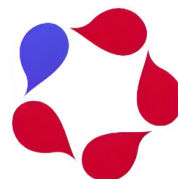


2024

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

Syria

Prepared By:



Washington Center
For Human Rights

Table of Content

Executive Summary.....	3
Methodology.....	4
Sources of Information.....	4
Interviews:.....	4
Document Analysis:.....	4
Verified Digital Content:.....	4
Secondary Data Analysis:.....	4
Data Collection Methods.....	4
Field Research:.....	4
Virtual Interviews:.....	5
Open-source Investigations:.....	5
Limitations and Challenges.....	5
Access Restrictions:.....	5
Verification Difficulties:.....	5
Safety of Interviewees:.....	5
Geopolitical Influences:.....	5
Human Rights Overview.....	7
Political Context.....	7
Economic Context.....	7
Social Context.....	7
Significant Events.....	7
• January 2024:.....	7
• February 2024:.....	8
Conclusion.....	8
Civil and Political Rights.....	10
Freedom of Expression and Assembly.....	10
Arbitrary Arrests and Enforced Disappearances.....	10
Torture and Ill-Treatment.....	10
Government Responses and International Implications.....	10
Overall Impact on the Population.....	11
Rights of Specific Groups.....	13
Women.....	13
Children.....	13
LGBTQ+ Individuals.....	13
Ethnic and Religious Minorities.....	14
Rights Violations and Legal Protections.....	14
Conclusion.....	14
Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.....	16
Economic Context.....	16
Right to Health.....	16
Right to Education.....	16

Right to Adequate Housing.....	16
Barriers and Improvements.....	17
Conclusion.....	17
Refugees and Migrants.....	19
Living Conditions and Access to Asylum Procedures.....	19
Instances of Exploitation and Abuse.....	19
International and Domestic Responses.....	19
Conclusion.....	20
Legal Framework and Accountability.....	22
Legal Framework and Recent Reforms.....	22
Role of the Judiciary.....	22
Accountability Mechanisms and Impunity.....	22
Examples of Justice and Injustice.....	22
Conclusion.....	23
International Relations and Human Rights.....	25
UN Involvement and Accountability Efforts.....	25
Arab League Readmission and Regional Relations.....	25
International Pressure and Sanctions.....	25
Impact on Domestic Human Rights.....	26
Conclusion.....	26
Recommendations.....	28
Recommendations to the Syrian Government.....	28
Recommendations to International Bodies.....	28
Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations.....	29
Conclusion.....	30
Appendices.....	31
Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues.....	31
Documented Violations.....	31
January 2024 Report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR):.....	31
UN Human Rights Council Observations:.....	31
Impact on Specific Groups.....	31
Women and Girls:.....	31
Children with Disabilities:.....	31
International Accountability.....	31
Legal Actions:.....	31
Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms.....	31
Arbitrary Detention:.....	32
Torture:.....	32
Transitional Justice:.....	32
Universal Jurisdiction:.....	32

Executive Summary

The human rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains critically dire, with severe violations and systemic failures worsening the humanitarian crisis. The Syrian government continues to engage in egregious human rights abuses, including widespread arbitrary detention and systematic torture. Despite international condemnation, these practices persist, subjecting thousands to inhumane conditions, with many still missing. This blatant disregard for human dignity and legal norms highlights the impunity within the regime. Civilians bear the brunt of the conflict, enduring indiscriminate attacks by government forces and armed groups. Targeting of civilian areas, including residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, and schools, reflects a troubling pattern of disregard for international humanitarian law. The ongoing military campaigns in Idlib and Aleppo feature severe breaches of international law, with the use of prohibited weapons and deliberate attacks on essential infrastructure contributing to immense civilian suffering and displacement. Syrians returning from abroad also face grave risks, including arbitrary detention and torture, revealing a broader systemic failure to protect returnees' rights and uphold the rule of law.

Although some international legal efforts have made progress, such as initiatives aimed at clarifying the fate of missing persons and increasing accountability for war crimes, overall advancement remains limited. The peace process is largely stalled, and humanitarian aid access is obstructed, particularly in areas under heavy conflict. Additionally, the lack of effective governance in opposition-held regions raises ongoing concerns about human rights protections and the impact of international interventions. Recommendations for the Syrian government include ending all forms of torture, arbitrary detention, and civilian attacks, while adhering to international humanitarian law. The government must also lift restrictions on humanitarian aid, allowing organisations to deliver assistance freely in conflict-affected areas. International bodies must enhance accountability measures by supporting robust legal proceedings to address impunity and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches affected populations. Civil society organisations must continue documenting abuses, advocating for displaced and returning individuals, and collaborating with international bodies to strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Addressing Syria's human rights abuses requires a coordinated response from national and international actors, with a collective commitment to justice and humanitarian principles.

Methodology

The methodology employed in compiling human rights reports on Syria involves a complex and often perilous approach. Given the volatile environment, the data collection strategies integrate multiple methods to address the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict and government restrictions.

Sources of Information

Interviews:

A crucial method is conducting interviews with individuals who have direct experiences of human rights violations in Syria. For instance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry conducted 447 interviews in the first half of 2023, employing both in-person and remote methods. These interviews provide essential personal testimonies and insights into the nature and scope of human rights abuses [1].

Document Analysis:

Researchers also rely on analysing various documents, including reports from local NGOs, governmental records, and international organisations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) utilises a desk review approach, examining project reports, legal notes, and other relevant documents to supplement their findings [2].

Verified Digital Content:

Digital content verification is pivotal. Organisations such as the Syrian Archive leverage user-generated content from social media and other online platforms, using open-source tools to validate the authenticity of visual evidence related to incidents of violence and human rights abuses [3].

Secondary Data Analysis:

This includes synthesising existing datasets and reports. For instance, the Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) aggregates reported killings and uses statistical methods to estimate total fatalities in the conflict, offering critical quantitative insights [4].

Data Collection Methods

The methodology involves a mixed-methods approach:

Field Research:

Although direct access to conflict zones is severely restricted, some organisations manage to perform field research through local contacts and remote means. This involves gathering testimonies from victims and witnesses who are often in precarious conditions.

Virtual Interviews:

Given the dangers associated with on-the-ground data collection, virtual interviews have become increasingly important. They allow researchers to collect testimonies while minimising risks to both interviewees and researchers].

Open-source Investigations:

Researchers use open-source tools to conduct investigations based on publicly available information. This method is crucial in a context where traditional reporting channels are often blocked or unsafe [2][4].

Limitations and Challenges

Several significant challenges impact the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data collected:

Access Restrictions:

The ongoing conflict and Syrian government's restrictive policies hinder direct data collection from affected areas. Researchers often work under the threat of violence, limiting their ability to conduct comprehensive field investigations.

Verification Difficulties:

The reliance on digital content and local testimonies raises concerns about information authenticity. Rigorous verification processes are essential but challenging, as ensuring the credibility of sources is an ongoing struggle..

Safety of Interviewees:

Protecting interviewees' identities is crucial to prevent reprisals. This necessity often results in incomplete data, as sensitive information must be redacted to safeguard individuals' safety.

Geopolitical Influences:

The geopolitical context complicates data interpretation, as various actors may have interests that shape or distort the narratives surrounding human rights violations. This factor further complicates objective reporting and analysis.

In summary, while the methodology for collecting human rights data on Syria is thorough and adaptive, it faces considerable obstacles. The ongoing conflict, restrictive policies, and safety concerns significantly challenge the accuracy and depth of human rights reporting. Despite these challenges, the combined efforts of interviews, document analysis, digital verification, and secondary data analysis strive to provide a comprehensive understanding of the human rights situation in Syria.

Citations:

1.
<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-may-2023>
2.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
3.
<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/6611-syria-we-spread-the-culture-of-human-rights-in-a-country-with-one-of-the-worlds-worst-human-rights-records>
4.
<https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/hrc57-key-issues-on-the-agenda-of-the-september-2024-session/>

Human Rights Overview

In 2024, the human rights situation in Syria continued to be alarmingly severe, marked by pervasive abuses and violations committed by the government, various armed groups, and de facto authorities throughout the country [1][4]. The intersection of ongoing political conflicts, economic decline, and social unrest has compounded the human rights crisis, leading to a deteriorating environment for civilians.

Political Context

The Assad regime remains firmly entrenched in power as of 2024, despite persistent internal and external conflicts. The government has maintained its authoritarian grip through brutal tactics, including widespread arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances. These actions are especially targeted at those perceived as dissenters or threats to the regime's stability [1][2]. In response to these abuses, the UN General Assembly has established an international institution aimed at clarifying the fate of the missing and providing reparations to victims' families, though this has yet to translate into substantial changes on the ground [5].

