

MISSING PERSONS IN NORTH EAST SYRIA: A STOCKTAKING

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Well over 100,000 persons have gone missing in Syria since the start of the 2011 uprising-turned-war. While the vast majority are reported to have been forcibly disappeared with involvement of the government, in northeast Syria, a tumultuous set of events and changing political and military actors have been responsible for missing persons. The missing in northeast Syria include men, women and children; members of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds including Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Yazidis; members tied to different political groups (opposition groups, PYD, SDC, GoS, ISIS); civilians and fighters (ISIS, Free Syrian Army, Syrian Arab Army, SDF, YPG/YPJ)¹; and Syrians and non-Syrians. While the exact numbers are difficult to estimate, they easily reach into the thousands.
2. Northeast Syria, and specifically Raqqa and Deir Ezzor, have seen a multitude of actors following the 2013 withdrawal of the Syrian armed forces. After a short period of control by armed opposition groups, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) assumed control over large parts of the region in 2014, instituting draconian measures and killing and kidnapping thousands. In the lead-up to the eventual defeat of ISIS in March 2018, the US-led Global Coalition (in partnership with the Syrian Democratic Forces) engaged in airstrikes and fierce ground battles, reportedly killing more than 1,000 civilians. The remains of many of those killed by the Global Coalition are still unaccounted for, either hurriedly buried or not buried at all, and subsequently disappeared.
3. Although the Syrian Democratic Council and the Syrian Democratic Forces have consolidated military and political control of northeast Syria, families of the missing have not yet received conclusive answers regarding the whereabouts of their missing relatives. ISIS prisoners do not appear to have been questioned on the fate of the missing. Nor has there been any known screening of these prisoners to determine whether they are indeed former ISIS detainees, despite the assertion by multiple families that their sons are now being detained along with ISIS prisoners.
4. Starting in early 2018, the First Responders were formed in Raqqa with the support of the US Government. To date, the First Responders have recovered 5,656 bodies in and around Raqqa City. Another 522 bodies were recovered by the Deir Ezzor 'forensic team.' In total, 22 mass clandestine and irregular graves have been excavated and bodies reburied in the two main cemeteries in Raqqa. Yet, until now, no reference samples have been taken from families of the missing and no DNA identification and matching has been done.
5. The location and identification of missing persons in northeast Syria relies in large part on the selfless work of the First Responders, the Deir Ezzor Forensic Team, Syrian civil society organizations, international human rights organizations and family associations that have worked on documentation, advocacy and even technical forensic training. However, much remains to be done and there is a clear and urgent need for an adequate, central and secure data processing system to store all relevant information that could ultimately support efforts to locate and identify missing persons and future accountability mechanisms.
6. In the Syrian legal framework, few protections exist for the missing and their families. Indeed, since 2011, families have faced increasing challenges in reporting their missing and obtaining any information on their circumstances or obtaining court judgements to serve as legal representatives in financial, property and inheritance matters.

¹ Democratic Union Party (PYD); Syrian Democratic Council (SDC); Government of Syria (GoS), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Free Syrian Army, Syrian Arab Army, Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), People's Protection Units (YPG)/ Women's Protection Units (YPJ).

7. The *de facto* authorities in northeast Syria are neither applying the Syrian legal framework, nor have they established the institutions or judicial procedures to deal with missing persons or their families. Many families have worked tirelessly to obtain information on their missing relatives by relying on tribal leaders, unofficial interlocutors or visits to different political and military offices – with little to no success. Those based outside of Syria have set up a small number of family organizations/associations and developed campaigns in the hope of obtaining more information on the circumstances of the missing. Yet these organizations and associations are small and under-resourced.
8. The challenges of locating and identifying missing persons have far exceeded successes. These challenges point to the need for structured international support that would enable the relevant authorities to secure the rights of surviving families to effective investigations, justice, truth and economic remedies.
9. This assessment focuses mostly on Raqqa and northeast Deir Ezzor and aims to shed light on current efforts to manage human remains and to account for missing persons (section III), the processes related to the recovery, location and identification of mortal remains (section IV), the Syrian legal framework relative to missing and disappeared persons (section V), demographics and circumstances of persons going missing or disappearing (section VI), the situation of families of the missing (section VII), challenges in the location and identification of missing persons (section VIII), and recommendations (section IX).

II. INTRODUCTION

10. Since the start of uprising and armed conflict in 2011, more than 100,000 persons have gone missing, the vast majority of whom were forcibly disappeared. In northeast Syria, thousands have gone missing throughout the years of conflict following a tumultuous set of events and changing political and military actors who have taken control of the region.
11. Large parts of the eastern region (known initially as *Rojava*) gained *de facto* autonomy in 2012 following the withdrawal of the Syrian army.² Starting in March 2013, the Syrian army was defeated in other parts of the region, including most notably Raqqa province, by armed opposition forces. These gains were short-lived, however, with the growing presence and control of ISIS.
12. In January 2014, ISIS occupied Raqqa and months later, ISIS formally declared its so-called caliphate in large parts of northeast Syria and eastern Iraq, designating Raqqa as its capital. Starting in September 2014, though, the US-led Global Coalition against ISIS (Global Coalition) began airstrikes throughout Syria including Kobani (Ain al-Arab), Tal Abyad, Manbij and in subsequent years, Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. In parallel, the Turkish Army along with armed opposition groups launched ‘Operation Euphrates Shield’, liberating areas of northern Aleppo (including Jarablus and al-Bab) from ISIS.
13. The Global Coalition and its partners, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) escalated airstrikes and ground operations with the launch of ‘Operation Wrath of Euphrates’ to defeat ISIS in Raqqa, ultimately liberating Raqqa City from ISIS on 17 October 2017. The battle against ISIS continued

² In 2014, the self-declared democratic self-administration (DAA) established a federal system of government known as the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. The region was further expanded following the defeat of ISIS by the PYD and the SDF and came to be known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (NES).

until March 2019 when the SDF announced that it had defeated ISIS in Baghouz, Deir Ezzor.

14. Following ISIS's defeat, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) along with its military wing, the SDF, took control over large parts of northeast Syria. In Raqqa and parts of Deir Ezzor, the SDC created political and administrative bodies including the Raqqa Civilian Council and the Deir Ezzor Civil Council. In early 2018, the First Responders were created through the support of US-funded programs to provide emergency aid, as well as to oversee the process of removing exposed bodies and excavating mass clandestine and irregular graves in Raqqa.
15. Tens of thousands of people returned to the former-ISIS territories, including families of the missing, with real hope that they would learn the fate of their missing relatives. However, to their deep disappointment, the vast majority have yet to learn the circumstances of their relatives' disappearances despite making repeated inquiries to tribal leaders, *de facto* authorities, the Global Coalition and others.
16. This aggravation only grew after the excavation of 22 graves (to date) in and around Raqqa City and the discovery of 5,656 bodies in Raqqa and another 522 in northeast Deir Ezzor between 2018-19.
17. In the past year, the northeast has continued to experience volatility following the October 2019 Turkish and Syrian armed opposition's incursion into parts of northern Syria and the announced US troop pullout from northeastern Syria. While the US seems to have reversed its decision for a complete military pullout, the SDC and Syrian government came to an agreement on 13 October 2019 to allow Syrian government forces into areas held by the SDF.
18. With control over the region changing hands repeatedly over the past nine years and with ongoing warfare, thousands of people have gone missing through enforced disappearances, kidnappings, detention and death. Many of those who went missing over the years remain unaccounted for with little or no information on their whereabouts. Indeed, in some cases, the bodies of the dead went missing due to hurried (or no) burials or the unwillingness of authorities to return the remains of the missing to relatives.

2.1. Methodology

19. For this assessment, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) interviewed 54 individuals, including members of the First Responders, former members of the Raqqa Reconstruction Committee, families of the missing, foreign diplomatic representatives, Syrian civil society organizations, and Syrian lawyers, researchers and journalists, as well as international and other organizations. ICMP conducted interviews remotely and in Istanbul, Turkey; Şanlıurfa, Turkey; Erbil, Iraq; Berlin, Germany and Paris, France.
20. ICMP also relied on publicly available and open source materials, including reports and news articles. Due to some discrepancy in open source materials, ICMP sought to verify all information with first-hand sources. All interviews were conducted in Arabic or English.

III. CURRENT EFFORTS TO LOCATE AND IDENTIFY MISSING PERSONS

21. Efforts to locate and identify missing persons are meager with challenges often outweighing successes. Documentation of missing persons has been haphazard and mostly unorganized,

lacking a systematic approach, adequate resources, or political support. While more than 5,600 bodies have been recovered in Raqqa only 667 by November 2019 have been identified using basic identifying markers such as tattoos, clothing, jewelry and ID cards. Similarly, another 552 bodies were recovered in northeast Deir Ezzor strewn on streets, in public places and homes. No graves have been excavated to date in Deir Ezzor. No DNA reference samples have been taken from families of the missing and no identifications by international forensic standards have been carried out, i.e. by genetic, odonatological or other generally recognized means.

22. Instability and an ever-changing political landscape continue to plague the northeast, making any longer-term engagement difficult, but not impossible. Despite the many challenges, multiple actors have been working on the issue of missing persons, and some have risked their lives doing so.

3.1. Actors

23. Actors vary from *de facto* public authorities to international and Syrian organizations, to private efforts. The US Government has been the primary funder of these activities.

