

# Annual Report of the Violations Monitoring and Documentation Office at the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network (SKJN) for 2024



## "Transitional Justice as a Tool for Building Peace and Preventing New Violations"

### Introduction

For years, we at the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network, like other Syrian and international organizations advocating for human rights, have monitored and documented violations against journalists. We have published annual reports to draw the world's attention to the scale of violations committed in our regions, or Syria as a whole, in collaboration with our partners. This has been necessitated by the tragic record of human rights abuses and the journalists who were killed in the regime's detention centers under brutal torture, becoming part of this tragedy for over 14 years. From the outset, our goal has not merely been to document; rather, we have believed that the day must come when no one escapes accountability, ensuring that those responsible for such violations are ultimately held accountable.

In all our annual reports, we have sought, as much as possible, to highlight the realities of journalistic work according to the distribution of control across areas held by the authorities in the different areas of control:

1- The Syrian regime-controlled areas (commonly known as Russia-backed Assad regime areas)

2- The Syrian Interim Government and the Salvation Government (commonly known as the Turkey-controlled Syrian opposition areas)

**3- The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (commonly known as the US-backed Kurdish areas)**

**Our main focus, however, has been on Kurdish areas**, which constitute the core of our work and the presence of our network's members in northeastern Syria. But now, everything has changed following the rapid collapse of the regime and the assumption of power by **the caretaker government**, which now controls most provinces except for the areas we monitor. This new reality requires us to quickly consider how to address this situation and to continue relentlessly defending our colleagues whose cities remain under the control of Turkey and its allied factions. Many have lost their homes and properties due to seizure by these groups.

We have documented various cases, hoping for the day when perpetrators of these violations are brought to justice through comprehensive accountability for crimes across all Syrian territories in a fair and impartial manner, following the fall of the regime. This accountability must not turn into retaliation among Syrians but should instead be pursued through fair and transparent trials under continuous international oversight. This, perhaps, represents the most significant challenge facing Syrians in lending credibility to the issue of accountability.

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## **Who Are We?**

**The Violations Monitoring and Documentation Office** is part of the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network (SKJN), an independent organizational media framework that aims to defend press freedoms in its areas of operation regardless of gender, sect, ethnicity, or the affiliation of the institutions journalists work for or the perpetrators of violations. It includes among its ranks Kurdish Syrian journalists as well as journalists from other communities within and outside Syria.

The network was established on **March 10, 2012**, initially under the name "**Union of Syrian Kurdish Journalists**," after a group of Kurdish university graduates from the Faculty of Media at Damascus University recognized the need to advance the Kurdish media landscape and address the broader Syrian reality, and the Kurdish situation in particular, with neutrality and professionalism, away from political or partisan bias. The name was changed from "Union" to "Network" following the decisions of the fourth conference held on August 8, 2020, with the approval of the majority of members.

The network relies on its members, who are distributed across different regions, to prepare its annual report. This is done based on specific criteria aligned with international laws and norms for protecting journalists, addressing violations committed by various parties to the conflict in Syria, as well as external entities. The report also draws upon news and journalistic reports published by local media at the time of the violation, as well as from monitoring and documentation centers, after analyzing and verifying the information with professionalism and transparency. Where available, it includes testimonies from the targeted journalists themselves or from sources that can be reached.

### **Press Freedom Index and Violations Worldwide**

According to the 2024 *World Press Freedom Index* issued by *Reporters Without Borders* (RSF), which annually assesses the state of press freedom in 180 countries and regions, using five new metrics (political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context, and safety), the results revealed the following: 36 countries were classified as "very dangerous," 49 as "difficult," 50 as "problematic," while the remaining 45 were deemed "good" or "fairly good." The report emphasized the glaring lack of political will on the part of the international community to enforce principles of journalist protection, particularly United Nations Security Council Resolution 2222.

