



Syrian Medical, Legal, and Mental Health Professionals to Begin Specialized Training on Torture Documentation and Accountability

A pilot initiative aimed at strengthening capacities in justice, rehabilitation, and survivor-centered documentation in post-Assad Syria

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The International Center for Human Rights Enforcement (CEHRI), in partnership with the Syrian Association for Mental Health (SAMH), and with support from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT), is launching a series of specialized trainings next week aimed at strengthening Syria's capacity to document torture and support accountability efforts in the aftermath of the country's transitional phase.

This initiative, "Strengthening Accountability for Torture in Syria: Developing Medical and Legal Documentation for Justice and Rehabilitation," comes at a pivotal moment for Syria. Following the fall of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 and the release of thousands of detainees, Syrian institutions and civil society organizations face the challenge of addressing the legacy of torture and serious human rights violations, while simultaneously supporting survivors and their families.

Starting next week, psychiatrists, psychologists, medical professionals, lawyers, and other Syrian practitioners will participate in trainings based on the Istanbul Protocol: Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the internationally recognized United Nations standard for investigating and documenting cases of torture and ill-treatment.

The trainings will equip participants with practical skills to identify, document, and assess evidence of torture in a medically, psychologically, and legally sound manner, and in a way that is sensitive to survivors' needs. The program will also strengthen collaboration between medical and legal professionals, contributing to improved future accountability processes and access to rehabilitation services, while drawing on the knowledge and contributions of Syrian experts and survivors.

Professor Dr. Thomas Wenzel, psychiatrist and Istanbul Protocol expert, said:

"At this moment, Syria has an opportunity to lay the foundations for justice and recovery. Effective documentation of torture is essential not only for accountability efforts, but also for recognizing survivors' experiences and ensuring they receive appropriate care and support."

Dr. Yasser Al-Shalabi, Chair of the Board of the Syrian Association for Mental Health (SAMH), stated:

"Syria is entering a phase that requires investment in national expertise capable of documenting violations according to the highest professional and ethical standards. Through this cooperation, we aim to empower Syrian professionals to play a central role in strengthening justice, protecting survivors' rights, and contributing to the development of a sustainable national framework for documentation and rehabilitation."

In addition to next week's training program, the project includes:

- An upcoming awareness video introducing the Istanbul Protocol and its relevance in the Syrian context
- Advanced multidisciplinary training focusing on forensic documentation and legal applications
- Supervised documentation of survivor cases in accordance with international standards, ensuring informed consent, psychological support, and data security
- Development of a practical Arabic guide to the Istanbul Protocol adapted to the Syrian context

The project combines international expertise with strong local partnerships, with a gender-sensitive and survivor-centered approach. By strengthening professional capacities and promoting recognized international standards, the initiative aims to contribute to long-term accountability and rehabilitation efforts in Syria.

About CEHRI

The International Center for Human Rights Enforcement (CEHRI) works to strengthen accountability for gross human rights violations through strategic litigation, legal capacity building, and support for the implementation of international human rights law and international criminal law.

About SAMH

The Syrian Association for Mental Health (SAMH) works to promote mental health and psychosocial support services in Syria and to enhance the well-being and rehabilitation of individuals and communities affected by conflict and violence.

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