Economic Context

The economic landscape in Syria has continued to deteriorate, with the Syrian Pound (SYP) experiencing a severe devaluation against the US Dollar throughout 2024. This economic instability has led to sharp increases in the prices of basic goods and services, exacerbating the already dire living conditions for the average citizen [1][2]. The government's practices of property confiscation and control, justified by a framework of restrictive laws, further aggravate the economic hardships faced by the population [1][2].

Social Context

Socially, Syria remains in a state of deep crisis. The continuous conflict has led to gross human rights violations including arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, and enforced disappearances. Vulnerable groups, particularly women returnees, face heightened risks of abuse [4]. The government's policies have severely restricted access to essential services for residents and internally displaced persons in the north-western regions, violating their economic and social rights [5].

Significant Events

Several significant events in 2024 have further influenced the human rights landscape:

- **January 2024:**

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported at least 37 attacks on vital civilian infrastructure by regime forces, including the use of incendiary weapons. This period also saw the continuation of restrictive and punitive measures against civilians in government-controlled areas, particularly targeting political dissenters [2].

- **February 2024:**

The UN Human Rights Office released a comprehensive report on the abuses faced by Syrian returnees. This report underscored the violation of international principles such as due process and non-refoulement, emphasising the need to protect returnees from violence and abuse [4].

Conclusion

The human rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains critical, with ongoing abuses that reflect deep-seated systemic issues within the country's political, economic, and social frameworks. Despite international efforts to address the plight of missing persons and advocate for human rights, the Assad regime's policies continue to perpetuate a cycle of violence and repression. The continued deterioration in living conditions and the lack of effective legal recourse highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and sustained international intervention.

Citations:

- [1] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/syria/our-presence>
- [4] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
- [5] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [6] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>
- [7] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/04/delusion-once-again-safe-zone-syria>
- [8] <https://syriaaccountability.org/human-rights-violations-in-syria-june-2024/>

Civil and Political Rights

The civil and political rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains deeply troubling, characterized by extensive repression, arbitrary arrests, and pervasive torture. The government's ongoing authoritarian measures, coupled with the country's dire economic and social conditions, have exacerbated the erosion of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

In 2024, freedom of expression and assembly in Syria continued to be severely restricted. The Assad regime's policies maintain a stringent control over political dissent, with any form of opposition being met with harsh retaliation. Reports consistently highlight that individuals expressing dissenting views are at risk of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, particularly in cities like Damascus and Homs [2][3][5].

A notable incident occurred in late August 2023, when large-scale protests erupted in Sweida due to worsening economic conditions. These protests were the most significant in government-controlled areas since 2011. While the regime avoided lethal force against demonstrators—an apparent deviation from its past practices—the repression of political expression and assembly remains stringent and unyielding [3].

Arbitrary Arrests and Enforced Disappearances

Arbitrary arrests are a cornerstone of the Syrian regime's approach to managing dissent. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported numerous arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances in February 2024, with the highest incidences in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Those detained often face severe torture and ill-treatment [5][6]. For instance, in January 2024, SNHR documented at least five deaths resulting from torture in custody, underscoring the brutal conditions in detention facilities [5][6]. Additionally, the government has used legal pretexts to justify property confiscations, further infringing on citizens' rights [5][6].

Torture and Ill-Treatment

Despite a 2022 law aimed at criminalizing torture, such practices remain rampant. Reports from the UN Commission of Inquiry describe widespread torture and severe mistreatment of detainees, with many suffering both physical and psychological harm [3][4]. The regime's security forces operate with impunity, and deaths in detention are frequently reported, yet the government's response to international criticism remains dismissive and unaccountable [2][3].

Government Responses and International Implications

In response to mounting international scrutiny, the Syrian government has made superficial legal changes, such as the abolition of military field courts notorious for lacking due process. However, this move raises concerns about the potential erasure of court records related to

enforced disappearances, complicating efforts to achieve justice for victims and their families [3][4].

International bodies, including the UN General Assembly, have attempted to address these issues by establishing mechanisms to clarify the fate of missing persons and provide reparations. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these measures is undermined by the regime's entrenched power and the ongoing conflict [4][5].

Overall Impact on the Population

The persistent violations of civil and political rights have significantly impacted the Syrian population. The ongoing humanitarian crisis is compounded by economic decline, with millions of Syrians reliant on humanitarian aid and suffering from the government's restrictive policies that limit access to essential services [4][6]. The pervasive fear and repression discourage any form of dissent, leaving the population in a state of ongoing despair.

In conclusion, Syria's civil and political rights situation in 2024 is marked by severe repression and systemic abuse. The government's responses to dissent and international criticism have been inadequate, perpetuating a cycle of human rights violations and deepening the suffering of the Syrian populace.

Citations:

- [1] https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International_Submissions/A/Index?id=500
- [2] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria>
- [3] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [4] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [5] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [6] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [7] <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

Rights of Specific Groups

The human rights landscape in Syria in 2024 reveals a harrowing situation for vulnerable groups, including women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities. Despite ongoing conflict and oppressive government measures, there has been little progress in improving their conditions, with systemic abuses and a lack of legal protections remaining widespread.

Women

In 2024, women in Syria faced severe violations of their rights, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and government repression. Female returnees are particularly vulnerable, often encountering arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual violence upon their return. The UN Human Rights Office has reported that women, especially those returning from abroad, are at heightened risk of gender-based violence and face significant restrictions on their freedom of movement imposed by male relatives [4].

For example, reports indicate that women attempting to flee the country have been subjected to harassment and extortion. A notable case involved a returnee who was detained and coerced into paying a bribe for her release [4]. These abuses reflect broader systemic discrimination against women in Syria, where discriminatory practices are pervasive and unaddressed.

Children

Children in Syria continue to suffer from the dire consequences of the ongoing conflict. In February 2024, seven children were reported killed, highlighting the perilous conditions faced by young Syrians [1]. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools, which disrupt education and endanger lives [3].

Additionally, the economic crisis has exacerbated child exploitation, with increased instances of child labour reported as families struggle to cope with rising inflation and deteriorating living conditions [2]. The lack of access to essential services further impedes the development and safety of children in the region.

LGBTQ+ Individuals

The plight of LGBTQ+ individuals in Syria remains critical. Homosexuality is criminalised, and LGBTQ+ individuals face severe **discrimination, harassment, and violence**. Societal stigma, coupled with legal penalties, forces many LGBTQ+ individuals into hiding, leading to significant mental health issues and social isolation [2].

There are no effective legal protections for LGBTQ+ rights, and the ongoing conflict exacerbates their vulnerability. LGBTQ+ individuals are often targeted by both state and non-state actors, with little recourse for justice or protection [2]. The absence of a supportive legal framework further entrenches their marginalisation and risks their safety.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Ethnic and religious minorities, including Kurds and Druze, face significant challenges and discrimination. The Syrian government has been accused of discrimination and suppression against these groups. For example, tensions in the Golan Heights have been exacerbated by violent responses to protests by the Druze community, reflecting ongoing regional conflicts and marginalisation [2].

Government policies often marginalised these minorities, denying them access to essential services and economic opportunities. The protracted conflict has further displaced these groups, increasing their vulnerability and exacerbating their hardships [5].

Rights Violations and Legal Protections

Throughout 2024, the Syrian government has continued to violate human rights extensively. Reports detail enforced disappearances, torture, and unlawful killings [1]. In February alone, 78 civilians were reported killed, with many of these abuses committed by regime forces [1]. These violations occur within a legal framework that offers scant protection, as the government persists in its suppression of dissent and restriction of freedoms [2].

Despite some international efforts to address these issues, such as the establishment of an international institution to investigate missing persons and provide reparations, the effectiveness of these measures is questionable. The regime's disregard for international calls for accountability undermines the potential impact of such initiatives [2][4].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the human rights conditions for women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities in Syria during 2024 are marked by severe violations and inadequate legal protections. The ongoing conflict and government repression have created an environment where these groups continue to face significant abuse and discrimination. The international community's efforts, while important, have so far been insufficient in addressing the full scope of these human rights challenges.

Citations:

- [1] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [2] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [3] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [4] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
- [5] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [6] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/syria-mass-unlawful-asset-freezes>
- [7] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>
- [8] <https://syriaaccountability.org/human-rights-violations-in-syria-june-2024/>

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The state of economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria in 2024 is profoundly dire. The ongoing conflict, economic collapse, and government-imposed barriers have severely compromised the rights to health, education, and adequate housing. This examination highlights the critical issues facing the population and the impediments to accessing these fundamental rights.

Economic Context

The economic crisis in Syria remains catastrophic. As of 2024, over 90% of the population lives below the poverty line, a result of the Syrian pound's dramatic devaluation and the collapse of essential sectors such as trade, agriculture, and manufacturing [1][2]. This economic deterioration has directly impacted the availability and quality of essential services, including healthcare, education, and housing. The World Bank's reports underline the extensive damage to Syria's economic infrastructure, which has worsened the humanitarian crisis [1].

