

Syrian Coalition's Letter on Detainees to ISSG Foreign Ministers

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May 17, 2016

No: 322

Date: 16 May 2016

Your Excellency Foreign Ministers of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG),
As the ISSG prepares to meet in Vienna to discuss ways of overcoming the stalemate in the political track due to the continued intransigence and negligence of international law obligations on the part of the Syrian regime, the suffering of tens of thousands of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons in Assad regime prisons continues. The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces held a consultative meeting yesterday with a group of Syrian human rights and civil society organizations concerned with detainees issues. It has been agreed that this joint letter be addressed to the ISSG.

As the whole world has come to know, the brave prison revolt that detainees in Hama prison staged has restored the issue of detainees to the forefront of media and international attention. However, this needs to be coupled with concrete guarantees for those detainees who have risked their lives and expect the international community to undertake its responsibilities towards them. In this context, we demand the following:

- In light of the continued concerns that the regime may attempt to break into the prison and block communications with detainees, we call on their behalf for the ICRC to act as a guarantor to oversee the implementation of the reached agreement.
- As the regime continues to try to identify the leaders of the prison revolt and threatens to take revenge from them, we demand guarantees to protect them against reprisals against them or their families.
- As the original reason for the prison revolt was to protest against haphazard execution verdicts against some detainees, we demand that ISSG puts pressure on the regime to immediately stop the practice of haphazard executions and verdict issued by phony trials.

As the plight of the detainees of Hama Central Prison constitutes the tip of the iceberg in the thorny situation and continued tragedy of Syrian detainees, the ISSG is expected to embark seriously and immediately on the following:

- The formation of a special task force, like the already existing humanitarian and CoH task forces, commissioned with the issue of Syrian detainees and forcibly disappeared persons to implement article 12 of UNSC 2254 and based on the recommendations of the COI on Syria dated 27 January 2016.

- To facilitate regular and repeated access of international independent inspection missions to civil prisons, detention centers of security centers and secret prisons.
- To put pressure on the Assad regime to stop haphazard execution verdicts, abolish the court of terrorism and stop referring civilian detainees to military courts.
- To work to guarantee that any political settlement reached in Syria involves guarantees to hold accountable those responsible for gross human rights violations and systematic torture and executions against Syrian detainees to combat the culture of impunity and lay the foundations for a new era based on justice and the rule of law.

The cause of Syrian detainees is one of the most critical and urgent humanitarian issues. Tens of thousands of detainees pay dearly everyday as serious efforts to reach concrete solutions for their situation are delayed. We, in the National Coalition, count on the support of our good friends in the ISSG to fulfil the legitimate demands of detainees and prisoners of conscience in Syria.

Please accept the assurances of my highest regards.

Yours sincerely,

Anas Abdah

President

National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces

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