3.1.1. The First Responders and the Raqqa Civilian Council

24. The main actor exhuming clandestine and irregular graves in Raqqa are the First Responders. Established in early 2018 through the support of the US State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), the First Responders were initially part of the Reconstruction Committee, a relatively autonomous organ of the Raqqa Civilian Council (RCC).³ Starting in March 2019, the Reconstruction Committee was dismantled and the First Responders came under the supervision of the RCC.
25. The Raqqa Civilian Council is an administrative body of the SDC, the political representative of the Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria and the political wing of the SDF.⁴ While the RCC's Municipalities Committee oversees the administrative work of the First Responders, the RCC's Office of the President oversees any external communication and support to the First Responders. Yet, in reality the First Responders are relatively autonomous and do not have a high level of engagement with the RCC's offices or committees politically, administratively or even technically.
26. The First Responders are composed of 113 individuals including a seven-person administrative team headed by a team lead and deputy, 42 firefighters, seven divers, 34 rescue workers, one pathologist and a general practitioner (GP). The First Responders are highly respected by the residents in Raqqa for their tireless work in responding to emergencies and recovering

³ The Raqqa Civilian Council was established in 2017 and is composed of the following committees/offices: the education committee, the finance committee, the municipalities committee, the health committee, the media office, the youth and sports committee, the agriculture committee, the women's committee, the families of the martyrs committee, the legislative office, the justice committee, the interior committee, the control and inspection committee, the bakeries and mills committee, the public relations office, the internal defense committee, and the office of the co-presidents.

⁴ The SDC was established in 2015 to oversee seven regions in northeast Syria: the Jazira, Tabqa, Afrin, Manbij, Deir Ezzor, the Furat Province, and Raqqa. In 2018, Turkey took control of Afrin and since the US withdrawal in October 2019, the SDC has reached an agreement to hand over control of portions of its territory to the Government of Syria.

thousands of bodies of the dead. The rescue workers are responsible for digging up graves and exhuming bodies while the pathologist and GP determine the sex and relative age of the bodies, any distinguishing markers and the cause of death, and extract post-mortem DNA samples. A lawyer is on staff to document the exhumations and sign off on any “death documents”. These ‘death documents’ provided by the First Responders are unofficial and not recognized by the Government of Syria. The First Responders maintain all data in a statistics and documentation office.

27. Neither the RCC nor the First Responders have staff to interact with the families of the missing. While the RCC’s Office of the President reportedly has a registry for missing persons where up to 1,500 people have registered their missing relatives, all families of the missing interviewed noted the lack of an official institution or formal protocols for reporting missing persons. The RCC’s Justice Committee is not involved in matters related to missing persons or clandestine or irregular mass graves. Rather, the Committee is limited in its mandate to legal matters.

3.1.2. Deir Ezzor Civil Council and the ‘Forensic’ Team

28. Like the Raqqa Civilian Council, the Deir Ezzor Civil Council (DCC) is an administrative body of the SDC in Deir Ezzor. As discussed below, the DCC formed an *ad-hoc* Forensic Team to remove a total of 522 bodies abandoned in streets, homes and farmland in two areas in Deir Ezzor: Hajin and Baghouz. In total, the team consisted of 17 individuals including a GP with some forensic training, nurses and laborers. The team was contracted to work for a total of two months in Hajin and after that for three months in Baghouz. Neither the DCC nor the Forensic Team have done any subsequent work in excavating, documenting or identifying missing persons. Nor does the DCC have any institutions or protocols to deal with families of the missing.

3.1.3. Organizations and Initiatives

29. The few organizations that have worked on missing persons issues in northeast Syria have focused primarily on documentation, advocacy and to a very limited extent training of relevant stakeholders. All organizations concerned with missing persons, other than the First Responders and the Deir Ezzor Forensic Team, are based outside of Syria

❖ Documentation

30. The main work of many international and Syrian civil society organizations has been the documentation of missing persons. Yet due to severe security concerns, lack of funding and largescale military campaigns, documentation has been piecemeal and fragmented. While a few organizations and initiatives including *Al Share’ Media*, *Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently* and “Where are the Kidnapped by ISIS?” documented persons taken by ISIS, the documentation of missing persons became more difficult and less systematic following the US-led Global Coalition’s airstrikes on Raqqa. Indeed, multiple sources reported that while they knew that their relatives were killed during battle, they no longer knew where their bodies are buried due to the tremendous damage to the city.
31. Currently, opportunities to document missing persons inside Raqqa and large parts of northeast Syria are limited. Local efforts thus far to document missing persons have been undertaken discreetly, relying on either a network of activists, and community members and/or a small number of field staff. International human rights organizations, including *Amnesty International*, have traveled to northeast Syria and documented civilians killed during the Global Coalition

strikes, including missing persons whose bodies have not yet been recovered.⁵

32. In addition to documenting the names of missing persons, a small number of organizations and initiatives have used ISIS documents, information etched on the walls of ISIS detention centers, and other evidence to determine the circumstances of missing persons. Both *Al Share' Media* and the *Syrian Justice & Accountability Center* (SJAC) have gathered thousands of these documents and pieces of evidence in hopes of helping families to determine the fate of their relatives.

❖ **Advocacy**

33. Advocacy efforts around missing persons in northeast Syria have primarily focused on the need for greater transparency and information from the Global Coalition and the Kurdish authorities regarding the whereabouts of persons disappeared by ISIS. To date, to ICMP's knowledge, neither the Global Coalition nor the Kurdish authorities have released information on the circumstances of missing persons taken by ISIS. Nor has there been confirmation of whether the thousands of ISIS prisoners held by the SDF have been questioned on this matter.⁶

❖ **Training**

34. From 27-28 December 2019, the *Syrian Justice and Accountability Center* (SJAC) in partnership with the *Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team* (EEAAF) conducted remote training consisting of eight videos for the First Responders. The training segments focused on locating, preserving and documenting graves and human remains. Specifically, the training focused on: surveying a gravesite, mapping a grave, establishing GPS coordinates for the grave, collecting items and information from the grave, proper excavation practices, exhumation of bodies, preservation of items on the body, documenting the body and creating a proper database. SJAC and the EEAAF hope to expand on this training in the coming year and a half.

❖ **Individual Efforts**

35. Due to the lack of formal mechanisms and institutions dealing with missing persons, efforts to locate missing persons have largely been individual and *ad hoc*. Families of the missing have used personal contacts and intermediaries including tribal leaders and known community figures to obtain information on the missing. Some family members have also attempted to contact Global Coalition representatives. All persons interviewed noted that any responses were exclusively verbal.

⁵ ICMP is unaware of the existence or nature of the *Syrian Red Crescent* and the International Committee on the Red Cross (ICRC) current activities relating to missing persons in northeast Syria. ICMP was informed that both the *Syrian Red Crescent* and the ICRC had activities in northeast Syria prior to ISIS's takeover of the area, including documenting the names of those killed during battles between the Government of Syria and opposition forces.

⁶ The Kurdish authorities have been lobbying European capitals for support to create either an international or local tribunal to prosecute ISIS prisoners. Irrespective of whether this tribunal is established, the Kurdish authorities must prioritize the questioning of ISIS prisoners to learn of the circumstances of missing persons and screen them to determine if any of the prisoners are in fact ISIS detainees.

3.2. Funding

36. There has been little financial support for efforts to address the issue of missing persons in northeast Syria. Rather, the vast majority of funding has focused on service delivery and meeting basic needs. The US Government, through both the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been the primary financier of the work done to date. The United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) have also provided support to ICMP's Syria/MENA program, including its efforts to collect data from families of the missing, so that ICMP can support efforts to find missing persons.
37. Through 'Furat,' a *Creative Associates International* program based in Berlin, Germany, the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) funds the salaries and equipment of the First Responders.⁷ The Furat program also funded two teams in Deir Ezzor for short intervals to remove bodies found in streets, farmland and destroyed homes. Rental vehicles and other equipment were also initially provided to the First Responders by USAID (through *Chemomics International*), which reportedly has since ended its support to the First Responders.
38. Starting in 2019, the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) financed SJAC and the EEAAF to provide training and specialized equipment to the First Responders, including body bags, evidence bags, tapes, cameras, gloves and metal detectors. DRL has also begun supporting advocacy efforts.
39. Given the evolving political and military climate in northeast Syria, however, it remains unclear if and how US funding will continue and in which locations in northeast Syria.⁸

IV. TECHNICAL ISSUES: THE PROCESS OF LOCATING, RECOVERING AND IDENTIFYING MORTAL REMAINS

4.1. Raqqa

40. Between 2018-19 following ISIS's defeat, thousands of bodies were found in Raqqa in mass clandestine and irregular graves. In the past two years, 22 graves have been excavated in Raqqa province containing 3,797 bodies.⁹ Bodies were buried in both public and private locations, including homes, parks, courtyards, mosques and the city stadium. An additional 1,859 bodies were found in and around Raqqa City (87 on the outskirts of Raqqa City and 1,772 within Raqqa City), totaling 5,656 bodies.¹⁰
41. Following the establishment of the First Responders, residents have reported to them mass clandestine and irregular graves, including graves where families believed their relatives were buried. While the First Responders have generally been responsive to such requests, some

⁷ It remains unclear how long the funding to the First Responders will last given the October 2019 announced US withdrawal from parts of northeast Syria.

⁸ To date, there has been no clarification of where US-funded programs will work following the US withdrawal from large parts of northeast Syria in October 2019. Whereas current US support in northeast Syria has mostly targeted Raqqa, ICMP has heard that US funding and support will be mostly limited to Deir Ezzor in the coming months. Yet, at the time of writing, work has continued in Raqqa.

⁹ Two additional graves have also been located but remain untouched near Division 17 (الفرقة 17) and Tabqa Airport. It is believed that the graves contain the bodies of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces killed by ISIS. ICMP was told that the graves will remain unopened until a political agreement is reached.