Right to Health

The right to health in Syria is severely undermined. Access to healthcare is notably restricted, particularly in areas controlled by the Syrian government. Humanitarian aid is often diverted or restricted, leading to significant barriers for those in need. According to the UN, more than 12 million people lack access to sufficient quality food, and over 600,000 children suffer from chronic malnutrition [2]. The healthcare infrastructure is in ruins, with many facilities either destroyed or operating under severe constraints. The government's control over humanitarian aid exacerbates the situation, particularly for dissenters who are systematically denied medical assistance [2].

Right to Education

The educational system in Syria faces severe disruption. The ongoing conflict has led to widespread educational deprivation, with many children unable to attend school. The Humanitarian Needs Assessment reveals that children with disabilities are disproportionately affected, with over 60% of school-age children with intellectual or physical disabilities never having received an education [2]. Economic hardships further compound the issue, as families struggle to afford school-related expenses, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting future opportunities for many children [2].

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing conditions in Syria are critical. The destruction of civilian infrastructure has left many people without safe and stable housing. The UN reports that government restrictions on aid have worsened the situation for displaced populations, who often live in inadequate shelters [3]. The lack of access to adequate housing affects especially vulnerable groups,

including female-headed households and those with disabilities, who face additional barriers in finding safe living conditions [3].

Barriers and Improvements

Several barriers impede the realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria. These include the ongoing conflict, economic sanctions, and restrictive government policies on humanitarian aid. Despite these challenges, there are some signs of potential improvement. Limited resumption of aid deliveries through specific border crossings offers a glimmer of hope for addressing immediate humanitarian needs [2]. Additionally, the Arab League's involvement with Syria may provide opportunities for economic recovery and support, contingent on the regime's cooperation on critical issues such as refugee returns and drug trafficking [1].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the situation for economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria remains bleak in 2024. The ongoing conflict, economic collapse, and systemic barriers continue to undermine the rights to health, education, and housing. While there are some indications of potential improvement, such as the limited resumption of aid and international engagement, these efforts are insufficient to address the full scope of the crisis. Urgent international attention and support are needed to help Syrians reclaim their fundamental rights and improve their living conditions.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/networked-authoritarianism-and-economic-resilience-in-syria/>
- [2] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [3] <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2024/07/examen-de-la-syrie-devant-le-comite-des-droits-de-lhomme-les>
- [4] <https://www.actwithus.org/2024-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-conference-program/>
- [5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Covenant_on_Economic,_Social_and_Cultural_Rights
- [6] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr>
- [7] <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/syrian-arab-republic-crisis-response-plan-2024>
- [8] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-concludes-consideration-syrian>

Refugees and Migrants

The situation of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Syria during 2024 is marked by significant hardships, exacerbated by ongoing conflict, natural disasters, and systemic exploitation. This report outlines the living conditions, access to asylum procedures, and instances of exploitation faced by these groups, as well as international and domestic responses.

Living Conditions and Access to Asylum Procedures

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria face extremely challenging living conditions. Over 14 million Syrians have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict, with 7.2 million remaining within the country and 5.6 million seeking refuge abroad [1][4]. The economic collapse, compounded by the February 2023 earthquakes, has left many in dire straits.

In neighbouring countries, Syrian refugees are also struggling. In Jordan, more than 90% of Syrian refugees depend on humanitarian aid for their basic needs [1]. Similarly, in Türkiye, 90% of refugees report being unable to meet their monthly expenses [1][2]. Most refugees live in urban areas rather than camps, leading to difficulties in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and stable employment.

Access to asylum procedures is marred by barriers. For instance, in Jordan, the refugee response system is criticised for its discriminatory nature, favoring Syrian refugees over other displaced groups like Palestinian refugees or migrant workers from other countries. This has resulted in unequal aid distribution and a tiered system of support [2].

Instances of Exploitation and Abuse

Exploitation of refugees and migrant workers is widespread. Many face unsafe working conditions and low wages. For example, Syrian farm workers in Jordan are reported to endure dangerous commutes in overcrowded vehicles, which have resulted in fatalities [2]. Economic hardships have also exacerbated vulnerabilities, leading to increased instances of child labor, gender-based violence, and other forms of exploitation [1][3].

Refugees and migrant workers often work in sectors with minimal regulation and oversight, making them particularly susceptible to abuse and exploitation. The precarious nature of their employment leaves them with little recourse to address grievances or seek justice [3].

International and Domestic Responses

International responses to the refugee crisis have been mixed. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called for increased support for early recovery activities and addressing the fears that prevent refugees from returning home safely. Despite these calls, many refugees lack confidence in the Syrian government and fear persecution, complicating repatriation efforts [4].

Organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are actively working to address the needs of refugees through various programs. These include cash assistance and vocational training aimed at enhancing self-reliance among refugees and host communities [3][5]. However, these efforts are often hindered by insufficient funding and political constraints, limiting their effectiveness.

Domestic responses are often inadequate, with governments in host countries facing their own challenges in managing the influx of refugees and asylum seekers. Discriminatory practices and uneven distribution of aid further exacerbate the plight of these displaced populations [2].

Conclusion

The situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Syria in 2024 highlights a severe humanitarian crisis. The ongoing conflict, economic instability, and systemic barriers to accessing essential services have created a landscape of extreme hardship and exploitation. International and domestic responses have been insufficient to fully address the needs and rights of these vulnerable groups. Urgent and comprehensive action is required to improve their living conditions and ensure equitable treatment and protection.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>
- [2] <https://merip.org/2024/03/jordans-syrian-refugee-response-and-discriminatory-development-aid/>
- [3] <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/syria-regional-refugee-and-resilience-response-plan-2024>
- [4] <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15713.doc.htm>
- [5] <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>
- [6] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
- [7] <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-2/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>
- [8] <https://open.unicef.org/sites/transparency/files/2024-05/Syrian%20Refugees%20CER%202023.pdf>

Legal Framework and Accountability

In 2024, Syria's legal framework and accountability mechanisms for human rights remain severely compromised, characterised by a culture of impunity and ineffective judicial processes. Despite some incremental changes, the Syrian government's actions and the broader international response reveal deep systemic failures in addressing human rights violations.

Legal Framework and Recent Reforms

The Syrian legal landscape has seen minimal changes that would improve human rights protections. The abolition of military field courts in September 2023 was a notable development, aimed at ending summary trials and executions without due process. However, this move has been criticised as potentially masking evidence related to enforced disappearances, which complicates efforts to hold perpetrators accountable [4]. Additionally, although a law criminalizing torture was enacted in March 2022, reports indicate that torture and ill-treatment continue unabated in detention facilities, highlighting a significant gap between legal provisions and actual practices [4].

Role of the Judiciary

The judiciary in Syria is widely perceived as an instrument of the regime rather than an independent entity capable of delivering justice. The lack of judicial independence results in a failure to prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses effectively. For example, while international efforts such as the upcoming trial in France of three senior Syrian security officials for war crimes are underway, these efforts are external to the Syrian legal system and underscore its inadequacies [1][4]. Within Syria, the judicial system remains largely ineffective in addressing violations committed by government forces, contributing to a pervasive atmosphere of impunity.

Accountability Mechanisms and Impunity

Impunity for human rights violations remains a critical issue in Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported numerous abuses in early 2024, including killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, primarily perpetrated by government forces [2][5]. The regime's control over security forces and the legal framework allows for widespread abuses without fear of repercussions. For instance, in January 2024 alone, SNHR documented 72 civilian deaths due to torture, largely attributed to regime forces [5].

On the international stage, the establishment of an independent institution by the UN to address the fates of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Syria is a positive step. However, the effectiveness of such initiatives is often undermined by the Syrian government's refusal to cooperate and the ongoing conflict [1][3].

Examples of Justice and Injustice

International efforts to address human rights violations have seen some success, though they remain limited. The trial in France of Syrian officials for their roles in war crimes is a significant development, but such cases are rare [1]. Most human rights abuses within Syria go unpunished, with regime forces continuing to carry out unlawful attacks and repress dissent without legal consequences [2][4].

In contrast, mechanisms like the International Criminal Court and national courts in Europe have begun prosecuting individuals involved in the Syrian conflict. These efforts face considerable challenges, including the Syrian government's lack of cooperation and the difficulties of collecting evidence in an active conflict zone [1][4].

