



EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

German Federal Prosecutor charges former high-ranking Assad government official with more than 4000 alleged cases of torture

With the first criminal trial worldwide about torture in Syria, German court to set international precedent

Berlin, 29 October 2019 – Earlier this month, the German Federal Public Prosecutor filed charges against two former officials of President Bashar al-Assad’s Syrian General Intelligence Directorate at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz. The first trial worldwide about torture in Syria is expected to start in Germany in early 2020 – an important step in the fight against impunity.

Anwar R. is suspected of being involved in the torture of at least 4000 people between 2011 and 2012 in the General Intelligence Al-Khatib Branch in Damascus. This torture resulted in the death of 58 people, and included two cases of sexual violence. Anwar R.’s colleague, Eyad A., has been charged with torture in at least thirty cases.

“This process in Germany gives hope, even if everything takes a long time and nothing happens tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow. The fact that it continues at all gives us as survivors hope for justice. I am ready to testify,” said a Syrian¹ who was tortured in the Al-Khatib detention facility in Damascus.

ECCHR supports Syrian torture survivors who are joint plaintiffs in the proceedings. In the course of the German Federal Prosecutor’s investigations, the Federal Criminal Police Office heard testimony from 14 Syrian witnesses, seven of whom are joint plaintiffs in the case.

“These charges send an important message to survivors of Assad’s system of torture,” said Wolfgang Kaleck, Secretary General of the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR). “We will continue working to ensure that the main perpetrators of state torture under Assad are brought to justice – in Germany or elsewhere.”

The trial in Koblenz is the result of a series of criminal complaints regarding torture in Syria, which ECCHR and nearly 50 Syrian torture survivors, relatives, activists, and lawyers have filed since 2016 in [Germany](#), [Austria](#) and [Sweden](#).

Testimony from witnesses supported by ECCHR, and the organization’s research contributed to the German Federal Supreme Court issuing arrest warrants for Anwar R. and Eyad A. in February 2019.

In June 2018, the Supreme Court issued an [international arrest warrant for Jamil Hassan](#), who was head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence until July 2019. ECCHR and its Syrian partners’ submissions to the Federal Prosecutor played an important role in that case as well.

For comprehensive information on the legal background of the case, videos, profiles of Syrian torture survivors and more on ECCHR's Syria work, see: www.ecchr.eu/en/topic/syria

Contact:

ECCHR – Anabel Bermejo: +49 (0)30 - 69819797, email: presse@ecchr.eu

ⁱ The witness's name will not be published for security reasons.