

Urgent Plea for “The Immediate Release of Tens of Young Students in Southern Damascus”

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The Violations Documentation Center in Syria (VDC) has been informed by a trusted source in the southern side of the Syrian capital that security forces/the Patrol Unit which runs under the Department of Military Intelligence “Military Security” arrested (52) Palestinian Syrian students who fled with their families from the Yarmouk camp to Yelda town; south of Damascus city; when ISIS took control of the camp. The arrest was under the pretext of tearing off the “Syrian president’s” picture at the Jurmoq School during official school hours.

According to the source, the first batch of students were arrested almost three weeks ago when approximately 15 security members from the Patrol Unit raided the Jurmoq school in the afternoon and during regular school hours to arrest (20) students. After three days, security members of the same unit raided the students’ families at their homes in Yelda town and arrested (5) other kids. The home raids continued on a daily basis until the total number of detained students from homes reached (32) between the ages of 10 - 16.

The same source mentioned that the families of detained students sent dignitaries of the Yarmouk camp to the Patrol Unit to understand the background of their kids arrest but the security officials refused the dignitaries mediation and claimed that the students were members of the “Caliphate Cubs”; an ISIS group; during the time when the majority of the camp was under ISIS control. According to the VDC’s source, the students were forced to confess through the use of intimidation tactics.

The VDC condemns all arbitrary detention operations in Syria and holds the Syrian security forces completely responsible for the safety of those detained kids and urge the regime for the immediate, unrestricted, and unconditioned release of them. We also call for the concerned international organizations to intervene and free those kids. The international agreements made provisions for protecting kids during armed conflicts as per the four Geneva conventions in 1949 and the two amending protocols in 1977 which state the necessity of providing special protection for kids.

The international humanitarian law provides two types of protections for kids. The first is a general one that they have as civilians and the second is a special protection because they are minors. There are more than 25 articles in the Geneva convention that refer to children and the importance of protecting them.



Additionally, the Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC) in 1989 emphasized the importance of protection of kids, saving their lives and providing every child with same opportunities to develop and grow. These conventions restricted the deprivation of their freedom and made it the last resort and for the shortest time possible. The first article of CRC states that a child is “every human being under the age of eighteen.” The CRC also states that a child “due to the fact that (s)he is not fully matured; both mentally and physically; requires special protection and care including a special legal protection before and after its birth.”

The detainees are being held in at the governmental detention centers isolated from the outside world for months and sometimes for years against all laws. Thousands are being detained under inhuman conditions at secret branches of security departments and they are subjected to extreme forms of torture. Civilians are being routinely arrested and detained at the military centers while others are subjected to forcible disappearance. Civilians including minor children are being systematically tried at courts that does not meet the minimum standards of a fair trial, this includes field trials and terrorism court.

During the past few years, the Syrian government launched and continues to execute large-scale arbitrary detention raids, tens of thousands of civilians were arrested including women, children, civilians with special-needs, and others with severe illnesses. The documented information at VDC proves that thousands of detainees including children under the age of eighteen died at governmental detention centers that do not meet the minimum criteria of humanitarian standards.

The VDC condemns with the strongest forms of expressions the arbitrary detention of those kids in the southern suburbs of Damascus city and them being illegally held and possibly tortured. We are, at the same time, demand the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and all the concerned humanitarian and relief organizations to carry out their responsibilities, stand at this case and open an investigation as soon as possible. A claimant must be made for the Syrian government to immediately release those kids without preconditions or restrictions.