Conclusion

The legal framework and accountability mechanisms for human rights in Syria in 2024 remain grossly inadequate. The lack of meaningful reforms, combined with a judiciary that operates under regime influence, perpetuates a cycle of impunity for human rights violations. Although international efforts to prosecute perpetrators and address violations are emerging, they are insufficient compared to the scale of abuses occurring within Syria. There is an urgent need for a concerted international effort to bolster accountability mechanisms and press the Syrian government to uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/syria/our-presence>
- [4] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [5] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [6] <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>
- [7] <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/ohchr/2024/en/147588>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

International Relations and Human Rights

In 2024, Syria's international relations were markedly influenced by its persistent human rights violations and its interactions with various global and regional bodies. The ongoing humanitarian crisis and the Syrian government's controversial policies have shaped its relationships with international organisations and influenced global responses to its human rights record.

UN Involvement and Accountability Efforts

The United Nations has continued to play a crucial role in addressing the Syrian human rights crisis, though its efforts have met with limited success. The UN-led peace process, including the work of the constitutional committee, failed to produce meaningful results in 2023 [1]. The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has reiterated that Syria remains unsafe for the return of refugees due to the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses [2]. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) has continued to document severe human rights violations, including new cases of torture and ill-treatment in detention [1].

A significant development was the joint case filed by Canada and the Netherlands at the International Court of Justice against Syria for widespread and systematic torture [1]. This legal action represents a notable effort to hold the Syrian government accountable on the international stage. Additionally, the UN established a new mechanism to address the fates of over 100,000 missing persons in Syria, marking a critical step towards accountability [1].

Arab League Readmission and Regional Relations

In a move seen as a normalisation of relations, the Arab League readmitted Syria in 2023 [1]. This decision was controversial, as it was perceived to benefit the Assad regime and regional capitals rather than addressing the needs of ordinary Syrians or holding the regime accountable [4]. Iran and Russia have also been active in attempting to mediate between Syria and Turkey, another key regional player [4]. Despite these efforts, the impact of such regional diplomacy on Syria's human rights situation has been minimal, with ongoing abuses persisting.

International Pressure and Sanctions

International pressure on Syria remains substantial, though its impact is somewhat constrained. The US, European Union, and the United Kingdom have continued to impose sanctions on individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses or linked to the Syrian government and ISIS [1]. In a related move, the US reinstated Turkey to its list of countries implicated in using child soldiers due to its support for certain factions within the Syrian National Army accused of child recruitment [1].

Military actions by Israel, including aerial strikes targeting Iranian and Hezbollah positions in Syria, have also affected the conflict dynamics, leading to temporary disruptions in services

and infrastructure in cities like Aleppo and Damascus [1]. However, these actions have had limited direct impact on improving human rights conditions within Syria.

Impact on Domestic Human Rights

Despite these international efforts, the domestic human rights situation in Syria remains dire. Civilians, particularly in opposition-held areas, continue to face indiscriminate attacks by Syrian and Russian forces, arbitrary detention, and torture [1][2]. Reports from the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) indicate that in early 2024, there were numerous documented abuses, including the killing of 78 civilians and attacks on vital civilian facilities [2][3].

The repressive environment extends to marginalized groups, with individuals with disabilities, men, boys, transgender women, and nonbinary people facing severe challenges, including sexual violence [1]. The impact of international sanctions and diplomatic pressure has yet to translate into significant improvements in the human rights situation within the country.

Conclusion

Syria's international relations in 2024 have been heavily influenced by its human rights record and the responses of global and regional actors. While there have been notable international efforts to address human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable, such as legal actions and sanctions, the overall impact on the domestic human rights situation remains limited. The readmission of Syria to the Arab League and ongoing regional diplomacy have not significantly improved the plight of ordinary Syrians. The dire human rights conditions persist, underscoring the need for continued and enhanced international pressure and support for accountability mechanisms.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [4] <https://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria>
- [5] <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-09/syria-71.php>
- [6] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [7] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/syria-mass-unlawful-asset-freezes>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

Recommendations

The human rights situation in Syria remains dire, characterised by ongoing violations perpetrated by the government and various armed groups. Based on the findings from early 2024, the following recommendations are directed towards the Syrian government, international bodies, and civil society organisations to improve the human rights landscape in the country.

Recommendations to the Syrian Government

1. **End Arbitrary Detentions and Torture:** The Syrian government must immediately cease arbitrary arrests and torture of detainees, particularly those expressing political dissent. Establishing independent monitoring mechanisms within detention facilities can help ensure accountability.
2. **Respect for Civilian Life:** An immediate halt to indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, including schools and places of worship, is essential. The government should adhere to international humanitarian law and protect civilian infrastructure from military actions.
3. **Guarantee Safe Returns for Refugees:** The government should implement policies that ensure the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees. This includes providing guarantees against arbitrary detention and ensuring that returnees are not subjected to violence or discrimination.
4. **Transparency in Aid Distribution:** The government must allow independent oversight of humanitarian aid distribution to prevent the misuse of funds and ensure that aid reaches those in need without political strings attached.
5. **Legal Reforms:** Introduce legal reforms that align with international human rights standards, particularly regarding freedom of expression and assembly. This includes abolishing laws that criminalise dissent.

Recommendations to International Bodies

1. **Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:** International bodies, including the UN, should enhance mechanisms for accountability for human rights violations in Syria. This could involve establishing a special tribunal for serious crimes committed during the conflict.
2. **Increase Humanitarian Access:** Advocate for unhindered access for humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria, ensuring that aid reaches vulnerable populations without interference from government forces.
3. **Support for Civil Society:** Provide technical and financial support to Syrian civil society organisations working on human rights issues. This includes capacity-building initiatives to enhance their ability to document violations and advocate for change.

4. **Monitor Refugee Returns:** International organisations should closely monitor the conditions of returnees to Syria, ensuring that their rights are protected and that they are not subjected to abuses upon their return.
5. **Impose Targeted Sanctions:** Consider imposing targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for egregious human rights violations, thereby pressuring the government to change its behaviour.

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. **Document Violations:** Civil society organisations should continue to document human rights abuses systematically, focusing on testimonies from victims and witnesses to provide credible evidence for advocacy efforts.
2. **Raise Awareness:** Engage in awareness-raising campaigns both locally and internationally to highlight the ongoing human rights violations in Syria. This can mobilise public opinion and pressure governments to take action.
3. **Build Coalitions:** Form coalitions with other human rights organisations to strengthen advocacy efforts and share resources for more effective campaigning against human rights abuses.
4. **Engage with the International Community:** Actively engage with international bodies and human rights mechanisms to ensure that the situation in Syria remains a priority on the global agenda.
5. **Empower Victims:** Provide platforms for victims of human rights abuses to share their stories, ensuring their voices are heard in the discourse surrounding human rights in Syria.

By implementing these recommendations, there is potential for significant progress in addressing the rampant human rights violations in Syria, fostering a safer and more just environment for all citizens.

Conclusion

The human rights landscape in Syria in 2024 is marked by a grim continuity of severe abuses across all fronts. The Syrian government and its allies persist in their brutal campaigns against civilians, marked by unlawful attacks that result in civilian deaths and the destruction of essential infrastructure. These actions not only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis but also represent blatant violations of international law.

Simultaneously, Türkiye-backed armed groups have been implicated in unlawful killings of civilians, compounding the suffering. Both the government and these armed groups have systematically obstructed humanitarian aid, deepening the crisis for those in need. The situation is particularly dire for returnees, who face a harrowing mix of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, and sexual violence. Women, in particular, endure severe restrictions on their liberties and are sometimes forcibly returned to Syria by male family members.

In Aleppo, the government's disregard for the right to housing has left residents of earthquake-affected areas in dire straits, with little to no recourse for reparations or rebuilding efforts. Despite the establishment of an international institution by the UN General Assembly aimed at addressing the plight of missing persons and providing reparations, the Syrian government continues to obstruct access to essential services for residents and internally displaced persons in the northwest.

Refugees also face a precarious situation, with the risk of arrest upon return to Syria remaining a significant concern. The complex and multifaceted nature of the crisis underscores the urgent need for continued international vigilance and intervention.

In conclusion, the international community must not waver in its commitment to addressing Syria's dire human rights situation. Ongoing monitoring, comprehensive reporting of abuses, and holding perpetrators accountable are imperative. It is essential to exert pressure on all parties involved to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights standards, ensure unhindered humanitarian access, and take concrete actions towards improving the human rights landscape in Syria. The pursuit of justice and reparations for victims remains a critical component of any meaningful resolution to this protracted crisis.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues

Documented Violations

January 2024 Report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR):

- **Civilian Deaths:** 72 reported, including:
- **Children:** 18
- **Women:** 10
- **Deaths Due to Torture:** 5
- **Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:** 37 attacks reported, with:
- **Attribution to Syrian Regime Forces:** 29 attacks

UN Human Rights Council Observations:

- **Arbitrary Detentions:** Ongoing issues with unlawful detentions by Syrian security forces.
- **Unlawful Confiscation of Property:** Noted in government-held areas, impacting residents' rights and security.

