

Torture in Syria: Another milestone in the fight against impunity

Senior ex-official from Assad government arrested in Germany

Berlin, 13 February 2019 – A former member of the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate was arrested yesterday at the behest of the Federal Court of Justice. Anwar R. is suspected of being responsible for the torture of detainees in 2011-2012 in the Al-Khatib detention facility run by the General Intelligence Directorate in Damascus. This could lead to a criminal trial in Germany, which would be the first trial anywhere in the world examining the responsibility of senior members of the Syrian intelligence agencies of President Bashar al-Assad for crimes of torture.

The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) is assisting survivors of torture in Syria in these proceedings. Six survivors were heard as witnesses by the Federal Criminal Police Office over the course of the investigations undertaken by the Federal Public Prosecutor. Their testimonies and research conducted by ECCHR contributed to the issuance of the arrest warrant against Anwar R.

“Should the suspect go on trial, the survivors of torture will join the case as private parties,” said ECCHR’s General Secretary Wolfgang Kaleck. “The arrest shows once again that Germany is taking the fight against impunity for torture in Syria seriously. It sends a very important message to survivors of Assad’s system of torture. Without justice, there will be no lasting peace in Syria.”

In June 2018, the German Federal Court of Justice issued an [arrest warrant for Jamil Hassan](#), head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence. In that case, as with today’s arrest, the complaints submitted to the prosecutor by ECCHR together with torture survivors, activists and lawyers from Syria played an important role.

More on ECCHR’s work related to Syria: <https://www.ecchr.eu/en/topic/syria/>

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