



PRESS RELEASE

German Federal Prosecutor must issue arrest warrants for Assad's inner circle

More crime scenes, more suspects: New criminal complaints by Syrian torture survivors

Berlin, 8 November 2017 – Saydnaya, al-Mezzeh and the Aleppo Air Force Intelligence Branch: for the vast majority of people in Syria, these prison names are synonymous with systematic degradation, unimaginable torture and mass executions. Senior officials of President Bashar al-Assad's government are responsible for the international crimes committed at these prisons. [Two new criminal complaints](#) were filed in Germany on 6 November 2017 against 17 of those most responsible for Assad's brutal policies of repression. The criminal complaints, submitted by 13 Syrian women and men to the Office of the German Federal Public Prosecutor in Karlsruhe, concern crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The complaints were compiled by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights ([ECCHR](#)) in collaboration with the Syrian lawyers and activists Anwar Al-Bunni (Syrian Center for Legal Studies & Research, [SCLSR](#)) and Mazen Darwish (Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, [SCM](#)) and with support from the [Heinrich Böll Stiftung](#). The complainants in this case include Yazan Awad, who was tortured over four months at the al-Mezzeh Air Force Intelligence Investigation Branch and Shappal Ibrahim, who was detained for one and a half years at the Saydnaya military prison.

“For me, the criminal complaint in Germany is currently the only way to fight for justice. It's not just about me, it's about all those who are still being held in Assad's torture prisons,” said Yazan Awad. Shappal Ibrahim has a similar view: “I am willing to assist with the prosecutor's investigations if needed. I want to help ensure that the German authorities issue arrest warrants for the people responsible for the crimes of the military police and intelligence services.”

The most recent criminal complaints supplement the previous criminal complaints and evidence submitted by [Syrian torture survivors](#) in March this year and by the [Caesar Files Support Group](#) in September this year. ECCHR, SCLSR and SCM believe that Germany can play an important role in efforts to end impunity in Syria. The German legal system recognizes the principle of universal jurisdiction and the Federal Public Prosecutor in Karlsruhe is already investigating torture committed under Assad since 2011.

More information on the new criminal complaints (profiles of the complainants, information on Saydnaya and the Air Force Intelligence, Q&A on the legal background) can be found under [ECCHR/Syria/torture](#)

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