Impact on Specific Groups

Women and Girls:

- **Discrimination and Violence:** Severe challenges in accessing healthcare and rising incidents of forced marriages reported.

Children with Disabilities:

- **Educational Access:** Over 60% of school-age children with disabilities have never attended school.

International Accountability

Legal Actions:

International Court of Justice Proceedings:

Canada and the Netherlands initiated proceedings against Syria for alleged violations of the Convention against Torture.

Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

Arbitrary Detention:

- **Definition:** The arrest or confinement of individuals without legal justification or due process.

Torture:

- **Definition:** The act of inflicting severe pain or suffering on an individual, often to extract information or punish.

Transitional Justice:

- **Definition:** A framework for addressing past human rights violations, often involving accountability measures and reparations.

Universal Jurisdiction:

- **Definition:** The principle that allows national courts to prosecute individuals for serious crimes against international law, regardless of where the crime was committed.

Executive Summary

The human rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains critically dire, with severe violations and systemic failures worsening the humanitarian crisis. The Syrian government continues to engage in egregious human rights abuses, including widespread arbitrary detention and systematic torture. Despite international condemnation, these practices persist, subjecting thousands to inhumane conditions, with many still missing. This blatant disregard for human dignity and legal norms highlights the impunity within the regime. Civilians bear the brunt of the conflict, enduring indiscriminate attacks by government forces and armed groups. Targeting of civilian areas, including residential neighbourhoods, hospitals, and schools, reflects a troubling pattern of disregard for international humanitarian law. The ongoing military campaigns in Idlib and Aleppo feature severe breaches of international law, with the use of prohibited weapons and deliberate attacks on essential infrastructure contributing to immense civilian suffering and displacement. Syrians returning from abroad also face grave risks, including arbitrary detention and torture, revealing a broader systemic failure to protect returnees' rights and uphold the rule of law.

Although some international legal efforts have made progress, such as initiatives aimed at clarifying the fate of missing persons and increasing accountability for war crimes, overall advancement remains limited. The peace process is largely stalled, and humanitarian aid access is obstructed, particularly in areas under heavy conflict. Additionally, the lack of effective governance in opposition-held regions raises ongoing concerns about human rights protections and the impact of international interventions. Recommendations for the Syrian government include ending all forms of torture, arbitrary detention, and civilian attacks, while adhering to international humanitarian law. The government must also lift restrictions on humanitarian aid, allowing organisations to deliver assistance freely in conflict-affected areas. International bodies must enhance accountability measures by supporting robust legal proceedings to address impunity and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches affected populations. Civil society organisations must continue documenting abuses, advocating for displaced and returning individuals, and collaborating with international bodies to strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Addressing Syria's human rights abuses requires a coordinated response from national and international actors, with a collective commitment to justice and humanitarian principles.

Methodology

The methodology employed in compiling human rights reports on Syria involves a complex and often perilous approach. Given the volatile environment, the data collection strategies integrate multiple methods to address the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict and government restrictions.

Sources of Information

Interviews:

A crucial method is conducting interviews with individuals who have direct experiences of human rights violations in Syria. For instance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry conducted 447 interviews in the first half of 2023, employing both in-person and remote methods. These interviews provide essential personal testimonies and insights into the nature and scope of human rights abuses [1].

Document Analysis:

Researchers also rely on analysing various documents, including reports from local NGOs, governmental records, and international organisations. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) utilises a desk review approach, examining project reports, legal notes, and other relevant documents to supplement their findings [2].

Verified Digital Content:

Digital content verification is pivotal. Organisations such as the Syrian Archive leverage user-generated content from social media and other online platforms, using open-source tools to validate the authenticity of visual evidence related to incidents of violence and human rights abuses [3].

Secondary Data Analysis:

This includes synthesising existing datasets and reports. For instance, the Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG) aggregates reported killings and uses statistical methods to estimate total fatalities in the conflict, offering critical quantitative insights [4].

Data Collection Methods

The methodology involves a mixed-methods approach:

Field Research:

Although direct access to conflict zones is severely restricted, some organisations manage to perform field research through local contacts and remote means. This involves gathering testimonies from victims and witnesses who are often in precarious conditions.

Virtual Interviews:

Given the dangers associated with on-the-ground data collection, virtual interviews have become increasingly important. They allow researchers to collect testimonies while minimising risks to both interviewees and researchers].

Open-source Investigations:

Researchers use open-source tools to conduct investigations based on publicly available information. This method is crucial in a context where traditional reporting channels are often blocked or unsafe [2][4].

Limitations and Challenges

Several significant challenges impact the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data collected:

Access Restrictions:

The ongoing conflict and Syrian government's restrictive policies hinder direct data collection from affected areas. Researchers often work under the threat of violence, limiting their ability to conduct comprehensive field investigations.

Verification Difficulties:

The reliance on digital content and local testimonies raises concerns about information authenticity. Rigorous verification processes are essential but challenging, as ensuring the credibility of sources is an ongoing struggle..

Safety of Interviewees:

Protecting interviewees' identities is crucial to prevent reprisals. This necessity often results in incomplete data, as sensitive information must be redacted to safeguard individuals' safety.

Geopolitical Influences:

The geopolitical context complicates data interpretation, as various actors may have interests that shape or distort the narratives surrounding human rights violations. This factor further complicates objective reporting and analysis.

In summary, while the methodology for collecting human rights data on Syria is thorough and adaptive, it faces considerable obstacles. The ongoing conflict, restrictive policies, and safety concerns significantly challenge the accuracy and depth of human rights reporting. Despite these challenges, the combined efforts of interviews, document analysis, digital verification, and secondary data analysis strive to provide a comprehensive understanding of the human rights situation in Syria.

Citations:

1.
<https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-may-2023>
2.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
3.
<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/6611-syria-we-spread-the-culture-of-human-rights-in-a-country-with-one-of-the-worlds-worst-human-rights-records>
4.
<https://ishr.ch/latest-updates/hrc57-key-issues-on-the-agenda-of-the-september-2024-session/>

Human Rights Overview

In 2024, the human rights situation in Syria continued to be alarmingly severe, marked by pervasive abuses and violations committed by the government, various armed groups, and de facto authorities throughout the country [1][4]. The intersection of ongoing political conflicts, economic decline, and social unrest has compounded the human rights crisis, leading to a deteriorating environment for civilians.

Political Context

The Assad regime remains firmly entrenched in power as of 2024, despite persistent internal and external conflicts. The government has maintained its authoritarian grip through brutal tactics, including widespread arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances. These actions are especially targeted at those perceived as dissenters or threats to the regime's stability [1][2]. In response to these abuses, the UN General Assembly has established an international institution aimed at clarifying the fate of the missing and providing reparations to victims' families, though this has yet to translate into substantial changes on the ground [5].

Economic Context

The economic landscape in Syria has continued to deteriorate, with the Syrian Pound (SYP) experiencing a severe devaluation against the US Dollar throughout 2024. This economic instability has led to sharp increases in the prices of basic goods and services, exacerbating the already dire living conditions for the average citizen [1][2]. The government's practices of property confiscation and control, justified by a framework of restrictive laws, further aggravate the economic hardships faced by the population [1][2].

Social Context

Socially, Syria remains in a state of deep crisis. The continuous conflict has led to gross human rights violations including arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, and enforced disappearances. Vulnerable groups, particularly women returnees, face heightened risks of abuse [4]. The government's policies have severely restricted access to essential services for residents and internally displaced persons in the north-western regions, violating their economic and social rights [5].

Significant Events

Several significant events in 2024 have further influenced the human rights landscape:

- **January 2024:**

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported at least 37 attacks on vital civilian infrastructure by regime forces, including the use of incendiary weapons. This period also saw the continuation of restrictive and punitive measures against civilians in government-controlled areas, particularly targeting political dissenters [2].

- **February 2024:**

The UN Human Rights Office released a comprehensive report on the abuses faced by Syrian returnees. This report underscored the violation of international principles such as due process and non-refoulement, emphasising the need to protect returnees from violence and abuse [4].

Conclusion

The human rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains critical, with ongoing abuses that reflect deep-seated systemic issues within the country's political, economic, and social frameworks. Despite international efforts to address the plight of missing persons and advocate for human rights, the Assad regime's policies continue to perpetuate a cycle of violence and repression. The continued deterioration in living conditions and the lack of effective legal recourse highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and sustained international intervention.