¹⁰ These numbers are as of 11 February 2020.

families reported that they had to pay for the removal of bodies themselves, possibly due to the First Responders' limited resources.

42. The First Responders started exhuming bodies from graves in early January 2018. According to the First Responders¹¹, 1,491 of the bodies were combatants (based on their clothing or other distinguishing markers), 1,986 were of male civilians, 797 were of female civilians, 739 were of boys, 373 were of girls, and 171 were of unknown sex. Of the exhumed bodies, 627 were identified using basic distinguishing markers including jewelry, clothing, tattoos and IDs and returned to their families. An additional 33 bodies were identified but never claimed by their families. A total of 4,397 are unidentified. It should be noted that the First Responders have limited forensic or specialized expertise in the fields of documentation, excavation, recovery and robust scientific identification.¹² All work by the First Responders has been done through trial and error and limited remote guidance.

❖ **Excavation, Recovery, and Methods of Identifying Bodies**

43. Given the limited technical expertise and training in forensic archaeological excavation, the location and identification of bodies has been rudimentary. The First Responders relied on witnesses and land features such as elevated soil to locate graves.¹³ Upon locating a grave, they used basic equipment such as trucks, tractors, shovels and axes to exhume the bodies. Such work came at tremendous risk to the First Responders and others, as many areas throughout Raqqa were heavily mined and required demining before an excavation could take place.

44. Following the removal of bodies, the First Responders reburied the bodies in Raqqa's two main cemeteries: Jabal al-Shamiya (in southern Raqqa City) and Tal al Bay'a (a.k.a. Tal al-Shuhada, translated as 'Martyr's Hill')¹⁴ (in northeast Raqqa) cemeteries. Multiple sources and witnesses have reported that there may have been comingling of body parts during the recovery process and damage caused to the graves by large and rudimentary equipment. This may cause problems in future identification efforts and accountability processes. However, with technical assistance, training and awareness of the forensic process, remedial action can be taken to establish robust processes to locate and identify the missing.

45. To date, no reference samples have been taken and no DNA-based identifications have been performed. All identifications of human remains have relied on visual examinations of clothing, jewelry, tattoos and documents found on the bodies. The First Responders only recently started taking hair, teeth and bone samples from exhumed bodies. Of the 5,676 recovered bodies, the First Responders have taken DNA samples from approximately 1,400. The samples have been stored in an unrefrigerated container in Raqqa until the time the First Responders have the proper equipment to preserve, protect and analyze them.

46. ICMP was told that most of the graves had been excavated in Raqqa City between 2018-19 and the First Responders are now working on graves outside the city. In total, 22 mass clandestine and irregular graves have been excavated in Raqqa province (see Annex I for a table of graves and Annex II for an interactive map of the locations of the graves).

¹¹ These numbers are from 8 January 2018 until 21 November 2019.

¹² Only recently, the First Responders have begun receiving video trainings on forensic documentation by the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team.

¹³ As shown through satellite imagery and based on the testimony of eyewitnesses, ISIS dug trenches in parks and open fields where they would subsequently bury bodies.

¹⁴ Tal al Bay'a/Tal al Shuhada' (Martyr's Hill) is the main cemetery where bodies were reburied.

- i) Al Rasheed Grave: Al Rasheed was previously a high school soccer field located on Adnan al Maliki Street to the east of a courthouse. Excavation of the Al Rasheed grave began on 17 April 2018 and lasted until 9 June 2018. Five hundred and fifty-three (553) bodies were exhumed from the grave. Of these, 153 were identified using basic markers and returned to their families.
- ii) Al Baydaa Garden Grave: Located in al Nahda neighborhood west of the Raqqa City center, Al Baydaa contained a total of 33 bodies. Excavation of the grave started on 14 March 2018 and lasted until 12 June 2018.
- iii) Al Taj Grave: Covering roughly four kilometers of agricultural land south of the local zoo, the Al Taj grave contained 402 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 21 June 2018 and ended on 26 July 2018. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, 31 of the bodies were identified using basic markers and handed over to their families.
- iv) Al Najjarin Grave: South of Al Baydaa Garden in the Al Nahda neighborhood in western Raqqa City is a rectangular parkland-turned-grave containing 27 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 1 August 2018 and lasted until 5 August 2018. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, 19 of the bodies exhumed were identified using basic markers and their remains returned to their families.
 - Al Badou Alley Graves (Graves 5-9): North of Raqqa City, Al Badou Alley contained five graves with 111 bodies. The bodies in the graves are believed to have been killed during the Global Coalition strikes and/or during the ground fighting between ISIS and the SDF:
- v) *Grave 1*: The first grave, containing 14 bodies, was discovered in a small garden east of the Hawari School. Excavation of the grave began on 15 June 2018 and lasted until 18 June 2018.
- vi) *Grave 2*: The second grave, containing 12 bodies, was discovered in a small garden west of al Shuhadaa Mosque opposite Bayan Rotisserie in Al Badou Alley. Excavation of the grave began on 12 December 2018 and lasted until 19 December 2018.
- vii) *Grave 3*: A grave containing 41 bodies was found in a house south of the Al Asfar Warehouse in Al Badou Alley. Excavation of the grave began on 3 July 2018 and lasted until 9 July 2018.
- viii) *Grave 4*: A grave containing 23 bodies was found in a house south of the Al Asfar Warehouse in Al Badou Alley. Excavation of the grave began on 30 July 2018 and lasted until 2 August 2018. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, two of the bodies were identified and returned to their families.
- ix) *Grave 5*: A fifth grave, containing 21 bodies was found in a home in Al Badou Alley west of the Al Asfar Warehouse. Excavation began on 27 August 2019 and lasted until 11 September 2019.
- x) Al Nahda Neighborhood Park Grave: In a park near the Jawad Anzour School in al Nahda neighborhood, 19 bodies were exhumed. Excavation of the grave began on 14 June 2018 and lasted until 18 December 2018. ICMP was informed that residents believe this grave contains mostly civilians who were buried by their relatives during the Global Coalition

strikes.

- x i) Muthalthiya Park Grave: In a park opposite Bilal Mosque east of Jazra junction, seven (7) bodies were exhumed. Excavation of this grave started on 12 December 2019 and lasted for one day.
- x ii) Panorama Park Grave: At the southern entrance to Raqqa City and north of Jisr al-Jadeed, Panorama Park is the second largest mass grave in Raqqa. An estimated 24 square acres, Panorama Park contained 793 bodies. The grave is believed to contain a large number of bodies killed by the Global Coalition, including ISIS fighters. Unlike other graves where bodies were buried hastily and in an unorganized manner, bodies in Panorama Park Grave were buried in a systematic manner in longitudinal trenches. Excavation of the park began on 10 January 2019 and lasted until 12 February 2019.
- x iii) Children's Garden Grave: Located in al Fardous neighborhood in the center of Raqqa City, the Children's Garden contained five (5) bodies. Excavation of the garden started on 16 April 2018 and lasted until 20 September 2019.
- x iv) Jam'a al Qadim Mosque Grave: Jama' al Qadim Grave is located north of February 23 Street in Raqqa City next to the mosque. Ninety-four (94) bodies were exhumed from the grave. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, 68 bodies were identified using basic identifying markers and returned to their families. Excavation began on 26 August 2018 and lasted until 16 September 2018.
- x v) Al Fakhikha Grave: Approximately 1.5 kilometers south of Raqqa City on agricultural land formerly belonging to the Agricultural Research Institute, Al Fakhikha Grave is the third largest mass grave in Raqqa province to be opened. Excavation of the grave began on 20 January 2019 and lasted until 9 June 2019, and 673 bodies were exhumed.
- x vi) Al Tala'a Camp Grave: Located on agricultural land within the Al Tala'a Camp south of Raqqa City, the Al Tala'a Camp Grave is the largest mass grave, containing 815 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 9 June 2019 and lasted until 18 September 2019.
- x vii) Kasrat Afnan Grave: Located south of the city on the main road, Kasrat Afnan Grave contained 40 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 21 September 2019 and lasted until 5 October 2019.
- x viii) Kasrat Faraj Grave: Located southwest of Raqqa City on the main road within the Maqas Park, this grave contained 15 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 24 September 2019 and lasted until 30 September 2019.
- x ix) Jabal Shamiya Grave: Located south of Raqqa City within Jabal (mountain) Shamiya, this grave contained 42 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 6 October 2019 and lasted until 20 October 2019.
- x x) Mansouriya Grave: Located south of the town of Mansouriya west of Raqqa City, Mansouriya Grave contained 18 bodies. Excavation of the grave began on 21 October 2019 and lasted until 23 October 2019.
- x xi) Western Salhabiya Grave: This grave is located west of Raqqa City in the town of Western Salhabiya. Excavation of the grave started on 30 October 2019 and is ongoing.

At the time of writing, 124 bodies had been exhumed.

- xxii) Maqla' (Quarry) Grave: This grave is located south of Raqqa City in a quarry. Excavation of this grave started on 11 November 2019 and is ongoing. At the time of writing, 46 bodies had been exhumed.

