country, said Ole Solvang, emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch. By publishing their locations, describing the torture methods, and identifying those in charge we are putting those responsible on notice that they will have to answer for these horrific crimes.

Click to view in-depth, **satellite images of the torture centers** in the following cities: [Damascus](#), [Homs](#), [Idlib](#), [Aleppo](#), [Daraa](#), and [Latakia](#).

Human Rights Watch called on the United Nations Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and to adopt targeted sanctions against officials credibly implicated in the abuses.

The facilities cited in the report are those for which multiple witnesses have indicated the same location and provided detailed descriptions of torture. The actual number of detention facilities used by intelligence agencies is probably much higher.

Almost all the former detainees interviewed by Human Rights Watch said they had been subjected to torture or witnessed the torture of others during their detention. Interrogators, guards, and officers used a broad range of torture methods, including prolonged beatings, often with objects such as batons and cables, holding the detainees in painful stress positions for prolonged periods of time, the use of electricity, burning with acid, sexual assault and humiliation, the pulling of fingernails, and mock execution. Altogether Human Rights Watch documented more than 20 distinct torture methods used by the security and intelligence services.

In most cases former detainees were subjected to a range of these torture methods. A 31-year-old detainee who was detained in Idlib governorate in June described to Human Rights Watch how the intelligence agencies tortured him in the Idlib Central Prison:

They forced me to undress. Then they started squeezing my fingers with pliers. They put staples in my fingers, chest and ears. I was only allowed to take them out if I spoke. The staples in the ears were the most painful. They used two wires hooked up to a car battery to give me electric shocks. They used electric stun-guns on my genitals twice. I thought I would never see my family again. They tortured me like this three times over three days.

While most of the torture victims interviewed by Human Rights Watch were young men between 18 and 35, the victims interviewed also included children, women, and the elderly.

Human Rights Watch research shows that the worst torture has taken place in detention facilities run by the country's four main intelligence agencies, commonly referred to collectively as the *mukhabarat*:

Each of these four agencies maintains central branches in Damascus as well as regional, city, and local branches across the country. In virtually all of these branches there are detention facilities of varying size.

All of the witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch described detention conditions that would by themselves amount to ill-treatment and, in some cases, torture: extreme overcrowding, inadequate food, and routine denial of necessary medical assistance. A graphic model depicting an overcrowded cell described by one former detainee illustrates how the conditions fall short of international legal standards.



***Diagrams produced by SITU Studio and Forensic Architecture, an ERC-funded project.***

The individuals who carried out or ordered crimes against humanity bear individual criminal responsibility under international law, as do those in a position of command whose subordinates committed crimes that they were aware of or should have been aware of and failed to prevent or punish. This command responsibility would apply not only to the officials overseeing detention facilities, but also to the heads of intelligence agencies, members of government, and the head of state, President Bashar al-Assad.

Because Syria has not ratified the Rome Statute, which created the ICC, the court will only have jurisdiction if the UN Security Council adopts a resolution referring the situation in Syria to the court. Russia and China have previously blocked Security Council efforts to push for accountability.

The reach and inhumanity of this network of torture centers are truly horrific, Solvang said. Russia should not be holding its protective hand over the people who are responsible for this.

A table with the detention facilities where torture was documented, along with their respective locations, operating agencies, and commanders follows.

Agency
Name of Branch
City
Head of Branch
Military Intelligence
Branch 215
Damascus
Brig. Gen. Shaafiq
Military Intelligence
Branch 227
Damascus
Maj. Gen. Rustom Ghazali
Military Intelligence
Branch 291
Damascus

Brig. Gen. BurhanQadour (Replaced Brig. Gen. Yousef Abdou in May 2012)

Military Intelligence

Branch 235 (Palestine)

Damascus

Brig. Gen. Muhammad Khallouf

Military Intelligence

Branch 248

Damascus

Not identified

Military Intelligence

Branch 245

Daraa

Col. Loaial-Ali

Military Intelligence

Aleppo Branch

Aleppo

Not identified

Military Intelligence

Branch 271

Idlib

Brig. Gen. Nawfel al-Hussein

Military Intelligence

Homs Branch

Homs

Muhammad Zamreni

Military Intelligence

Latakia Branch

Latakia

Not identified

Air Force Intelligence

Mezzeh Airport Branch

Damascus

Brig. Gen. Abdul Salam Fajr Mahmoud (director of investigative branch)

Air Force Intelligence

Bab Touma Branch

Damascus

Not identified

Air Force Intelligence

Homs Branch

Homs

Brig. Gen. Jawdat al-Ahmed

Air Force Intelligence

Daraa branch

Daraa

Col. QusayMihoub

Air Force Intelligence

Latakia Branch

Latakia

Col. Suhail Al-Abdullah

Political Security

Mezzeh Branch

Damascus

Not identified

Political Security

Idlib Branch

Idlib

Not identified

Political Security

Homs Branch

Homs

Not identified

Political Security

Latakia Branch

Latakia

Not identified

Political Security

Daraa Branch

Daraa

Not identified

General Intelligence

Latakia Branch

Latakia

Brig. Gen. KhudrKhudr

General Intelligence

Branch 285

Damascus

Brig. Gen. Ibrahim Maala (Replaced Brig. Gen. HussamFendi in late 2011)

General Intelligence

Al-Khattib Branch

Damascus

Not identified

General Intelligence

Aleppo Branch

Aleppo

Not identified

General Intelligence

Branch 318

Homs

Brig. Gen. Firas Al-Hamed

General Intelligence

Idlib Branch

Idlib

Not identified

Joint

Central Prison - Idlib

Idlib

Not identified

Bahrain Death Sentences Follow Torture, Sham Trials

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