Citations:

- [1] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/syria/our-presence>
- [4] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
- [5] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [6] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>
- [7] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/04/delusion-once-again-safe-zone-syria>
- [8] <https://syriaaccountability.org/human-rights-violations-in-syria-june-2024/>

Civil and Political Rights

The civil and political rights situation in Syria in 2024 remains deeply troubling, characterized by extensive repression, arbitrary arrests, and pervasive torture. The government's ongoing authoritarian measures, coupled with the country's dire economic and social conditions, have exacerbated the erosion of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

In 2024, freedom of expression and assembly in Syria continued to be severely restricted. The Assad regime's policies maintain a stringent control over political dissent, with any form of opposition being met with harsh retaliation. Reports consistently highlight that individuals expressing dissenting views are at risk of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, particularly in cities like Damascus and Homs [2][3][5].

A notable incident occurred in late August 2023, when large-scale protests erupted in Sweida due to worsening economic conditions. These protests were the most significant in government-controlled areas since 2011. While the regime avoided lethal force against demonstrators—an apparent deviation from its past practices—the repression of political expression and assembly remains stringent and unyielding [3].

Arbitrary Arrests and Enforced Disappearances

Arbitrary arrests are a cornerstone of the Syrian regime's approach to managing dissent. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported numerous arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances in February 2024, with the highest incidences in Damascus and Rural Damascus. Those detained often face severe torture and ill-treatment [5][6]. For instance, in January 2024, SNHR documented at least five deaths resulting from torture in custody, underscoring the brutal conditions in detention facilities [5][6]. Additionally, the government has used legal pretexts to justify property confiscations, further infringing on citizens' rights [5][6].

Torture and Ill-Treatment

Despite a 2022 law aimed at criminalizing torture, such practices remain rampant. Reports from the UN Commission of Inquiry describe widespread torture and severe mistreatment of detainees, with many suffering both physical and psychological harm [3][4]. The regime's security forces operate with impunity, and deaths in detention are frequently reported, yet the government's response to international criticism remains dismissive and unaccountable [2][3].

Government Responses and International Implications

In response to mounting international scrutiny, the Syrian government has made superficial legal changes, such as the abolition of military field courts notorious for lacking due process. However, this move raises concerns about the potential erasure of court records related to

enforced disappearances, complicating efforts to achieve justice for victims and their families [3][4].

International bodies, including the UN General Assembly, have attempted to address these issues by establishing mechanisms to clarify the fate of missing persons and provide reparations. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these measures is undermined by the regime's entrenched power and the ongoing conflict [4][5].

Overall Impact on the Population

The persistent violations of civil and political rights have significantly impacted the Syrian population. The ongoing humanitarian crisis is compounded by economic decline, with millions of Syrians reliant on humanitarian aid and suffering from the government's restrictive policies that limit access to essential services [4][6]. The pervasive fear and repression discourage any form of dissent, leaving the population in a state of ongoing despair.

In conclusion, Syria's civil and political rights situation in 2024 is marked by severe repression and systemic abuse. The government's responses to dissent and international criticism have been inadequate, perpetuating a cycle of human rights violations and deepening the suffering of the Syrian populace.

Citations:

- [1] https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International_Submissions/A/Index?id=500
- [2] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria>
- [3] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [4] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [5] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [6] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [7] <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

Rights of Specific Groups

The human rights landscape in Syria in 2024 reveals a harrowing situation for vulnerable groups, including women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities. Despite ongoing conflict and oppressive government measures, there has been little progress in improving their conditions, with systemic abuses and a lack of legal protections remaining widespread.

Women

In 2024, women in Syria faced severe violations of their rights, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and government repression. Female returnees are particularly vulnerable, often encountering arbitrary detention, torture, and sexual violence upon their return. The UN Human Rights Office has reported that women, especially those returning from abroad, are at heightened risk of gender-based violence and face significant restrictions on their freedom of movement imposed by male relatives [4].

For example, reports indicate that women attempting to flee the country have been subjected to harassment and extortion. A notable case involved a returnee who was detained and coerced into paying a bribe for her release [4]. These abuses reflect broader systemic discrimination against women in Syria, where discriminatory practices are pervasive and unaddressed.

Children

Children in Syria continue to suffer from the dire consequences of the ongoing conflict. In February 2024, seven children were reported killed, highlighting the perilous conditions faced by young Syrians [1]. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) documented attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools, which disrupt education and endanger lives [3].

Additionally, the economic crisis has exacerbated child exploitation, with increased instances of child labour reported as families struggle to cope with rising inflation and deteriorating living conditions [2]. The lack of access to essential services further impedes the development and safety of children in the region.

LGBTQ+ Individuals

The plight of LGBTQ+ individuals in Syria remains critical. Homosexuality is criminalised, and LGBTQ+ individuals face severe **discrimination, harassment, and violence**. Societal stigma, coupled with legal penalties, forces many LGBTQ+ individuals into hiding, leading to significant mental health issues and social isolation [2].

There are no effective legal protections for LGBTQ+ rights, and the ongoing conflict exacerbates their vulnerability. LGBTQ+ individuals are often targeted by both state and non-state actors, with little recourse for justice or protection [2]. The absence of a supportive legal framework further entrenches their marginalisation and risks their safety.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

Ethnic and religious minorities, including Kurds and Druze, face significant challenges and discrimination. The Syrian government has been accused of discrimination and suppression against these groups. For example, tensions in the Golan Heights have been exacerbated by violent responses to protests by the Druze community, reflecting ongoing regional conflicts and marginalisation [2].

Government policies often marginalised these minorities, denying them access to essential services and economic opportunities. The protracted conflict has further displaced these groups, increasing their vulnerability and exacerbating their hardships [5].

Rights Violations and Legal Protections

Throughout 2024, the Syrian government has continued to violate human rights extensively. Reports detail enforced disappearances, torture, and unlawful killings [1]. In February alone, 78 civilians were reported killed, with many of these abuses committed by regime forces [1]. These violations occur within a legal framework that offers scant protection, as the government persists in its suppression of dissent and restriction of freedoms [2].

Despite some international efforts to address these issues, such as the establishment of an international institution to investigate missing persons and provide reparations, the effectiveness of these measures is questionable. The regime's disregard for international calls for accountability undermines the potential impact of such initiatives [2][4].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the human rights conditions for women, children, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities in Syria during 2024 are marked by severe violations and inadequate legal protections. The ongoing conflict and government repression have created an environment where these groups continue to face significant abuse and discrimination. The international community's efforts, while important, have so far been insufficient in addressing the full scope of these human rights challenges.

Citations:

- [1] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [2] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [3] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [4] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/syrian-returnees-subjected-gross-human-rights-violations-and-abuses-un>
- [5] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [6] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/syria-mass-unlawful-asset-freezes>
- [7] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>
- [8] <https://syriaaccountability.org/human-rights-violations-in-syria-june-2024/>

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The state of economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria in 2024 is profoundly dire. The ongoing conflict, economic collapse, and government-imposed barriers have severely compromised the rights to health, education, and adequate housing. This examination highlights the critical issues facing the population and the impediments to accessing these fundamental rights.

Economic Context

The economic crisis in Syria remains catastrophic. As of 2024, over 90% of the population lives below the poverty line, a result of the Syrian pound's dramatic devaluation and the collapse of essential sectors such as trade, agriculture, and manufacturing [1][2]. This economic deterioration has directly impacted the availability and quality of essential services, including healthcare, education, and housing. The World Bank's reports underline the extensive damage to Syria's economic infrastructure, which has worsened the humanitarian crisis [1].

Right to Health

The right to health in Syria is severely undermined. Access to healthcare is notably restricted, particularly in areas controlled by the Syrian government. Humanitarian aid is often diverted or restricted, leading to significant barriers for those in need. According to the UN, more than 12 million people lack access to sufficient quality food, and over 600,000 children suffer from chronic malnutrition [2]. The healthcare infrastructure is in ruins, with many facilities either destroyed or operating under severe constraints. The government's control over humanitarian aid exacerbates the situation, particularly for dissenters who are systematically denied medical assistance [2].

Right to Education

The educational system in Syria faces severe disruption. The ongoing conflict has led to widespread educational deprivation, with many children unable to attend school. The Humanitarian Needs Assessment reveals that children with disabilities are disproportionately affected, with over 60% of school-age children with intellectual or physical disabilities never having received an education [2]. Economic hardships further compound the issue, as families struggle to afford school-related expenses, perpetuating cycles of poverty and limiting future opportunities for many children [2].

Right to Adequate Housing

Housing conditions in Syria are critical. The destruction of civilian infrastructure has left many people without safe and stable housing. The UN reports that government restrictions on aid have worsened the situation for displaced populations, who often live in inadequate shelters [3]. The lack of access to adequate housing affects especially vulnerable groups,

including female-headed households and those with disabilities, who face additional barriers in finding safe living conditions [3].

