



The Case of Journalist Samer Al-Ahmad - Assassination on Paper

Report of Monitoring, Documentation, Description, and Notification

A New Type of Gross Violation Invented by the Assad Regime

Firstly – In the Facts,

- In January 2024, MHR NGO received a report from journalist Samer Al-Ahmad, which included a document stating his death, issued by the General Directorate of Civil Affairs in Syria. After a joint meeting during which MHR listened to Mr. Samer's testimony, they informed the relevant United Nations body about the incident.
- Samer Al-Ahmad, a young Syrian national, currently 36 years old, engaged in peaceful activities opposing the Assad regime thirteen years ago when he was twenty-three. He worked on filming demonstrations and documenting violations. As a result, he was arrested by State Security and Air Force Intelligence during the years 2013-2014. After his release, fearing repeated arrests and threats to his life, freedom, and dignity, he left his homeland for Turkey.
- Since 2014 and up to now in 2024, Samer Al-Ahmad has been residing in Turkey with a temporary protection card. He has been active and working



as a journalist and researcher on various Syrian issues. He participated in many television programs and produced numerous articles and studies published in both Arabic and English. His latest work includes a study on education in Al-Hasakah Governorate published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and an article on the Institute Middle East titled "Syria is the Place Where the Conflict Between Wagner and the Russian Government Began" and another article discussing the attacks by Iran-backed militias and their threat to regional peace.

- During this period, several of his family members were summoned and arrested by the Assad regime's security apparatus and by de facto authorities in the Qamishli area.
- In 2016, Samer got married and had two daughters, Maria and Sham, registering them in the foreign nationals' civil registry - under his name - as Syrians residing under temporary protection.
- In 2019, Samer obtained a two-and-a-half-year passport from the Syrian government consulate in Istanbul, based on his identification documents and personal data submitted to the consulate for this purpose.
- At the end of 2023, in order to register his daughters in the Syrian civil registry, and after requesting a copy of his civil registration statement, he was shocked by the intermediary informing him that he was listed as deceased in the civil records. The intermediary's attempts to correct what he initially thought was an error failed. The civil registry employee in Syria told the intermediary that the reason was security-related.
- Samer turned to a lawyer in Qamishli to address the issue legally. During the lawyer's review of the Civil Affairs Directorate, the civil registry



director informed him that Samer Al-Ahmad was recorded as deceased in their records as of September 2023, based on a decision by the head of State Security Branch in Qamishli, without a forensic report or hospital certificate. When the civil registry staff informed the security officer that Samer was still alive, the officer replied, "We know he is alive, but he is an opponent, and whoever the state wants to be alive lives, and whoever it wants to be dead dies." When the lawyer visited the State Security Branch, he received nothing but a reprimand from the officer for asking about Samer.

- MHR obtained copies of death certificates issued by various civil registry offices in Syria, all matching the information regarding Samer Al-Ahmad's status as deceased. These documents bear the letterhead of the Syrian Arab Republic – Ministry of Interior – Civil Affairs, titled "Death Certificate" issued by the Civil Registry Office of Al-Qamishli, dated ,,,,,, 2024. The deceased's name is Samer Al-Ahmad, born on 03/03/1988 – Syrian nationality – male – registration place and number (Qamishli – Tal Oudah – 53) – national number 08090013808 – father's name Ibrahim Al-Ahmad, national number 0800901193885 – mother's name Tarfah Al-Awad, national number 08090116703 – place of death field empty – date and time of death field empty – the incident was registered at the Qamishli office – date of registration of the incident empty – name and signature of the civil registry center head, official stamp (Ministry of Interior – Civil Affairs Directorate in Governorate ,,,,,, – Civil Registry Center).



Secondly - Conclusions;

1. The Mizaan Organization listened to the testimony of Mr. Samer Al-Ahmad and noted that the action of registering him as deceased in the civil records coincided with his publication of several articles in the Western media. These articles documented specific incidents involving identified officers from the regime's forces and apparatus, as well as leaders and figures from Iranian militias, including information about their involvement in drug trafficking and their relationships with ISIS leaders.
2. The Mizaan Organization examined various death certificates issued in Samer's name from different civil registry centers and noticed that the information matched across all certificates. The fields for the place, date, and cause of death were left blank in all certificates. Mizaan also noted the similarity in format, seal, and letterhead between these certificates and those stored in the organization's archives related to other Syrian detainees.
3. Conclusions suggest that State Security and the Civil Registry Directorate consider the death to have occurred in 2014, during Samer Al-Ahmad's detention by the State Security Branch. This aligns with the new Syrian Civil Status Law No. 13 of 2021, which in Article (38) allows civil registries to record death based on prison officials' testimonies – as is customary for detainees – while ignoring the procedures stipulated in the same law for registering death in civil records, such as "notification from a relative of the deceased - testimony from the village head accompanied by a medical report proving that the death was natural."