In 2024, the war in Gaza took center stage, marked by a record number of incidents and violations against journalists and media outlets. Consequently, Gaza ranked 157th out of 180 countries and regions surveyed in the 2024 Global Press Freedom Index and was also among the bottom ten countries in terms of journalist safety. According to figures from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, there

was a significant surge in violations against journalists in Gaza in 2024, making it one of the most dangerous regions for journalistic work. More than 100 journalists were killed between October 7, 2023, and the present day by Israeli forces.

Thus, 2024 witnessed a marked increase in violations against journalists worldwide. The *Reporters Without Borders* annual report highlighted the escalating threats faced by journalists during their duties. The report documented hundreds of cases of repression, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, and killings, underscoring the hostile environment in which journalists operate.

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### **Press Freedom Violations in the Arab World**

The situation was particularly dire in the Arab world, with countries like Syria, Yemen, and Egypt topping the list of the most egregious violators of journalists' rights. Violations included bans on media coverage, the shutdown of press institutions, and legal persecution of journalists under the guise of anti-terrorism laws. RSF reported that journalists in this region face compounded risks due to the absence of legal protections and unstable political environments.

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### **Violations Against Journalists in Syria**

Syria remained one of the most dangerous places for journalism in 2024, according to reports by global and local human rights organizations. The *Committee to Protect Journalists* noted that Syria continues to rank high in impunity, with journalists being targeted by all sides of the conflict. Violations included arbitrary detention, prolonged imprisonment without trial, physical assaults, and direct threats. This hostile climate has led to a shrinking space for free press and increased self-censorship among journalists.

Data shows that independent journalists and media activists were the most affected due to their lack of institutional protection. According to RSF, "Since 2011, the Syrian regime and its allies have killed more than 181 journalists because of their work." By the time the regime fell to *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* on December 8, 2024, at least 23 journalists were imprisoned in the country, with 10 others missing. Of these, seven were victims of enforced disappearance,

placing Syria at 179th out of 180 countries in the Global Press Freedom Index.

Following the opposition factions' takeover of most Syrian territories and the opening of prisons that held regime opponents—including journalists—no entity announced the names of detained or missing journalists. This suggests that many were either killed in detention or executed by security forces. With opposition factions, led by *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham*, assuming control, fears are growing of further silencing, intimidation, and targeting of journalists, as evidenced by their past actions in Idlib, where they detained numerous journalists for their work.

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### **Violations Against Journalists in Northeastern Syria**

Despite repeated declarations by the Autonomous Administration of its commitment to press freedom in northeastern Syria, 2024 saw numerous violations against journalists in the region. The Violations Monitoring and Documentation Office of the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network documented 13 cases, including killings, arbitrary arrests, bans on media coverage, confiscation of media equipment, and direct and deliberate attacks by Turkey on journalists while they were performing their duties. These attacks included incidents in Kurdish cities (Afrin, Sari Kaniyeh/Ras al-Ain, and Gire Spi/Tal Abyad) occupied by Turkey and its allied armed factions continuing to commit violations under a culture of impunity year after year. The targeting and killing of journalists by Turkey serve as clear evidence of its disregard for the reports of organizations highlighting its ongoing attacks on infrastructure and civilian areas, which are naturally covered by journalists. The result has been a heavy toll for practicing their profession and exposing the truth, despite the adoption of some professional safety measures based on international guidelines in recent times.

Additionally, social media platforms witnessed a significant increase in targeted campaigns against journalists in northeastern Syria. Accounts and pages affiliated with individuals "aligned" with the Autonomous Administration openly threatened several journalists by name, accusing them of being linked to external entities, particularly Turkey. The Violations Monitoring and Documentation Office views these online threats not only as endangering journalists' lives but

also as contributing to a hostile environment that undermines their ability to work freely and safely.

Journalists in the Kurdish region also faced increased pressure due to strict laws and administrative procedures that hinder media work. These practices pose a significant threat to media diversity and the ability of journalists to report truthfully and independently.