❖ Documentation

47. Lacking technical training, the First Responders have not documented the graves or bodies according to international forensic standards, or preserved evidence found on the bodies or at the gravesites. Yet, with the passage of time and through increased trial and error, it is clear that documentation efforts have become more detailed. Although initially, the First Responders may not have photographed bodies or provided detailed documentation on the location or the state of the bodies, they appear to have become more thorough in their documentation, likely due to increased attention and support from external and technical parties.
48. According to *Human Rights Watch* researchers who observed the documentation process in June 2018, "the team logg[ed] basic details about the bodies found; for each body, a team member assigned the body a number and logged on a form the possible cause of death, injuries, sex, hair color and length, clothing, and approximate age, if it could be determined, as well as any items found on the body. They determined this information based on a visual assessment of the remains exhumed. They did not take photographs in accordance with international forensic standards."¹⁵
49. This information was verified by multiple sources who noted that photos were taken in an *ad-hoc* manner, often failing to photograph identifying markers. In some cases, ICMP was told that photos were not taken at all of the bodies or the gravesites. ICMP was also told that the First Responders did not record the graves using GPS coordinates. Rather, graves were recorded by their approximate location in the city (e.g. in a park, alley, etc.). Other sources noted that the First Responders would log the number of the body found, the date of its exhumation and all items found on it, approximate age, sex, cause of death, location of reburial and the persons/team overseeing the reburial. While some sources noted that documentation was mostly done on paper due to the difficulty in maintaining a laptop, others confirmed that it was uploaded to the First Responders' central computer. Following exhumation, bodies were placed in blue body bags that were numbered by pen. The First Responders logged the number of the body and where it was reburied.
50. Neither the First Responders nor any of the related administrative bodies issued death certificates to families in cases where the bodies were identified. Rather, on those occasions where the family was known, the First Responders would provide them with a document with the details of the body, where it was found, identifying markers and any other information related to the body. The document also detailed when and how the body was given to the family. If the body was not identified, the First Responders kept the document with all the logged information.

¹⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/03/syria-mass-graves-former-isis-areas> (Syria: Mass Graves in Former ISIS Areas, 3 July 2018); interview with Priyanka Motaparthy, former acting director of HRW's Emergencies division and Nadim Houry, former director of HRW's Terrorism and Counterterrorism division.

4.2. Deir Ezzor

51. Like Raqqa, Deir Ezzor witnessed largescale executions at the hands of the Islamic State during its control between 2014 to 2018. Since ISIS's defeat in Baghouz in March 2018 in the eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor, little has been done to draw attention to, document or exhume bodies in Deir Ezzor. Currently, control over Deir Ezzor is divided between the SDC/SDF (as supported by the Global Coalition) to the east of the Euphrates River and the Syrian Government and Iranian militias to the west of the Euphrates River. This shared control, as well as the vast desert areas of Deir Ezzor, has made it difficult to determine the status of mass graves and accurately count the numbers of missing persons.
52. It is known that ISIS committed a number of massacres in August 2014 against the Al-Shuatait tribe in the villages and towns of Abu Hamam, Al-Kashkiyya and Gharanij. Numbers of the dead range from 750 to 800 people, including civilians, guards of oil fields and combatants. Dozens of corpses were left throughout the towns without proper burial, leaving the bodies to decompose and difficult to identify. Bodies were also disposed of in open pits, with only a limited number of distinguishing markers or clothing. Upon returning to their towns and villages, residents buried some of the bodies in several well-known locations: Abu Hardoub cemetery, the Jarthi cemetery, a cemetery near Abu Hamam canal, a cemetery near the Omar oil field and the cemetery near the train railway in Al-Kashkiyya. Due to the bodies' disintegration, residents were unable to identify the bodies.

❖ Excavation, Recovery, and Methods of Identifying Bodies

53. Starting on 24 May 2019, the Deir Ezzor Civil Council – through the support of *Creative's* Furat program – formed an *ad-hoc* Forensic Team to remove bodies dumped in the streets, farmlands and destroyed homes in two areas in Deir Ezzor: Hajin and Baghouz. The team of 17 individuals consisted of a team leader – a general practitioner with some forensic experience – nurses and laborers. Like the First Responders in Raqqa, the team has not received structured forensic training to deal with excavation, recovery and robust scientific identification of the bodies. Nor had they had sufficient training on forensic documentation. The team had at its disposal basic equipment, shovels, two cars and one excavator.
54. For two months, from 24 May 2019 until 24 July 2019, the team worked on removing bodies from the streets and destroyed buildings in Hajin. No mass graves were opened in Hajin's Al-Majnah cemetery or the Sanabel neighborhood cemetery, where it is believed the victims of ISIS and civilians killed in the Coalition strikes were buried. In total, 172 bodies were removed from Hajin and buried in a special cemetery. Only four of the bodies were identified using basic identifying markers.
55. Subsequently, for three months from 17 September 2019 to 17 December 2019, the team removed a total of 350 bodies from destroyed homes, streets and agricultural lands in Baghouz. The team did not open the five mass graves located in and around Baghouz. Out of the 350 bodies, four were identified using basic identifying markers, including two originally from Idlib. More grave sites have been reported near the oil fields controlled by the Syrian Government. Those buried are believed to be from the town of Abu Hamam who went missing during the 2014 Al-Shuatait massacre.
56. In both Hajin and Baghouz, the team was informed of the bodies and their location by families and residents. Bodies were discovered in homes and agricultural fields while farmers tried to

cultivate their fields. Bodies were also found by their rotting smell and by dogs. Some bodies were found in open pits, where they were dumped without burial.

❖ Documentation

57. Once bodies were located, the GP logged the location of where the bodies were found; any specifications including gender, age, hair color, distinguishing markers (tattoos, body marks); cause of death (if possible to ascertain); and any belongings found on the body including jewelry, IDs and clothing. The GP then assigned a special number to the body that matched the number of the grave where the body was subsequently buried. The team did not take any post-mortem samples from the bodies.
58. All the information obtained by the team was sent to Creative's Furat program, including information relevant to identifications. Following the team's work in Hajin and Baghouz, it has not had any subsequent support or work.

4.3. Al-Houta

59. Possibly one of the most well-known and largest sites where bodies have been disposed of in northeast Syria is Al-Houta, a natural gorge located near the town of Hammam al-Turkman, south of Suluk and approximately 65 km north of Raqqa City. Prior to 2011, Al-Houta was a popular destination for hiking and local tourism. Yet starting 2013, it was used as a mass grave. According to residents of the area, journalists and activists, the first person who proposed disposing of bodies in Al-Houta was the Nusra Front commander turned ISIS leader, Faisal al-Balu following an attack on a government checkpoint near Tal Abyad in July 2013. Approximately 20 Syrian government soldiers were killed, the remains of 12 were subsequently discarded into the gorge.
60. With the emergence and growing control of ISIS over large parts of the northeast, ISIS discarded bodies and persons still alive into Al-Houta, including members of the Free Syrian Army, government soldiers and Kurdish YPG fighters. Activists and locals reported that 'Abu Yasser al-Iraqi', an ISIS security personnel, was responsible for throwing bodies into Al-Houta during ISIS's control of Raqqa. While it is impossible to know the exact number of bodies thrown into Al-Houta, activists and locals estimate the number to be in the thousands.
61. Based on both interviews and open source information, ICMP learned that ISIS would dump cars full of corpses into Al-Houta or execute victims at the edge of gorge to allow their bodies to fall into the crevice. Other victims would be brought blindfolded and told to run to their deaths, under the pretense that they were being released and running to their salvation.
62. Indeed, due to the large number of bodies discarded into Al-Houta, local residents complained to ISIS officials of the smell and feared diseases caused by decomposing remains. In response, ISIS purportedly emptied crude oil into the deep gorge and burned it for days.
63. Following the defeat of ISIS in the area at the end of 2016, there have been no known attempts to recover the bodies dumped into Al-Houta, due in large part to the difficulty in entering the gorge and the lack of equipment to recover bodies. Following the October 2019 Turkish-led incursion into northern Syria, the area is currently under the control of the Turkish-supported National Army.

V. THE DOMESTIC LEGAL & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

5.1. Legislation

64. Legal texts in Syrian legislation that deal with the issue of the missing are few and far between.¹⁶ Generally, the laws focus on the time period and procedures necessary in declaring a missing person deceased. They lack protections for the missing and their families, and provide limited guidance on relevant institutions that could help in the search for the missing or provide information on their whereabouts. Rather, the laws focus on courts issuing judgments declaring missing persons dead or appointing legal representatives.
65. In general, there are two types of laws: those that apply to civilians and those that apply to the military. In the absence of special legislation, many civilian laws also apply to missing combatants.

❖ Laws Relating to Missing Civilians

66. According to Law No. 84/1949, Article 31 of the Syrian Civil Code, the legal persona begins with birth and ends with death, whether that death is natural or by legal judgement. Article 34 of the same law then notes that all matters relating to missing persons are either prescribed in special laws such as the Personal Status Law or in Islamic Sharia provisions unless regulated otherwise.¹⁷ Nearly all legal matters relating to missing persons are found in Articles 202-206 in the Personal Status Law No. 53/1953.¹⁸
67. Article 202 defines a missing person as “every person whose life or death status is unknown or who is absent.” Article 203, on the other hand, defines an absent person as a person who is alive but whose location or situation is unknown. Article 203 further notes that the same laws that apply to a missing person can apply to an absent person if that person is prevented by force from returning to his/her home and managing his/her affairs for more than one year.¹⁹
68. Under Article 205, a missing person will be declared dead upon reaching the age of 80 (following issuance of a court judgement) under normal circumstances and after four years from the date of disappearance under extraordinary circumstances such as war or natural disasters. Until such time, the person maintains all his legal rights, including his right to inherit, however suspended until the fate and whereabouts of the missing person are clarified. Once a court judgement is issued, though, the missing person’s legal persona ends and he/she is treated as deceased.
69. Article 204 discusses the steps necessary to appoint a legal agent for the missing person to act

¹⁶ As large parts of the northeast are not under the control of the Syrian government, the domestic legal and institutional framework is not applied by the authorities in control there except under limited circumstances unrelated to the matter of the missing. Yet it is relevant to understand what current framework exists for any negotiated political processes and possible future arrangements between political and military authorities.