Barriers and Improvements

Several barriers impede the realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria. These include the ongoing conflict, economic sanctions, and restrictive government policies on humanitarian aid. Despite these challenges, there are some signs of potential improvement. Limited resumption of aid deliveries through specific border crossings offers a glimmer of hope for addressing immediate humanitarian needs [2]. Additionally, the Arab League's involvement with Syria may provide opportunities for economic recovery and support, contingent on the regime's cooperation on critical issues such as refugee returns and drug trafficking [1].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the situation for economic, social, and cultural rights in Syria remains bleak in 2024. The ongoing conflict, economic collapse, and systemic barriers continue to undermine the rights to health, education, and housing. While there are some indications of potential improvement, such as the limited resumption of aid and international engagement, these efforts are insufficient to address the full scope of the crisis. Urgent international attention and support are needed to help Syrians reclaim their fundamental rights and improve their living conditions.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/networked-authoritarianism-and-economic-resilience-in-syria/>
- [2] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [3] <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2024/07/examen-de-la-syrie-devant-le-comite-des-droits-de-lhomme-les>
- [4] <https://www.actwithus.org/2024-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-conference-program/>
- [5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Covenant_on_Economic,_Social_and_Cultural_Rights
- [6] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cescr>
- [7] <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/syrian-arab-republic-crisis-response-plan-2024>
- [8] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-concludes-consideration-syrian>

Refugees and Migrants

The situation of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Syria during 2024 is marked by significant hardships, exacerbated by ongoing conflict, natural disasters, and systemic exploitation. This report outlines the living conditions, access to asylum procedures, and instances of exploitation faced by these groups, as well as international and domestic responses.

Living Conditions and Access to Asylum Procedures

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria face extremely challenging living conditions. Over 14 million Syrians have been displaced due to the ongoing conflict, with 7.2 million remaining within the country and 5.6 million seeking refuge abroad [1][4]. The economic collapse, compounded by the February 2023 earthquakes, has left many in dire straits.

In neighbouring countries, Syrian refugees are also struggling. In Jordan, more than 90% of Syrian refugees depend on humanitarian aid for their basic needs [1]. Similarly, in Türkiye, 90% of refugees report being unable to meet their monthly expenses [1][2]. Most refugees live in urban areas rather than camps, leading to difficulties in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and stable employment.

Access to asylum procedures is marred by barriers. For instance, in Jordan, the refugee response system is criticised for its discriminatory nature, favoring Syrian refugees over other displaced groups like Palestinian refugees or migrant workers from other countries. This has resulted in unequal aid distribution and a tiered system of support [2].

Instances of Exploitation and Abuse

Exploitation of refugees and migrant workers is widespread. Many face unsafe working conditions and low wages. For example, Syrian farm workers in Jordan are reported to endure dangerous commutes in overcrowded vehicles, which have resulted in fatalities [2]. Economic hardships have also exacerbated vulnerabilities, leading to increased instances of child labor, gender-based violence, and other forms of exploitation [1][3].

Refugees and migrant workers often work in sectors with minimal regulation and oversight, making them particularly susceptible to abuse and exploitation. The precarious nature of their employment leaves them with little recourse to address grievances or seek justice [3].

International and Domestic Responses

International responses to the refugee crisis have been mixed. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called for increased support for early recovery activities and addressing the fears that prevent refugees from returning home safely. Despite these calls, many refugees lack confidence in the Syrian government and fear persecution, complicating repatriation efforts [4].

Organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are actively working to address the needs of refugees through various programs. These include cash assistance and vocational training aimed at enhancing self-reliance among refugees and host communities [3][5]. However, these efforts are often hindered by insufficient funding and political constraints, limiting their effectiveness.

Domestic responses are often inadequate, with governments in host countries facing their own challenges in managing the influx of refugees and asylum seekers. Discriminatory practices and uneven distribution of aid further exacerbate the plight of these displaced populations [2].

Conclusion

The situation for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers in Syria in 2024 highlights a severe humanitarian crisis. The ongoing conflict, economic instability, and systemic barriers to accessing essential services have created a landscape of extreme hardship and exploitation. International and domestic responses have been insufficient to fully address the needs and rights of these vulnerable groups. Urgent and comprehensive action is required to improve their living conditions and ensure equitable treatment and protection.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>
- [2] <https://merip.org/2024/03/jordans-syrian-refugee-response-and-discriminatory-development-aid/>
- [3] <https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/syria-regional-refugee-and-resilience-response-plan-2024>
- [4] <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15713.doc.htm>
- [5] <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria>
- [6] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>
- [7] <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/what-we-do/world-migration-report-2024-chapter-2/refugees-and-asylum-seekers>
- [8] <https://open.unicef.org/sites/transparency/files/2024-05/Syrian%20Refugees%20CER%202023.pdf>

Legal Framework and Accountability

In 2024, Syria's legal framework and accountability mechanisms for human rights remain severely compromised, characterised by a culture of impunity and ineffective judicial processes. Despite some incremental changes, the Syrian government's actions and the broader international response reveal deep systemic failures in addressing human rights violations.

Legal Framework and Recent Reforms

The Syrian legal landscape has seen minimal changes that would improve human rights protections. The abolition of military field courts in September 2023 was a notable development, aimed at ending summary trials and executions without due process. However, this move has been criticised as potentially masking evidence related to enforced disappearances, which complicates efforts to hold perpetrators accountable [4]. Additionally, although a law criminalizing torture was enacted in March 2022, reports indicate that torture and ill-treatment continue unabated in detention facilities, highlighting a significant gap between legal provisions and actual practices [4].

Role of the Judiciary

The judiciary in Syria is widely perceived as an instrument of the regime rather than an independent entity capable of delivering justice. The lack of judicial independence results in a failure to prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses effectively. For example, while international efforts such as the upcoming trial in France of three senior Syrian security officials for war crimes are underway, these efforts are external to the Syrian legal system and underscore its inadequacies [1][4]. Within Syria, the judicial system remains largely ineffective in addressing violations committed by government forces, contributing to a pervasive atmosphere of impunity.

Accountability Mechanisms and Impunity

Impunity for human rights violations remains a critical issue in Syria. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported numerous abuses in early 2024, including killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, primarily perpetrated by government forces [2][5]. The regime's control over security forces and the legal framework allows for widespread abuses without fear of repercussions. For instance, in January 2024 alone, SNHR documented 72 civilian deaths due to torture, largely attributed to regime forces [5].

On the international stage, the establishment of an independent institution by the UN to address the fates of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Syria is a positive step. However, the effectiveness of such initiatives is often undermined by the Syrian government's refusal to cooperate and the ongoing conflict [1][3].

Examples of Justice and Injustice

International efforts to address human rights violations have seen some success, though they remain limited. The trial in France of Syrian officials for their roles in war crimes is a significant development, but such cases are rare [1]. Most human rights abuses within Syria go unpunished, with regime forces continuing to carry out unlawful attacks and repress dissent without legal consequences [2][4].

In contrast, mechanisms like the International Criminal Court and national courts in Europe have begun prosecuting individuals involved in the Syrian conflict. These efforts face considerable challenges, including the Syrian government's lack of cooperation and the difficulties of collecting evidence in an active conflict zone [1][4].

Conclusion

The legal framework and accountability mechanisms for human rights in Syria in 2024 remain grossly inadequate. The lack of meaningful reforms, combined with a judiciary that operates under regime influence, perpetuates a cycle of impunity for human rights violations. Although international efforts to prosecute perpetrators and address violations are emerging, they are insufficient compared to the scale of abuses occurring within Syria. There is an urgent need for a concerted international effort to bolster accountability mechanisms and press the Syrian government to uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/report-syria/>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/syria/our-presence>
- [4] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [5] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [6] <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>
- [7] <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/ohchr/2024/en/147588>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

International Relations and Human Rights

In 2024, Syria's international relations were markedly influenced by its persistent human rights violations and its interactions with various global and regional bodies. The ongoing humanitarian crisis and the Syrian government's controversial policies have shaped its relationships with international organisations and influenced global responses to its human rights record.

UN Involvement and Accountability Efforts

The United Nations has continued to play a crucial role in addressing the Syrian human rights crisis, though its efforts have met with limited success. The UN-led peace process, including the work of the constitutional committee, failed to produce meaningful results in 2023 [1]. The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) has reiterated that Syria remains unsafe for the return of refugees due to the ongoing conflict and human rights abuses [2]. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) has continued to document severe human rights violations, including new cases of torture and ill-treatment in detention [1].

A significant development was the joint case filed by Canada and the Netherlands at the International Court of Justice against Syria for widespread and systematic torture [1]. This legal action represents a notable effort to hold the Syrian government accountable on the international stage. Additionally, the UN established a new mechanism to address the fates of over 100,000 missing persons in Syria, marking a critical step towards accountability [1].