4. Registering the death of a living person is a criminal precedent invented by the Assad regime, previously unknown to humanity. Consequently, international law did not foresee it and did not explicitly prohibit it in its charters and agreements. However, the resulting effects constitute a grave violation of universal human rights, including the right to obtain personal and family identification documents and travel documents, the right to move, reside, work, own property, return, and be recognized in one's legal capacity, and the right not to have one's human dignity demeaned, among other rights stipulated in the declaration, covenants, and signed agreements.
5. The death certificate deprives Maria and Sham, Samer's daughters, of their right to Syrian nationality, equal citizenship, obtaining an identity card and passport, freedom of movement, and the right of return, placing them in a status similar to that of stateless persons. This could affect their rights to care, education, and health.
6. The measures taken against Samer Al-Ahmad, combined with the State Security officer's statement, "We know he is alive, but he is an opponent, and whoever the state wants to be alive lives, and whoever it wants to be dead dies," and the threats he received from parties affiliated with Iran, constitute a threat to his right to life and a danger to his safety and security.
7. The Mizaan Organization believes the incident was motivated by the Iranian militias and security agencies' desire for revenge, and to punish Samer Al-Ahmad for his research activities and the information he disclosed about their involvement in drug trafficking and dealing with terrorism.



8. The head and officer of the State Security Branch bear direct responsibility for the described gross violations, in collusion with their superiors and the Iranian leaders in the region.
9. Civil status employees are responsible for implementing the registration retroactively or for neglecting to record the place and date of death, according to Syrian law. This includes the responsibility of their superiors, given their certain knowledge of the grave procedural defects. This certain knowledge is confirmed by the methodology of the death certificates issued for detainees on one hand, and on the other hand by the adoption of the Unified Syrian Registry system, which provides continuous and direct access to all records and procedures for their superiors.
10. Samer Al-Ahmad, his wife, their two daughters, and his family – like most Syrians – are paying the price for exercising the right to freedom of expression, voicing opinions, promoting truth, upholding civil and political rights, and defending them. Samer is known in his community for his credibility and professionalism, and there is no reason other than these for him to be a victim of continuous detention, persecution, and revenge by the regime against activists.
11. The Assad regime's contempt for activists, and the methodology of its policies in reinforcing its leaders and members' conviction in the principle of impunity, is a fundamental reason for its creation of new criminal acts against Syrians.



Thirdly – Recommendations;

1) To the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):

1. Register this report in OHCHR documents as a notification of a new type of gross human rights violation by the Assad regime.
2. Disseminate this notification to the Special Procedures Branch / rapporteurs and concerned working groups.
3. Include the incident in discussions, demands, and reports of the Universal Periodic Review.
4. Include the incident in your proposal for a Council resolution on the human rights situation in Syria.
5. Demand that the Assad regime correct the civil status record and hold those involved in the incident accountable.
6. Explore mechanisms to include specific provisions in international treaties and agreements that criminalize the registration of a living person as deceased, recognizing it as a form of gross human rights violation.

2) To the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria:

1. Receive our report with related documents, analyze and preserve them as evidence.
2. Investigate whether there are similar cases that establish a pattern of gross violations.



3. Share the investigation of the incident with the International Court of Justice and include it in the lawsuit file of the Netherlands and Canada against the Assad regime, describing the act as a form of family torture.

3) To the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria:

1. Receive our report with related documents, analyze and preserve them as evidence.
2. Include the incident in the commission's periodic reports.
3. Demand that the Syrian regime correct the civil status record and hold those involved in the incident accountable.

4) To the Free World Nations:

1. Grant political asylum to Mr. Samer Al-Ahmad, his wife, and their two daughters.
2. View the incident as a new pattern of human rights violations, confirming that Assad does not change his behavior and will not change it, and that the longer he stays in power, the more crimes he invents, preventing the return of refugees and threatening international peace and security.
3. Pressure the Assad regime in the Security Council and General Assembly to stop the gross, systematic, and ongoing violations committed by it.



4. Pressure the Assad regime through its supporting countries to correct the civil status record and hold those involved in the incident accountable.
5. Support efforts to hold the regime's leaders and elements accountable and find ways to apply pressure to achieve political transition in accordance with international resolutions issued by the Security Council and the General Assembly, especially 2254 and 2118, and 262/67.

5) To Syrian and International Human Rights Organizations:

1. Document the incident and include the precedent of registering a living person as deceased in the reports and notifications of specialized organizations.
2. Publish news of the incident on the organizations' platforms to promote the right to truth and contribute to forming public opinion about it.
3. Advocate for Samer Al-Ahmad in the case of his daughters and wife, using all possible means of mobilization. Assad evolves in his criminal actions, and defenders of justice must develop accountability mechanisms