¹⁷ Syrian Personal Status Law takes the form of specialized laws that originate from multiple sources: Ottoman family rights law, Egyptian laws regarding personal status, Sharia provisions developed by Qadri Pasha and the personal status project of the Damascene judge, Ali Tantawi.

¹⁸ While this law was subsequently amended by Law No. 34/1975, Law No. 19/2000, Law No. 18/2003, Law No. 31/2006 and Law No. 4/2019, the amendments are not related to the matter of missing persons and are not relevant to this assessment.

¹⁹ This relates specially to matters of divorce. For example, under Art. 109 of the Personal Status Law, a wife can divorce her husband (without justified reason) who has been missing after one year.

on his/her behalf. If the missing person had previously designated a legal agent, the court must confirm that the agent meets the legal requirements. If the agent fails to meet the requirements or the missing person had not previously designated a legal agent, the court can appoint an agent for the missing person.²⁰ Article 206 notes that the legal agent of a missing person has the same rights and duties as a guardian.

❖ **Laws Relating to Missing Military**

70. As noted above, legal texts regarding personal status generally apply to the military unless a special text is provided. Decree No. 15/2019 defines a missing military person as a soldier whose status – alive or dead – is not known, due to war or war operations, or due to actions by a terrorist gang, hostile elements, or due to ordinary service.
71. Decree No. 15/2019 also distinguishes between the missing and martyrs who could receive distinction, compensation and other family benefits. According to Decree No. 15/2019, a missing person who disappeared after 15 March 2011 due to war or war operations or by a terrorist gang or hostile elements is deemed a martyr four years after their disappearance (following the issuance of a death verdict). Yet missing soldiers who defected or tried to defect from the military units of the government forces are not protected by this law. Their existence is not recognized and their fate is generally undisclosed if families request their military records. Rather, families are told that the missing person is still on the run and therefore unaccounted for.
72. Procedurally, a request is submitted by the family of the missing person, accompanied by a family statement from the Military Public Prosecution. The family is then transferred to the military police to review the military records for any information on the circumstances of the missing person. Assuming no information is found, the family must wait four years from the date of disappearance to obtain a death certificate from the Ministry of Defense (which then sends the military documents to the Civil Registry Secretariat proving death or its equivalent in accordance to Article 43 from the Personal Status Law).

❖ **Obtaining a Court Judgment that the Missing Person is Dead**

73. For both civilians and the military missing, families of the missing must obtain a court judgment that the missing person is dead (*see Annex III for the lawsuit text*). The case must be filed by a presumed heir or an interested party such as a wife, trustee, or debtor. Several documents and pieces of evidence must be submitted to the judge before hearing from two witnesses on the facts of the case, including: 1) when and where the person went missing, with the exact date; 2) proof that the person is still missing; 3) if the person went missing in Syria, proof from the

²⁰ In terms of procedure, a family member of the missing person must submit a request to serve as a legal agent. Attached to the court-mandated application should be a police report that the person (civilian) has gone missing or in the case of military or security persons, a decision issued by the Council of the Missing (either from the Ministry of Defense for soldiers or from the Ministry of Interior for police officers and internal security). In addition, the applicant must provide his/her criminal record, a family declaration showing his/her relationship to the missing person, and a report from the mayor confirming his/her good character and qualification to be appointed as a legal agent for the missing person. The judge will subsequently hear from two witnesses that the person has indeed gone missing and the details of his/her disappearance. The judge must then issue a judgment that the person has gone missing and appoint the legal agent.

Immigration and Passports Department that the person has not left the country; and 4) confirmation that the disappearance occurred after 15 March 2011 (especially for military persons).

74. After having heard the two witnesses, the judge will verify the details of the case with the Missing Committee of the Ministry of Defense for military persons, the Ministry of Interior for police personnel or the Ministry of Justice for civilians. Having received confirmation from the respective ministry, the judge will issue a judgment after four years from the date of disappearance declaring the missing person deceased.
75. According to semi-official press sources linked to the Government of Syria, courts in Damascus received daily on average 70 requests during 2019 either to appoint a judicial agent or requests for a judgment that a missing person is deceased. This contrasts starkly with the 375 requests during the whole of 2015, according to statements made by a judge in Damascus.

❖ **Application of Laws Post-2011**

76. After 2011 and with the escalation of military operations in Syria, the application of laws relating to missing persons changed dramatically and matters became even more complicated. An estimated 128,000 individuals have been arrested by government forces since 2011. Because Syrian law lacks the necessary protections for the missing or their families and fails to provide practical measures for families seeking information on their missing, a majority of families of the missing have been left more or less in the dark, with the circumstances of disappearances remaining largely unknown.
77. ICMP was informed that families of the missing have mostly tried to obtain information about their relatives from the military police in Damascus, where some lists of detainees have been provided by various security branches or by the military hospitals. But even this procedure is usually subject to mediators and monetary extortion. In addition, families have tried to obtain information from the Reconciliation Committee, yet again, without significant results.
78. Lawyers and families of the missing pointed to three main methods used by families of the missing to determine their circumstances:
 - First, families submitted an application to the Ministry of Justice in Damascus, providing the name of the missing person, the date of their disappearance and any other relevant information. In some cases, the Ministry of Justice responded to this application with information on the circumstances of the missing person and his/her place of detention if the person was being held by the Syrian government;
 - Second, families submitted an application to the military police in Damascus for a visit to Seydnaya Prison to determine if the missing person was being held there. In the rare event that the request was approved, it meant that the missing person was indeed being held at the prison. Yet, on the other hand, the absence of a response could mean that either the person was not being held there or the government authorities did not wish to disclose his/her location. ICMP was told, though, that even in the few cases when government authorities have responded positively to a request, it is advisable not to visit as the detainee could face severe torture and even death following the visit;
 - Third, families reviewed the civil registry in the place of the missing person's residence or else attempted to speak to the mayor of the neighborhood where the missing person lived. In a few cases, it was possible to verify the status of the missing person if

government authorities reported his/her death.

❖ **Obstacles for Families of the Missing**

79. With limited legal protections and unclear procedures, families of the missing have confronted tremendous obstacles in obtaining information on the missing, particularly after 2011. Largescale displacement has left millions of Syrians far from their homes and areas of original residence and with limited access to government institutions, including prisons. In addition, judges have often refused to assign a legal representative or provide support to families if the missing person was detained by the Syrian government. This has had legal implications for the family, and especially women, in restricting their access to family assets. As men have gone missing at higher rates than women in Syria, female family members must undergo the difficult process of becoming legal agents, seeking divorces or even seeking death judgements on behalf of their male relatives. Yet for a wife to seek a divorce from her husband after a full year since his disappearance, she must first obtain a police report or official record stating his status as missing. In addition, assets remain the property of the missing person throughout his absence or until a court judgment declaring his death. Only a legal agent can access assets of the missing in the meantime.
80. In addition, since 2011, many laws have been passed that strip missing persons (and their families) of their rights. For example, Law No. 19/2012 (also known as the Counterterrorism Law) broadly defines terrorism to include human rights activities and dissent. Decree 63/2012 then allows the Finance Ministry to seize movable and immovable properties of people who fall under the Counterterrorism Law. Similarly, Law No. 35/2017 allows the Ministry of Finance to seize the real and moveable assets of males who have not met their military duties. These laws have collectively worked to disenfranchise persons, many of whom have subsequently gone missing.
81. Families who have tried to obtain a legal judgment of death have avoided mentioning that their relatives were detained or lost in government prisons. Yet this has limited the information families can include in a court application, thereby weakening the application. Families and lawyers who spoke with ICMP noted the difficulty in obtaining a police report that proves a person is missing. Police often refuse to provide such a document. Similarly, families are rarely notified by prison administrators when their relatives are moved from civilian prisons, such as Adra Prison in Damascus, to another location. Rather, prison administrators reportedly deny the disappearance of the person and the family cannot prove that their relative had disappeared from the prison and are therefore unable to assert in any court application that they have been transferred and disappeared.
82. Further, court employees are often reluctant to accept requests relating to missing persons detained by the authorities, which they consider a security issue rather than a legal matter. Families are therefore left with no legal recourse in assigning a legal representative or seeking a court judgment for purposes of accessing family finances or property.
83. In 2018, the Syrian government sent notifications through the Ministry of Interior's civil registry, informing of the deaths of hundreds of missing persons, many of whom had been detainees in detention centers or forcibly disappeared. Chaos ensued, prompting the authorities to stop sending the lists of detainee deaths.
84. Families who were notified of the death of their relatives during the 2018 notifications weren't given personal belongings except for the identity cards of detainees who had died in the

Tishreen Military Hospital. In all cases, the cause of death was listed as a heart attack or stroke. No families were given the bodies of their relatives or information on where their bodies were taken or buried.

VI. DEMOGRAPHICS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF PERSONS DISAPPEARING

85. The demographics and circumstances of persons disappearing remain largely undocumented in northeast Syria due to security concerns, limited expertise and frequent change of political and military groups controlling the area, resulting in large IDP flows. ICMP was told by civil society organizations and families of the missing that State actors and ISIS were the main perpetrators of disappearances in northeast Syria. Yet, many more were killed or went missing with the start and escalation of the US-led Global Coalition strikes against ISIS.
86. Missing persons in northeast Syria include men, women and children; members of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds including Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Yazidis; members tied to different political groups (opposition groups, PYD, SDC, GoS, ISIS); civilians and fighters (ISIS, Free Syrian Army, Syrian Arab Army, SDF, YPG/YPJ); and Syrians and non-Syrians. While the exact numbers are difficult to estimate, they easily reach into the thousands.

