

PRESS RELEASE

Arrest warrant against Jamil Hassan is a milestone and good news for all affected by Assad's torture system

Berlin, 8 June 2018 – “The arrest warrant against Jamil Hassan is a milestone and an important step for all affected by the Assad’s torture system – for the survivors, for the family members and for those who are still held in the government-run detention facilities all over Syria,” says Wolfgang Kaleck, General Secretary of the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR). It is an encouraging sign for 24 Syrian torture survivors and activists, whose testimonies contributed to the arrest warrant. Together with Syrian lawyers Anwar al-Bunni (Syrian Center for Legal Research and Studies) and Mazen Darwish (Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression) and ECCHR, they filed [four criminal complaints](#) in Germany against high-ranking officials of the Assad government.

Jamil Hassan, identified as standing on the top of the command structure in complaints filed in September and November 2017, is the head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence. The criminal complaints name, next to Jamil Hassan, other 26 high-level officials of the Syrian Intelligence Services and the Syrian Military. The allegations include: torture as crimes against humanity and war crimes. One of the criminal complaints was filed by activists of the group supporting the work of “[Caesar](#),” a former employee of the Syrian military police. ECCHR has prepared and filed the complaints together with the Syrian torture survivors, lawyers and activists. “I choose justice and human rights over revenge and violence as my means to fight back against what Jamil Hassan has done to me and my friends. And today’s decision shows that I chose the right path and I am very grateful for it,” says Yazan Awad. He was held four and a half months in various detention facilities of the [Air Force Intelligence](#) and was severely tortured during this time. He is one of the claimants in the complaint submitted in November 2017.

“This decision in Germany confirms that justice must be respected as a principle and will not be ignored for any political reason,” says Anwar al-Bunni. “It is also a victory for the survivors who have been waiting for justice for a long time.”

“It is great news and another milestone which assures us that there will be no impunity or immunity to those who committed crimes in Syria,” says Mazen Darwish. “As one of the complainants in this case, this is the best news since I was released. I’d like to thank all those who’ve contributed, especially the survivors – without their courage and their commitment we would’ve not achieved this.”

“By issuing such an arrest warrant, German’s chief federal prosecutor emphasizes: Torture is absolutely prohibited. Those high-level officials responsible for torture in Syria belong before a court. Germany signals its readiness to engage in investigations and prosecutions of grave human rights violations,” says Kaleck. “Judicial authorities in other states ought to follow such a step by the German judiciary. As long as no international tribunal or court is prosecuting torture in Syria, third countries have to use the principle of universal jurisdiction.”