Arab League Readmission and Regional Relations

In a move seen as a normalisation of relations, the Arab League readmitted Syria in 2023 [1]. This decision was controversial, as it was perceived to benefit the Assad regime and regional capitals rather than addressing the needs of ordinary Syrians or holding the regime accountable [4]. Iran and Russia have also been active in attempting to mediate between Syria and Turkey, another key regional player [4]. Despite these efforts, the impact of such regional diplomacy on Syria's human rights situation has been minimal, with ongoing abuses persisting.

International Pressure and Sanctions

International pressure on Syria remains substantial, though its impact is somewhat constrained. The US, European Union, and the United Kingdom have continued to impose sanctions on individuals and entities involved in human rights abuses or linked to the Syrian government and ISIS [1]. In a related move, the US reinstated Turkey to its list of countries implicated in using child soldiers due to its support for certain factions within the Syrian National Army accused of child recruitment [1].

Military actions by Israel, including aerial strikes targeting Iranian and Hezbollah positions in Syria, have also affected the conflict dynamics, leading to temporary disruptions in services

and infrastructure in cities like Aleppo and Damascus [1]. However, these actions have had limited direct impact on improving human rights conditions within Syria.

Impact on Domestic Human Rights

Despite these international efforts, the domestic human rights situation in Syria remains dire. Civilians, particularly in opposition-held areas, continue to face indiscriminate attacks by Syrian and Russian forces, arbitrary detention, and torture [1][2]. Reports from the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) indicate that in early 2024, there were numerous documented abuses, including the killing of 78 civilians and attacks on vital civilian facilities [2][3].

The repressive environment extends to marginalized groups, with individuals with disabilities, men, boys, transgender women, and nonbinary people facing severe challenges, including sexual violence [1]. The impact of international sanctions and diplomatic pressure has yet to translate into significant improvements in the human rights situation within the country.

Conclusion

Syria's international relations in 2024 have been heavily influenced by its human rights record and the responses of global and regional actors. While there have been notable international efforts to address human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable, such as legal actions and sanctions, the overall impact on the domestic human rights situation remains limited. The readmission of Syria to the Arab League and ongoing regional diplomacy have not significantly improved the plight of ordinary Syrians. The dire human rights conditions persist, underscoring the need for continued and enhanced international pressure and support for accountability mechanisms.

Citations:

- [1] <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/syria>
- [2] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-february-2024-enar>
- [3] <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/most-notable-human-rights-violations-syria-january-2024-enar>
- [4] <https://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria>
- [5] <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-09/syria-71.php>
- [6] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/syria/>
- [7] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/18/syria-mass-unlawful-asset-freezes>
- [8] <https://freedomhouse.org/country/syria/freedom-world/2024>

Recommendations

The human rights situation in Syria remains dire, characterised by ongoing violations perpetrated by the government and various armed groups. Based on the findings from early 2024, the following recommendations are directed towards the Syrian government, international bodies, and civil society organisations to improve the human rights landscape in the country.

Recommendations to the Syrian Government

1. **End Arbitrary Detentions and Torture:** The Syrian government must immediately cease arbitrary arrests and torture of detainees, particularly those expressing political dissent. Establishing independent monitoring mechanisms within detention facilities can help ensure accountability.
2. **Respect for Civilian Life:** An immediate halt to indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas, including schools and places of worship, is essential. The government should adhere to international humanitarian law and protect civilian infrastructure from military actions.
3. **Guarantee Safe Returns for Refugees:** The government should implement policies that ensure the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees. This includes providing guarantees against arbitrary detention and ensuring that returnees are not subjected to violence or discrimination.
4. **Transparency in Aid Distribution:** The government must allow independent oversight of humanitarian aid distribution to prevent the misuse of funds and ensure that aid reaches those in need without political strings attached.
5. **Legal Reforms:** Introduce legal reforms that align with international human rights standards, particularly regarding freedom of expression and assembly. This includes abolishing laws that criminalise dissent.

Recommendations to International Bodies

1. **Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:** International bodies, including the UN, should enhance mechanisms for accountability for human rights violations in Syria. This could involve establishing a special tribunal for serious crimes committed during the conflict.
2. **Increase Humanitarian Access:** Advocate for unhindered access for humanitarian organisations to all areas of Syria, ensuring that aid reaches vulnerable populations without interference from government forces.
3. **Support for Civil Society:** Provide technical and financial support to Syrian civil society organisations working on human rights issues. This includes capacity-building initiatives to enhance their ability to document violations and advocate for change.

4. **Monitor Refugee Returns:** International organisations should closely monitor the conditions of returnees to Syria, ensuring that their rights are protected and that they are not subjected to abuses upon their return.
5. **Impose Targeted Sanctions:** Consider imposing targeted sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for egregious human rights violations, thereby pressuring the government to change its behaviour.

Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

1. **Document Violations:** Civil society organisations should continue to document human rights abuses systematically, focusing on testimonies from victims and witnesses to provide credible evidence for advocacy efforts.
2. **Raise Awareness:** Engage in awareness-raising campaigns both locally and internationally to highlight the ongoing human rights violations in Syria. This can mobilise public opinion and pressure governments to take action.
3. **Build Coalitions:** Form coalitions with other human rights organisations to strengthen advocacy efforts and share resources for more effective campaigning against human rights abuses.
4. **Engage with the International Community:** Actively engage with international bodies and human rights mechanisms to ensure that the situation in Syria remains a priority on the global agenda.
5. **Empower Victims:** Provide platforms for victims of human rights abuses to share their stories, ensuring their voices are heard in the discourse surrounding human rights in Syria.

By implementing these recommendations, there is potential for significant progress in addressing the rampant human rights violations in Syria, fostering a safer and more just environment for all citizens.

Conclusion

The human rights landscape in Syria in 2024 is marked by a grim continuity of severe abuses across all fronts. The Syrian government and its allies persist in their brutal campaigns against civilians, marked by unlawful attacks that result in civilian deaths and the destruction of essential infrastructure. These actions not only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis but also represent blatant violations of international law.

Simultaneously, Türkiye-backed armed groups have been implicated in unlawful killings of civilians, compounding the suffering. Both the government and these armed groups have systematically obstructed humanitarian aid, deepening the crisis for those in need. The situation is particularly dire for returnees, who face a harrowing mix of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, and sexual violence. Women, in particular, endure severe restrictions on their liberties and are sometimes forcibly returned to Syria by male family members.

In Aleppo, the government's disregard for the right to housing has left residents of earthquake-affected areas in dire straits, with little to no recourse for reparations or rebuilding efforts. Despite the establishment of an international institution by the UN General Assembly aimed at addressing the plight of missing persons and providing reparations, the Syrian government continues to obstruct access to essential services for residents and internally displaced persons in the northwest.

Refugees also face a precarious situation, with the risk of arrest upon return to Syria remaining a significant concern. The complex and multifaceted nature of the crisis underscores the urgent need for continued international vigilance and intervention.

In conclusion, the international community must not waver in its commitment to addressing Syria's dire human rights situation. Ongoing monitoring, comprehensive reporting of abuses, and holding perpetrators accountable are imperative. It is essential to exert pressure on all parties involved to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights standards, ensure unhindered humanitarian access, and take concrete actions towards improving the human rights landscape in Syria. The pursuit of justice and reparations for victims remains a critical component of any meaningful resolution to this protracted crisis.

Appendices

Appendix A: Statistical Data on Human Rights Issues

Documented Violations

January 2024 Report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR):

- **Civilian Deaths:** 72 reported, including:
- **Children:** 18
- **Women:** 10
- **Deaths Due to Torture:** 5
- **Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities:** 37 attacks reported, with:
- **Attribution to Syrian Regime Forces:** 29 attacks

UN Human Rights Council Observations:

- **Arbitrary Detentions:** Ongoing issues with unlawful detentions by Syrian security forces.
- **Unlawful Confiscation of Property:** Noted in government-held areas, impacting residents' rights and security.

Impact on Specific Groups

Women and Girls:

- **Discrimination and Violence:** Severe challenges in accessing healthcare and rising incidents of forced marriages reported.

Children with Disabilities:

- **Educational Access:** Over 60% of school-age children with disabilities have never attended school.

International Accountability

Legal Actions:

International Court of Justice Proceedings:

Canada and the Netherlands initiated proceedings against Syria for alleged violations of the Convention against Torture.

Appendix B: Glossary of Legal and Human Rights Terms

Arbitrary Detention:

- **Definition:** The arrest or confinement of individuals without legal justification or due process.

Torture:

- **Definition:** The act of inflicting severe pain or suffering on an individual, often to extract information or punish.

Transitional Justice:

- **Definition:** A framework for addressing past human rights violations, often involving accountability measures and reparations.

Universal Jurisdiction:

- **Definition:** The principle that allows national courts to prosecute individuals for serious crimes against international law, regardless of where the crime was committed.