6.1. Pre-ISIS Control (2011-2014)

87. With the start of the Syrian uprising in March 2011, the number of missing in northeast Syria spiked drastically. Political activists, humanitarian workers and perceived dissidents were summarily rounded up and detained. Many of those who were detained disappeared in detention centers and prisons and are still unaccounted for. In meetings with nearly a dozen families of the missing in Urfa, ICMP was told that their relatives were disappeared by State actors between 2011 and 2013 and remain unaccounted for.
88. Starting in approximately March 2013, Syrian government forces withdrew and the armed opposition (e.g. Free Syrian Army) took control of Raqqa and northeast Deir Ezzor until January 2014. The majority of those previously detained by the Syrian government in local detention centers and prisons remained unaccounted for. By contrast, the armed opposition group mainly disappeared combatants from different factions and, to a limited extent, civilians, whereas ISIS would target and disappear both combatants and civilians. Yet disappearances of civilians would drastically increase after 2014.
89. In the Kurdish-held areas, there were also reports of the PYD and its military wing, the YPG, disappearing combatants and civilians, including political dissidents or those with perceived links to ISIS or the FSA.

6.2. Post-ISIS Control & Defeat (2014-present)

90. Following fierce battles with armed opposition fighters, ISIS took control of Raqqa City in January 2014, expanding its rule during the coming months over Raqqa province, Deir Ezzor and other parts of northeast Syria. ISIS kidnapped and assassinated thousands of people. It declared war on journalists and kidnapped and assassinated both Syrian and foreign journalists. According to the Syrian Journalists Association, there are at least 17 missing journalists, including three foreigners. While some are known to have been killed by ISIS, their bodies were never returned

to their families. In addition, ISIS kidnapped humanitarian workers and individuals tied to opposition activities/bodies including members of local councils, lawyers and political activists. ISIS also kidnapped foreigners (often for ransom) including Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, Kayla Mueller, and Peter Kassig, among others.²¹ While the majority of foreign hostages held by the Islamic State were released in exchange for large sums of money, those from the US and UK (which maintain a strict no-ransom policy) were killed or remain unaccounted for. Further, ISIS disappeared combatants from armed opposition groups including the Free Syrian Army and Ahrar al-Sham, as well as members of the Syrian army in both the Tabqa Military Airport and Squad/Firqa 17 near Raqqa City. ISIS similarly captured and disappeared members of the PYD/YPG and Kurdish residents when it took control over hundreds of Kurdish villages and towns in and around Kobane (Ain Al Arab) in late September 2014.

91. ISIS assassinated or disappeared members of Arab tribes in Deir Ezzor, the most notable massacre being that of the Shuatait tribe in 2014. In its attempts to gain access to the oil fields in the region, ISIS faced resistance and pushback from some tribes. While ISIS 'forgave' certain tribes for their dissent, it met the Shuatait's resistance with deadly force, massacring more than 700 people including tribal members, technical staff working on the fields and guards protecting them.
92. When ISIS captured the city of Sinjar in Iraq's Nineveh Governate in August 2014, it abducted thousands of Yazidi men, women and children. While ISIS killed the majority of the men, it dispersed women and children around its so-called caliphate in both Iraq and Syria, degrading the women to sex slaves and forcing the children into training camps. The whereabouts of many of these women and children remain largely unknown.
93. While the disappearance of many of the aforementioned categories of people was partly documented by journalists, activists and community members on social networks or by local and international media sources, ISIS disappeared many other individuals who were neither activists nor dissidents. Following ISIS's formal declaration of its caliphate and control over large parts of northeast Syria, starting in July 2014, ISIS instituted laws restricting individual rights and basic freedoms, e.g. prohibiting the intermixing of sexes, internet use, communicating with journalists, smoking, and mandating prayer and full hijab. Residents who transgressed these laws were detained and often disappeared.
94. Starting in September 2014, the Global Coalition was formed and began airstrikes against ISIS targets in Kobane, Tal Abyad, Manbij, Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. In July 2017, the Global Coalition (in partnership with the SDF) escalated its attacks on ISIS in Raqqa City. Global Coalition operations resulted in the death of approximately 1,600 civilians, many of whom were disappeared. In addition, as residents tried to flee the bombardment, ISIS would detain and disappear them. All in all, the so-called Battle for Raqqa resulted in the death and disappearance of well over a thousand persons.
95. Following the defeat of ISIS, the SDC took control of large parts of the northeast including Raqqa and parts of Deir Ezzor. Under its rule, the SDC and its military arm – the SDF – have reportedly disappeared individuals including Kurdish activists and dissidents from PYD/SDC rule, families with perceived ties to ISIS or FSA soldiers and civilians. While there is no exact number of disappearances, the number is much lower than those disappeared by the Syrian government and ISIS.

²¹. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/10/24/world/middleeast/the-fate-of-23-hostages-in-syria.html> ("The Fates of 23 ISIS Hostages in Syria," Feb. 10, 2015).

VII. FAMILIES OF THE MISSING

96. Families of the missing are among the most relevant actors in the process of searching for and identifying the missing. As victims of the crime of enforced disappearance, their rights and participation in the search for the missing must be prioritized. As noted above, Syria's legal framework and institutions in northeast Syria provide little or no protections for families of the missing. Families are not empowered to participate in the documentation, location or identification processes. Rather, they appear to be purposefully excluded. Accordingly, their participation has been mostly *ad-hoc* and through individual efforts. To date, there are only a small number of family organizations, associations and initiatives, including *Families for Freedom*, *Caesar Families Association* and *The Coalition of the Families of the Kidnapped by ISIS* (Coalition of Families), an organization consisting of nine families of the missing from northeast Syria.
97. Coalition of Families emerged from the campaign "Where are the Missing from ISIS?" with the mandate to lobby governments and other authorities to provide more information on the circumstances of disappearances by ISIS. Its members are now based in Europe, having fled from Syria.
98. As a member of the Coalition of Families and mother of Abdulqader Haddad, who was kidnapped by ISIS in June 2013, Fatin Ajjan told ICMP, "A mother is different. A brother or sister [of a missing person] can resume his or her life. But I cannot resume my life." The daughter of Ismail Al-Hamed, Heba Al-Hamed (a co-founder of "Where are the Missing from ISIS?" campaign) told ICMP, "We have not received any legal assistance from any party, and the procedures that we have worked on to communicate with human rights organizations and the International Red Cross here in France have not produced any results." In interviews with Amer Matar, a co-founder and the brother of kidnapped Mohammed Nour Matar, ICMP was told that the Coalition of Families, through the support of other advocacy and human rights organizations, hopes to expand its network of families to those in Syria and bordering countries.
99. ICMP also spoke to multiple families of the missing residing in Raqqa. They reported not having received any form of support whether legal, financial or psychosocial, and that given the acute security situation, they could not organize themselves in any meaningful way. At least three families told ICMP that they believed they had seen their missing sons in videos following ISIS's defeat in Baghouz, Deir Ezzor. Their sons had either been kidnapped years earlier or, in one case, months before ISIS's defeat. In their attempts to discover the whereabouts of their sons, they had asked tribal and Kurdish leaders to intervene, used private contacts to obtain information, met with political and military authorities and traveled around the region to visit detention centers. On several occasions, money was extorted from the families in exchange for information, but ultimately, they failed to learn the whereabouts of their sons.
100. One such example is that of Qays Hussein Al-Ajali. Qays went missing in Ramadan 2017 (between May and June 2017) during the 'Battle for Raqqa'. While his parents fled a week earlier, Qays stayed behind to help his extended family flee from Raqqa to Aleppo. Qays's parents lost contact with him but believe he was captured by ISIS on a charge of smuggling civilians from the city. At the time, ISIS was using civilians in Raqqa as human shields and banned them from leaving. In February 2018, Umm and Abu Qays saw their son in video coverage of the prisoners of war who had surrendered to the SDF in Baghouz. He was kneeling, handcuffed, among a large group of others, including ISIS fighters. Umm Qays shared the video with ICMP along with photographs of her son. There is a clear resemblance.

101. In the months following the video, Abu Qays worked tirelessly using personal contacts and interlocutors to help him reach his son. He spoke with tribal and Kurdish leaders who tried to intervene on his behalf with the political and military authorities. He met with the SDF and showed them his son's pictures and the video of his capture. He traveled to both Qamishli and Hasaka to meet with prison administrators. He went to the PYD's public relations office in Ein Eissa and Raqqa. He spoke with members of the YPG (the military wing of the PYD). He traveled to Hasaka province and tried to visit Al Hol Camp. He was subsequently informed by interlocutors that Qays was being held in Ghwaran Prison in Hasaka (along with ISIS fighters). Despite his many attempts to visit the prison, he has not had any success in accessing the prison or learning any definitive information about Qays's whereabouts. Abu Qays notified ICMP that he was aware of 4-5 families who shared similar stories.
102. Through the support of ICMP, a few Syrian civil society organizations have recently started engaging families of the missing in Şanlıurfa (Urfa), in southern Turkey. *Horizon* and *Adala*, two Syrian civil society organizations in Urfa, have been working with families of the missing to build their familiarity with reporting mechanisms. Yet, they have faced challenges from the families. For example, families have expressed fear of security breaches to the data should they report their missing, which could ultimately result in retaliation against both the family and the missing person. In addition, families are often unwilling to report the disappearance of female family members. Given widespread sexual assault and rape in detention facilities, a female relative's disappearance or detention is perceived as a shame on the family. Families of the missing also expressed a deep mistrust of local and international organizations, which they often view as businesses seeking to profit off their losses. Ultimately, some families of the missing have become resigned to the belief that they can do nothing to learn the whereabouts of their relatives, leaving the matter "in the hands of God".
103. Despite the challenges, ICMP through data partnerships with Syrian CSOs has been able to collect data representing at the time of writing 4,621 missing persons in line with its stringent data protection standards. This data will eventually be used to find missing persons.
104. Yet more engagement with families of the missing will be needed, including trainings on basic reporting, assisting families in setting up initiatives/associations and supporting them in advocacy and legal work. In addition, institutional and legal protections must be prioritized for families of the missing.