## **Number of Violations in 2024 in the Autonomous Administration Area**

Freedom of the press is one of the most crucial pillars for enabling democratic and free societies based on participation, promoting freedom of opinion and expression. The stronger the foundation of journalistic freedom for journalists and media outlets, the more significant and decisive steps they can achieve to ensure the transparency and accountability of local authorities. This is particularly critical as we are all aware that media freedom and the safety of journalists are under threat across the country, not limited to a specific region. Therefore, our mission is to consistently defend and protect journalists, as they do not voluntarily face imprisonment and detention; rather, there are security agencies restricting their freedoms and detaining them. Similarly, forcibly disappeared journalists are subjected to the same violations. Any infringement against them constitutes a violation of international law, as they represent the voice of truth and its dissemination to the public. When we document and monitor these violations, it is to uphold justice and champion fairness. By protecting them, we protect the truth itself through their work.

The report documented **13 violations throughout the year** targeting journalists and media institutions. These include cases of collective targeting or threats, among which were three cases of arrest, two killings, three cases of assault and temporary detention, as well as two incidents of targeting press crews. In one incident, the driver of a press crew was injured, with journalists sustaining minor injuries. Additionally, there were three cases of threats, incitement to liquidation, and defamation, one of which was explicit and individual, another collective without any official entity claiming responsibility for the threats or defamation, and the third occurring

outside Syrian territory. Below is the summary of violations in 2024 within the Autonomous Administration areas:

- On **January 13, 2024**, a masked armed group affiliated with the General Security Forces, under the security apparatus of the Autonomous Administration, arrested activist and journalist **Djwar Tawfiq** in the city of Amuda, northeast Syria, and took him to an unknown location. He was released on **January 17, 2024**.
- On **March 15, 2024**, members of the General Security Forces ("Asayish") under the Autonomous Administration assaulted journalist **Marwa Nasif**, a reporter for the "SY Plus" website, in Raqqa. They confiscated her equipment while she was covering a demonstration by activists in the city.
- **Rakan Ahmad**, a journalist working as a correspondent for the "Nu Dem Rojava" agency, was arrested by an armed group under the security apparatus of the Autonomous Administration in **Girkê Legê/Al-Mabada**, northeast Syria, on **March 29, 2024**. He was taken to an unknown location and was later released on **November 28, 2024**.
- On **April 2, 2024**, journalist **Ahmad Sufi** was arrested and taken to an unknown location by a masked armed group traveling in a white van while on the main road between **Derik/Al-Malikiya** and his village **Bana Qasr/Bab Al-Hawa**. He was released on **September 7, 2024**.
- On **May 27, 2024**, journalist **Abdullah Al-Khalaf**, a correspondent for the "Rozana" foundation, was assaulted and detained by members of the Asayish security forces in Raqqa while covering a farmers' protest against the Autonomous Administration's pricing of wheat for 2024. The demonstration took place in front of the administration's building in Raqqa.
- On **June 10, 2024**, journalist **Jumaa Akash**, a correspondent for the "Al-Arabiya/Al-Arabiya Al-Hadath" channel, was

subjected to incitement and threats of killing. Individuals openly posted threats against him, along with photos, on social media platforms, warning him against entering Raqqa, citing the danger it posed to his life. The threats came a day after the channel aired an investigative report authored by Akash on the spread of drug addiction and the exploitation of addicted women for sexual abuse, based on live testimonies from victims in the city.

