



PRESS RELEASE

Europe's role in the fight for accountability and justice

Torture in Syria: Survivors file new complaint in Sweden against Assad's Intelligence Chiefs

Stockholm/Berlin, 20 February 2019 – Fighting impunity for torture in Syria step-by-step: Nine torture survivors submitted a criminal complaint in Stockholm yesterday against senior officials in the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, including for crimes against humanity. The women and men from Syria are using universal jurisdiction to bring to court those responsible for Assad's torture system. Their aim: for the Swedish judiciary to investigate the 25 named intelligence officials, as well as those not yet known by name, and issue international arrest warrants. The [criminal complaint in Sweden](#) follows legal steps already taken in Germany, France, Austria, and other European countries.

In Germany, witnesses in similar complaints, as well as photographs and documents from the [Caesar Files Group](#), contributed significantly to the issuance of an [international arrest warrant against Jamil Hassan](#), Head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence. Investigations by German and French authorities also led to the [arrest of former officers](#) of the Assad government in February 2019. Should the suspects face trials, at least six torture survivors wish to participate as civil parties.

These first legal successes offer hope to Abdunaser (whose surname is not published for security reasons), one of the plaintiffs in Sweden: "I survived torture in two detention centers of the General Intelligence Service in Damascus. But to this day thousands of prisoners in Syria face death by torture. We file this criminal complaint to help put an end to this torture system."

Abdunaser and other torture survivors filed the complaint together with the Syrian lawyers Anwar al-Bunni (Syrian Center for Legal Research and Studies, [SCLSR](#)) and Mazen Darwish (Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, [SCM](#)), the Caesar Files Group as well as the Swedish organization Civil Rights Defenders ([CRD](#)) and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights ([ECCHR](#)) from Berlin. CRD and ECCHR, whose legal research and analysis forms the basis of the criminal complaint, have been working together closely with the complainants.

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