VIII. CHALLENGES IN LOCATING & IDENTIFYING MISSING PERSONS

105. Challenges in locating and identifying missing persons in northeast Syria range from the lack of technical capacities, to lack of a legal framework, to weak institutions and continued instability in the region. While seemingly insurmountable, these challenges point to the dire need for more engagement in the process of locating and identifying missing persons in NE Syria.

❖ Lack of Technical Capacities

106. As noted above, the main actors responsible for the excavation and removal of bodies, including most notably the First Responders and the Forensic Team in Deir Ezzor, lack technical professionals on their teams, including forensic scientists, forensic archaeologists and anthropologists. In addition, the teams lack necessary forensic equipment and support. Indeed, the only forensic lab in Syria is in Damascus, under the control of the Syrian government. Even if

technical teams and capacities existed in northeast Syria, actors there do not have access to the Damascus lab and not much is known about the lab's forensic genetic capabilities. Furthermore, the teams to date have received only minimal technical training consisting of a two-day remote training course and basic guidelines. The political agencies overseeing the work of these teams also lack technical skills to support the process of locating and identifying missing persons or safeguarding the rights of families of the missing.

❖ **No Institutions Dealing with Missing Persons**

107. The authorities in northeast Syria lack a legal framework that protects missing persons and their families. Despite hearing that the SDC has a special office or committee for missing persons, all families of the missing that ICMP spoke with denied the existence of such an agency. As such, families have relied almost exclusively on personal relationships with Kurdish authorities or tribal leaders to gather information on missing persons. Often such inquiries came at a monetary cost and led to no tangible outcome.
108. In addition, courts in northeast Syria are not involved in the process of locating or identifying missing persons or providing any accountability mechanisms, while families have no procedural or legal guidance to ascertain the circumstances of disappearances. They are left to their own devices.

❖ **Lack of Political Will**

109. To date, the political authorities in northeast Syria have not prioritized the search for missing persons. Efforts are limited to the work of the First Responders in Raqqa, and to a much more limited extent, the Forensic Team in parts of Deir Ezzor. While there exists a plethora of Syrian civil society organizations in northeast Syria, they are limited to service-delivery and some peacebuilding initiatives. ICMP did not encounter any organizations specialized in documentation or initiatives for families of the missing. Rather, documentation has been limited to a weak network of activists working secretly and feeding information in a non-methodical manner to individuals or organizations based outside of Syria. Similarly, there have been limited advocacy efforts on the matter of missing persons and none based in Syria.
110. There have been no known efforts by the authorities in northeast Syria to question ISIS fighters held in captivity on the circumstances of the missing. It has been reported that ISIS fighters associated with local Arab tribes are being released for short-term political gains. These fighters may have critical information on the circumstances of persons going missing.

❖ **Weak Legal Framework**

111. Irrespective of the political situation in northeast Syria, Syria has a weak legal framework that does not provide proper protections for the missing or their families. Even if the authorities in northeast relied on the Syrian legal framework, it is insufficient in addressing fundamental legal rights, including efforts to locate and identify missing persons or protecting families of the missing.

❖ Lack of Stability and Unclear Programming Priorities

112. The situation in northeast Syria remains extremely unstable. Only time will tell who will ultimately gain control of the region. This puts in question the longevity of the current institutions and actors.
113. It also remains unclear whether programs concerning the issue of missing and disappeared persons will continue in northeast Syria, including the work of the First Responders. While ICMP has been told that there may be more focus on Deir Ezzor in the coming months, programming priorities in the region remain largely undefined.
114. The lack of political stability, and large movements of populations around Syria and to a lesser extent in northeast Syria, make efforts to locate and identify missing persons particularly difficult.

IX. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1. Political and Accountability Recommendations

- a. *Efforts should be enhanced to ensure that the relevant authorities screen prisoners thought to be ISIS fighters but who may in fact be former detainees.* Multiple families of the missing told ICMP that they feared their non-combatant sons were currently detained with ISIS fighters. Indeed, one family saw their son (who had gone missing months earlier in Raqqa) on a video being held with ISIS fighters in Baghouz, Deir Ezzor.
- b. *Efforts should be enhanced to ensure that the relevant authorities question ISIS detainees on the whereabouts of the missing.* In addition, the authorities have released in recent months dozens of fighters – particularly those from the Arab tribes in the region – for political gain. There has been no information or transparency on the identity of these fighters and whether they are privy to ISIS’s disappearance practices or have knowledge about the circumstances of the thousands missing at the hands of ISIS. Access should be given to a select number of human rights and civil society organizations (both international and Syrian) that can work with the Kurdish authorities to achieve a better understanding of the circumstances of the missing and key ISIS personnel who would have important information about the whereabouts of missing persons.
- c. *Access should be granted to SDF detainees and prisoners who have been held incommunicado.* With the military defeat of ISIS in March 2019, the time limit for incommunicado detention can no longer be justified by any means. Families and rights organizations should be granted access to the detention facilities and camps (including Al Hol Camp, among others) in search of missing persons. In addition, authorities should create a database containing the identities of detainees and prisoners that families can access in their search for their missing relatives.
- d. *Any future ad-hoc tribunal of ISIS fighters should include thorough questioning on the whereabouts of persons disappeared by ISIS.* Kurdish authorities are actively lobbying European capitals to support the formation of either an international or local tribunal to

try ISIS fighters.²² While to date, there has been little political appetite for such tribunals, should a tribunal be formed, the relevant authorities, with the help of families of the missing and specialized organizations, should use this platform to question the fighters on the whereabouts of the thousands of persons who have gone missing at the hands of ISIS.

- e. *Western states that have foreign ISIS fighters currently under their jurisdiction should routinely question them to obtain information on the missing.* Foreign ISIS fighters who have been sent to Europe to await prosecution should be questioned on the thousands kidnapped by ISIS. Information obtained would be critical to finding missing persons and should be uploaded, along with other information, using a shared central data systems capability.
- f. *The Global Coalition should prioritize the uncovering of the circumstances of the missing under ISIS.* While the Global Coalition prioritized the demise of ISIS, it has not yet prioritized the search for the missing kidnapped by ISIS. Indeed, thousands of individuals were kidnapped by ISIS and little or no information has been provided on their whereabouts even after ISIS's defeat. The US-led Global Coalition should prioritize the search for the missing in its strategy on ISIS and use its continued influence in the northeast and with the Kurdish authorities to find answers for families of the missing.

9.2. Institutional Recommendations

- a. *Support administrative bodies in northeast Syria to develop their institutions, judicial infrastructure and legal framework.* While it is unclear if the administrative bodies in northeast Syria will continue to exist in the long-term, present support should be afforded to them to develop their institutions, judicial infrastructure and legal framework to provide protections and mechanisms for reporting and investigating cases of missing persons. For example, the political authorities should be encouraged to create a commission or office for the missing where families can report their missing and obtain information on their whereabouts. The political and military authorities should put processes in place to learn the whereabouts of the missing. Even with the changing political and military climate in northeast Syria, many of the current political and military actors in the northeast will likely play a role in a future Syria. Present engagement may have long-term benefits for the institutions and frameworks that will exist in the future.

9.3. Political Process Recommendations

- a. *Advise the Syrian constitutional process on legal protections necessary for the missing and their families.* Political talks have resumed in Geneva with the goal of developing a transitional constitution. As the Syrian state has weak laws and protections for families of the missing, advice by a specialized organization such as ICMP should be available to the Geneva talks, including to the civil society delegation and the UN Special Envoy's Office in suggesting a more robust legal framework with protections for both the missing and their families that should be included in any future constitution. This can be done through the drafting of White Papers as well as direct technical support to the relevant

²² <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-syria-security-islamic-state/kurdish-led-authorities-in-northeast-syria-plan-local-tribunal-for-is-fighters-idUKKBN1ZT2MU> ("Kurdish-Led Authorities in Northeast Syria Plan Local Tribunal for IS Fighters", 30 January 2020).

actors in the constitutional process.