- Journalist **Kamal Sheikho**, a correspondent for the officially licensed "Al-Sharq Al-Awsat" newspaper, was detained and assaulted on **July 14, 2024**, by a force affiliated with the Internal Security Forces in the city of Hasakah, northeast Syria. He was taken to a local security center while covering recent events in the city, forced to hand over his equipment, including his camera and personal belongings, and was denied access to any official.
- On **October 24, 2024**, a Turkish drone targeted a vehicle carrying journalists from various agencies in **Amuda**, west of Qamishli. The journalists were covering Turkish bombardment on a power distribution station in the city. Those targeted included **Jamil Omar** from "Orkish Radio," **Simav Mohammed** from "Hawar News Agency," and others from "Ronahi TV."
- On **December 19, 2024**, a Turkish drone targeted a vehicle carrying journalists from the "ANHA" agency near the Tishreen Dam in **Kobani**, northeast Syria. This attack killed correspondent **Jihan Belkin**.
- On the same day (**December 19, 2024**), another Turkish drone attack on press teams killed journalist **Nazim Dashtan**, who was covering Turkish strikes on the Tishreen Dam and Qara Qozak Bridge.
- Journalist **Shirin Shakir**, responsible for licensing the network in Sweden, faced an ongoing campaign of harassment and threats on social media targeting her, her husband, and her



son. The threats included physical harm to her son. Despite presenting evidence and private messages to Swedish authorities, the incitement campaign against her and her family persisted.

- On **December 19, 2024**, another Turkish drone strike near the Tishreen Dam injured the driver **Aziz Haj Bouzan** of an "ANHA" team.
- A coordinated campaign was waged by public and pseudonymous pages, including those "aligned" with the Autonomous Administration, against journalists and activists in Rojava and northeast Syria. These pages spread false news and fabricated accusations without providing credible evidence, aiming to defame and endanger these individuals. The targeted journalists included **Cano Shakir, Gihad Darwish, Shivan Ibrahim, Simav Hesén, Sirwan Haj Barko, Hamza Hamki, Ivan Hassib, Ezz El-Din Malla, Omar Kojri, Walat Ahmi, Naz Hami, Sabah Mirani, Salam Hassan, Hozan Hadi and others.**
- On **January 6, 2025**, the Kurdistan Regional Government released journalist **Sulaiman Ahmad** after nearly a year of detention, following his arrest at the **Fayshkhabur crossing** on October 25, 2023, while traveling from northeast Syria to Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Lastly, the SKJN reiterated its annual focus on the unresolved case of journalist **Farhad Hamo**, a correspondent for "Rudaw TV," who has been forcibly disappeared since **December 15, 2014**, after being abducted by ISIS militants. His fate remains unknown despite repeated calls by his family and the network to uncover the fate of forcibly disappeared individuals.

**Despite the Fall of the Regime... Journalists' Properties in Occupied Cities Have Not Been Returned Yet**

As documented by the network in its annual reports over the past six years, **50 cases of confiscation of journalists' homes and properties** have been recorded in the areas of **Afrin, Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain), Tal Abyad, and Tal Tamer**. These violations, carried out by Turkish forces and their allied Syrian factions that occupy these areas, remain ongoing. Despite the fall of the Syrian regime and the liberation of cities and towns of the Turkey-backed factions, those factions have not returned and the properties are still confiscated. Consequently, these properties and homes have not been restored to their rightful owners. According to testimonies from some residents, a small number of returnees exploited the properties before leaving again, looting them without offering any compensation to the rightful owners, whether civilians or journalists' families.

Over the past years, actions taken in these areas have shown no regard for the **laws of war**, which explicitly prohibit looting or forcibly seizing private property for personal use. Such actions are categorized as war crimes when they occur in conflict zones, as is the case here. International laws and procedures are clear: fighters are not allowed to seize property for personal use, even to house their families. Thus, if the current authorities claim to pursue justice, one of their most urgent priorities, after addressing the detainee issue, must be providing shelter for displaced families and vulnerable groups whose homes were destroyed. Additionally, they must return the properties confiscated in the three cities of **Afrin, Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain), and Tal Abyad** to their original owners. This aligns with the **Pinheiro Principles**, which reflect broadly applicable international law regarding the restitution of housing and property in the context of refugees' and displaced persons' return. These principles state that "all refugees and displaced persons have the right to restitution of any housing, land, and property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived." The destruction, occupation, or seizure of personal and private properties constitutes a significant obstacle to their return, which is precisely what has occurred with the residents of these cities.

