



URGENT STATEMENT:

**The Lebanese Authorities Must Cooperate
to Prevent Impunity for Perpetrators of
Human Rights Violations by
the Former Syrian Regime**

19 December 2024

Eleven days have passed since the success of a two-week offensive by Syrian opposition forces and the fall of the Assad regime. Thousands of Syrian refugees have already begun returning from Lebanon, and other neighboring countries, via regular and irregular routes, despite the severe economic hardship and concerns over safety and security in Syria, along with. While many Syrian regime officials and military officers have fled Syria, Access Center for Human Rights emphasizes that the Lebanese authorities must cooperate in ensuring that individuals accused of crimes against humanity and human rights violations against civilians in Syria, who are internationally wanted, do not escape accountability by fleeing through Lebanon during this critical transitional period.

In addition to the well-documented war crimes committed since 2011, new grave violations of human rights have come to light following December 8th. These include the discovery of numerous mass graves in regime-held areas and evidence of systematic torture and unlawful executions of thousands of civilians. The release of thousands of detainees from prisons after opposition forces took control of major cities has further exposed the scale of abuse, as many had been forcibly disappeared and unlawfully detained and tortured for years. Unfortunately, reports confirm the tragic deaths of tens of thousands of Syrians who had been arrested by the Assad regime and its allies since the start of the revolution in 2011, including those detained in the notorious Sednaya prison.

The Assad regime's officials have been implicated in the torture and killing of the vast majority of war victims, including over 10,000 women in Sednaya prison alone, according to the documents published by Zaman Al-Wsl.¹ The regime is also responsible for the internal and external forced displacement of over 13 million Syrians² and the systematic indiscriminate shelling of residential areas across Syria, among many other grave violations.

On December 9, the Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) team observed numerous luxury vehicles with Syrian license plates, along with dozens of Syrian families, entering Lebanon through both regular crossings and irregular routes. There are credible concerns that these vehicles may belong to Syrian officials attempting to flee the country following the collapse of the regime, potentially using Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport as a transit point to destinations such as Iran, Russia, the UAE, and other locations to evade accountability. Several officials sanctioned by the European Union and the United States, including Bouthaina Shaaban and Ali Mamlouk, might have entered Lebanon.³ Many other top officials have been reportedly hiding in Lebanon under their ally Hezbollah's protections.⁴

Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) emphasizes that Lebanese authorities must not become complicit in crimes against humanity and human rights violations. They must cooperate fully in transferring all Syrian officials and leaders of sub-state armed groups to the new Syrian authorities to ensure accountability. Syrians, regardless of the future form of governance, have the right to justice. All military and security officials accused of crimes against humanity and violations of human rights in Syria must be brought before courts to ensure transitional justice and remedy for the families of the victims.

1-<https://leaks.zamanalwsl.net/10kwomen.php>

2-<https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/syria-situation>

3-<https://www.abc.net.au/news/202413-12-/assad-regime-officials-reportedly-hiding-in-luxury-beirut-hotels/104716348>

4-<https://www.newarab.com/news/top-assad-regime-officials-fleeing-luxury-lebanon-hotels>