According to the network's annual reports for **2019, 2020, and 2021, 50 cases of property confiscation** targeting journalists' homes were documented as follows:

- **Afrin**: 20 cases
- **Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain)**: 28 cases
- **Tal Abyad**: 1 case

- **Tal Tamer:** 1 case

These properties were distributed among the families of armed militants and some Iraqi families. Each year, the report highlights that some names of forcibly displaced individuals remain undisclosed to protect their relatives from the armed factions and to avoid further Turkish retaliation. In some cases, displaced individuals had portions of their properties seized but chose not to report them to preserve what remains of their assets.

Additionally, it is worth noting that many of the journalists affected are no longer affiliated with the institutions or media outlets they worked with at the time of documentation. Instead, they now work for other organizations. Below is a detailed list of the confiscated properties in **Serekaniye (Ras al-Ain)**:

1. The **Sultan Murad Division**, a faction of the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army, seized the home of journalist **Shireen Mohammed Ali Shaker** in Serekaniye on October 17, 2019, and converted it into a military base.
2. The home of journalist **Sardar Milla Drwish**, General Manager of the Asso News Network.
3. The home of journalist **Munyedin Isso**, who collaborates with various local, Arab, and international outlets, was converted into a Quran memorization school under the supervision of the Turkish governor of Urfa.
4. The home of photojournalist **Rodi Said**, a photographer for Reuters.
5. The home of journalist **Abdulhalim Suleiman Abdulhalim**, correspondent for the Arabic section of *The Independent* and a presenter for Arta Radio.
6. The home of journalist **Orhan Kamal**, a correspondent for the Yezidna website.
7. The home of journalist **Alaa Al-Rubaie**, a correspondent for the Asso News Network and an editor at the "Taa Marbouta" Foundation.
8. The home of journalist **Ezzeddin Saleh**, a former reporter for Arta Radio.
9. The home of photojournalist **Haitham Haji**, a photographer and cameraman for Kurdistan 24, who faced direct threats and extortion.
10. The home of journalist **Hassan Abdullah**, a former correspondent for KNN TV, who was forcibly displaced to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq after losing all his properties. Armed

factions seized and partially burned his family's assets, leaving him temporarily residing in Qamishli.

11. The home of journalist **Hussein Zeido**, a former correspondent for KNN TV and North Press Agency, who was also forcibly displaced to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq due to the seizure of his properties.
12. The home of journalist **Hisham Arafat**, a news editor for Kurdistan 24 English and a news producer and fixer for various international media outlets.
13. The home of journalist **Shiyar Mohammed**, a correspondent for Zagros TV in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan.
14. The home of journalist **Salman Mano**, a reporter for the Asso News Network.
15. The home of journalist **Alan Osman**, a journalist who has worked with numerous local and international agencies.
16. The home of journalist **Liloz Hakari**, a presenter on Washokani Radio.
17. The home of journalist **Shera Ossi**, a former Rojava TV correspondent and current presenter on Von FM Radio.
18. The home of journalist **Shireen Naaman**, a former correspondent for ARTA FM Radio.
19. The home of journalist **Sipan Mousa**, an ARTA FM Radio correspondent.
20. The home of journalist **Nouri Khalil**, a sports correspondent for ARTA FM Radio.
21. The home of journalist **Rodi Ayu**, also with ARTA FM Radio.
22. The home of photojournalist **Youssef Biro**.
23. The home of photojournalist and filmmaker **Azad Evdike**.
24. The home of photojournalist **Sheikh Hamou**.
25. The home of journalist **Suleiman Al-Tawil**, a Ronahi TV correspondent in Serekaniye.
26. The home of photojournalist **Diyar Mawou**.
27. Most properties belonging to media workers at Washokani Radio were confiscated by Turkey-aligned factions.
28. The home of journalist **Radwan Rashid Othman** (known as **Redwan Bezar**) and his family in Tal Abyad, along with another property in the village of Sousk, was converted into a military base. Redwan, a Kurdistan 24 correspondent, had previously received numerous death threats due to his journalism.

29. The home of journalist **Salman Salman**, a member of the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network, was seized in the village of Dadoudia near Serekaniye on October 10, 2019. He and his family were forcibly displaced by Turkish-backed armed factions.
30. The home and agricultural land (50 dunams) of journalist **Idris Abdullah** (known as **Dilyar Jaziri**) in the village of Rashidiya near Tal Tamer were seized by armed factions. They also confiscated a well and its associated equipment.

### **Ongoing Forced Displacement under Threat of Arrest and Murder by the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army Factions Occupying Afrin**

The following names represent journalists who have been forcibly displaced from Afrin due to threats, arrests, or property confiscation by Turkish-backed armed factions:

1. **Mohammed Bilo** – A former correspondent for Kurdistan 24 and Rozana Radio. He was forcibly displaced from Afrin after receiving direct threats from armed factions. His home was seized, and he continues to face threats of assassination from Turkish sources.
2. **Jihad Abdo** – A journalist and correspondent for Hawar News Agency, forced to leave Afrin due to threats to his life.
3. **Roj Musa** – A correspondent for Hawar News Agency, forcibly displaced after being threatened by members of the factions.
4. **Newroz Rasho** – A journalist for Voice of America and Alhurra TV, forced to leave due to persistent threats.
5. **Ahmed Qatma** – A former correspondent for SMART News Agency, now displaced in Iraqi Kurdistan after threats from Turkish-backed Syrian factions.
6. **Ahmed Shafee Bilal** – A journalist who worked with a Russian news agency and was forcibly displaced due to targeted threats.
7. **Nurhat Hesén** – A correspondent for Hawar News Agency, displaced following threats.
8. **Sido Ebo** – A journalist with Hawar News Agency, also forcibly displaced.
9. **Mizgin Gorsay** – A journalist for Ronahi TV, whose home in Afrin was seized.
10. **Jaafar Jafo** – A correspondent for Hawar News Agency, whose home was taken over by settlers.

11. **Tirast Jodi** – A journalist for Hawar News Agency, displaced after armed factions confiscated his home.
12. **Munzer Sheikho** – A former correspondent for Ronahi TV, displaced due to threats and his home being seized by armed factions.
13. **Mamo Hassan** – A former journalist for Ronahi Newspaper, forcibly displaced.
14. **Salah Ebo** – A former journalist for Ronahi Newspaper, forcibly displaced.
15. **Jian Haji** – A former journalist for Hawar News Agency and current reporter for Rudaw Media Network. He was forcibly displaced, and his home confiscated.
16. **Idris Hanan** – A journalist with Ronahi Newspaper, forcibly displaced.
17. **Hassan Tahsin Nasser** – A former journalist for Ronahi Newspaper, forcibly displaced.
18. **Zakariya Sheikho** – A photojournalist for Ronahi TV, forced to leave Afrin.
19. **Sharif Mohammed** – A former journalist for Ronahi TV, forcibly displaced.
20. **Hassan Qousho** – A journalist with Rojava TV, forcibly displaced.

## **Why Documentation?**

The Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network has been issuing its annual reports on the state of freedoms in Syria's Kurdish region, regardless of how minor the violations may be, in an independent and professional manner, without bias toward any party under any circumstances or pressures, and without fear of presenting the truth as it is. This has been the case even though all conflicting parties are present in this geographical area in northeastern Syria and various regions of the Autonomous Administration. What has made the task of the monitoring and documentation team more difficult in recent years is the direct Turkish intervention in some areas, its occupation of key Kurdish cities (Afrin, Serê Kaniyê/Ras al-Ayn, Girê Spî/Tal Abyad), and the continued Turkish military operations— airstrikes, drones, and ground operations—along with the armed factions allied with it. These factions have committed numerous violations against journalists, seized homes and properties belonging to them, and caused massive civilian casualties. Therefore, protecting journalists, defending their rights, and promoting them is

one of the primary goals of the Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network, because failing to adhere to international standards for the protection of those working in the media field weakens the efforts of organizations defending them. This is what the Documentation and Monitoring Office in the network does by tracking violations in the Kurdish areas and presenting the facts and evidence to international organizations and public opinion, in order to change the policies, practices, and behaviors that foster violations by all parties. This is particularly relevant to areas where the network's members and their media colleagues are present—areas that are difficult for other human rights and media organizations to access and where journalistic work is severely restricted due to the differing identities of the controlling parties.

## **Conclusion**

The violations faced by journalists vary from murder and arbitrary detention to enforced disappearance, physical assaults, confiscation of equipment, fabricated charges, deliberate defamation, or restrictions on their work, even to the extent of threats of execution. In addition, there are laws imposed on them that limit their movement and basic rights, especially their right to freedom of opinion and expression, as local authorities attempt to narrow the space for press freedom and silence the voice of truth. Most of the arrest cases did not mention the primary reasons for such actions, nor were the arrested individuals presented before competent courts in accordance with fair trial standards. Therefore, when the Documentation and Monitoring Office in the network documents any case, it takes into account that the detention may be arbitrary, especially with the confirmation of the illegality of the evidence obtained and the significant doubt surrounding its credibility and authenticity. This is one of the points raised regarding the fact that, to date, neither the judiciary nor human rights organizations have been able to hold violators accountable, even in cases classified as severe. This highlights the urgent need for the establishment of an international criminal accountability mechanism as a top priority for the international community in conflict areas, in order to collect, unify, preserve, analyze evidence, and prepare files for all cases—even in areas beyond our presence and monitoring—while maintaining continuous contact with victims of violations, regardless of their scale. Accordingly, all international agreements have emphasized adherence to Article 19 of the International Covenant

on Civil and Political Rights, which protects everyone's freedom of opinion and expression, and that this right is a fundamental condition for the progress and development of a democratic society governed by the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is also recognized that free, independent, and unbiased journalism forms one of the core foundations of a democratic society. The agreements also stress the need for greater protection for all media workers and journalistic sources, and to ensure that national security claims, including counterterrorism efforts, are not used to unjustifiably or arbitrarily restrict freedom of opinion and expression. They also reaffirm commitment to international humanitarian law, which was restated in UN Security Council Resolution 1738 (2006) and the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 27/5, dated September 25, 2014, regarding the safety of journalists. Journalists and media professionals engaged in dangerous journalistic work in conflict zones are to be treated as civilians and respected and protected as such. There is also a specific reference to the risks faced by female journalists and media professionals, especially when reporting from conflict areas, and the emphasis on adopting a gender-sensitive approach when considering measures for journalists' safety. Furthermore, the Geneva Conventions dated August 12, 1949, and the Additional Protocols dated June 8, 1977, especially Article 79 of the Additional Protocol I, related to the protection of journalists performing dangerous journalistic tasks in armed conflict zones, are always cited.

All of the above are important excerpts from the international agreements on the safety and independence of journalists and other media professionals. Therefore, studying the impact of these laws on protecting journalists and media professionals in international and non-international armed conflicts is critical, as the situation for journalists in armed conflict remains somewhat unclear despite the clarity of legal provisions. We conclude by expressing our concern at the continued assaults by the various conflicting parties in Syria—even after the fall of the regime—who remain some of the largest perpetrators of violations and crimes against journalists. These actions hinder their ability to perform their work and violate their basic rights. All parties to the conflict must therefore halt practices such as enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, intimidation, and the punishment of journalists simply for rejecting content that does not align with their policies and objectives and exposes their transgressions and mistakes. The issue of impunity, which has



become widespread, must be addressed and boundaries must be set so that it applies to all without exception.

## **Syrian Kurdish Journalists Network (SKJN)**

### **Violations Documentation and Monitoring Office**

**Qamishlo, 25 January 2025**

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SYRIAN KURDISH JOURNALISTS NETWORK  
شبكة الصحفيين الكُرد السوريين  
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