9.4. Documentation and Data-Sharing Recommendations

- a. *Advocate for the establishment of a centralized, secure missing persons database dedicated to finding missing persons. The collection, processing, and protection of data in a centralized, secure data system is essential to finding missing persons. Data sources range from families of the missing, to CSOs, to international organizations, to those responsible for investigations, including government authorities. Data can include:*
 - Information about the missing person, including place and date of disappearance;
 - Information from family members, including genetic reference samples;
 - Field data, including data from site locations, such as clandestine graves;
 - Data concerning investigations and related documentation;
 - Genetic reference samples data obtained from victims.
- b. International organizations can provide support as impartial conduits for collecting, processing and protecting data from a variety of sources and locations, and by sharing data with the written permission of families of the missing and others for the express purpose of finding a missing person and securing the rights of survivors, including justice. International support is particularly necessary following conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, organized crime and in the context of irregular migration.
- c. In the process of writing this assessment, ICMP spoke to many organizations and groups that have their own databases with scattered information on missing persons, including the First Responders, Syrian civil society organizations and international human rights organizations. Only by ensuring that all information collected on missing persons is stored, processed and protected in a central and secure data system will missing persons be found. Such a system is critical to future accountability processes.
- d. *Support detailed documentation of missing persons, relying especially on families of the missing and communities in Syria and the region for information.* To date, documentation efforts remain minimal and piecemeal. There should be increased trainings on the importance of documenting missing persons, including missing women. Additionally, communities in Syria and the region are best placed to know the whereabouts of missing persons and details of their disappearance. These communities, including families of the missing, should be financially and technically supported to document missing persons in a more thorough and methodical manner than has been the case so far.
- e. *Begin taking reference samples from families of the missing for DNA testing.* The First Responders, the Deir Ezzor Forensic Team and Syrian CSOs should be trained to begin taking reference samples from families of the missing located in northeast Syria as well as in neighboring countries (Turkey and Kurdistan, Iraq). All data obtained from the reference samples should be stored and protected in ICMP's iDMS.
- f. *Support in the testing and matching of DNA.* While the future of northeast Syria remains unclear, it is currently experiencing a degree of stability with the presence of US forces (which may increase in number in the coming months). Given this stability, DNA samples should be taken from the recovered bodies for testing and matching. This data should be

stored and protected in ICMP's iDMS to support future matching efforts and the creation of DNA reports.

9.5. Technical Recommendations

- a. *Provide in-person technical and forensic training for the First Responders and other relevant bodies in Syria either in the region or in Syria.* In-person comprehensive training of the First Responders and other relevant bodies in Syria on documentation, excavation, recovery, methods of identifying bodies, determining the cause and manner of death and post-recovery matters is necessary. Even if present conditions preclude the First Responders from identifying bodies through DNA testing and matching, First Responders and other relevant actors should have a full understanding of the process.
- b. *Train relevant actors and institutions in northeast Syria that mass and clandestine graves and irregular burials of human remains are potentially crime scenes and must be treated as such.* This may mean not opening graves at the present time until proper mechanisms are in place to protect evidence for future accountability processes.
- c. *Train the First Responders and other relevant actors in DNA-based identification while advising against opening additional graves or reopening graves to take post-mortem DNA samples.* Given the limited forensic expertise and equipment in northeast Syria, First Responders must be advised against opening additional graves or reopening graves to take DNA samples from the human remains. In addition to causing further damage to the bodies, the opening of graves can destroy important evidence necessary for future prosecutions and accountability mechanisms.

9.6. Recommendations for Families of the Missing

- a. *Financial, advocacy, legal and other technical support for families of the missing.* As noted above, families of the missing have organized in a limited way. While those in Syria may be restricted from doing so because of the security situation, those outside Syria in neighboring countries or in Europe have far fewer restrictions. Urfa houses between 4,000 and 5,000 families from northeast Syria, many of whom have missing relatives. Similarly, Europe has become home to many Syrian refugees. Increased support should be given to families of the missing to organize themselves in meaningful ways, including through financial, advocacy, legal and technical support. Families should be trained on the process of locating and identifying missing persons and should be relied upon as an essential partner in the missing person process to document missing persons and support in any current and future accountability mechanisms.
- b. *Provide psychosocial support for families of the missing and those working on the location and identification of bodies in northeast Syria.* Given that most families are left to their own devices, they have been the main actors responsible for determining the whereabouts of their relatives. Many have relived the disappearance of their relatives dozens, if not hundreds, of times as they try to obtain information about their whereabouts. Similarly, the teams working on recovering bodies (First Responders and the Deir Ezzor Forensic Team) have undergone severe trauma. In addition to removing thousands of mutilated bodies, these teams have been exposed to unexploded IEDs, hostility from families and communities, diseases and extremely difficult working

conditions. Families and workers should be provided with the necessary psychosocial support as stand-alone activities or components of larger programs in northeast Syria.

X. ABOUT ICMP

115. ICMP is a treaty-based international organization with Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. Its mandate is to secure the cooperation of governments and others in locating missing persons from conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, organized crime, irregular migration and other causes and to assist them in doing so. It is the only international organization tasked exclusively to work on the issue of missing persons.
116. ICMP's Syria/MENA Program is working to establish the foundations for an effective process to address the issue of the missing. The program places the rights of families of the missing at the center of the effort to account for their relatives, regardless of the circumstances of the missing person, their ethnic, or religious background, or their role in the conflict.
117. The Syria/MENA Program is being implemented among refugees and along migratory routes.
118. Key objectives are to:
- Build capacity among families of the missing, and others to participate in a process of accounting for missing persons;
 - Develop a participatory process of data collection among families of the missing; and
 - Prepare the ground for a future rule-of-law-based effort to account for missing persons and create conditions that will enable people to return to their homes.
119. A systematic and effective missing persons program has the capacity to resolve a large number of cases, enabling families to access their rights to the truth, to justice and to reparation. This is fundamental to upholding the rule of law and will play a major role in any post-conflict settlement.
120. With more than 20 years of experience in 40 countries, ICMP helps governments build rule-of-law institutions that successfully and impartially search for and identify missing persons, and it supports efforts to develop legislation to enable families of the missing to assert their rights.
121. ICMP maintains the world's only non-profit, high-throughput standing capacity to conduct large-scale, DNA-led human identification. It also responds to requests for documentation and expert testimony from international and domestic courts on matters related to war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and other crimes under international law.
122. Data collection and data analysis through the Syria/MENA Program utilizes ICMP's existing specialized data infrastructure and its high-throughput capacities to make large-scale identifications.
123. ICMP's key programs are:
- Institution and Civil Society Development: contributes to transitional justice, provides legislative support, and supports the development of networks of civil society organizations that advocate for truth, justice and the rights of family members of missing persons;

- Science and Technology: provides state-of-the-art technical solutions through direct technical assistance including training and capacity building, as well as high-throughput DNA identification testing, and expertise in archeology and anthropology;
- Data Systems: maintains ICMP's Identification Data Management System (iDMS), which collects, stores, protects and shares data on missing persons securely. The iDMS can be accessed from anywhere in the world by those who wish to provide information on missing persons, using ICMP's Online Inquiry Center;
- Justice Sector Assistance: supports international and domestic legislative initiatives to account for the missing, based on democratic processes and the rule of law;
- The Wim Kok Center for Excellence and Learning: enables the transfer of skills, strategies and best practice developed by ICMP. Among other things, it runs training courses in DNA identification testing, advanced database informatics, excavation of mass and clandestine graves, chain-of-custody procedures and crime-scene management.

XI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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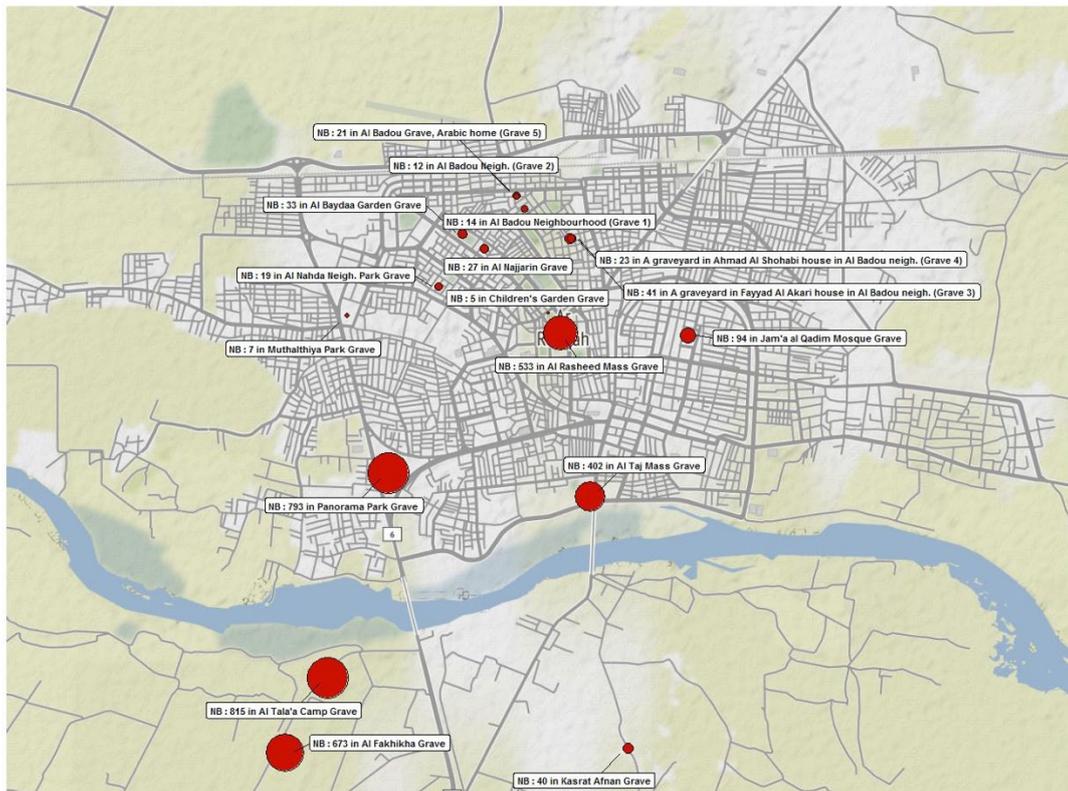
ANNEX I: TABLE OF MASS GRAVES AROUND/IN RAQQA CITY

Name of Grave	Start Date	End date	Location	Number of Bodies	Coordinates
Al Taj Mass Grave	6/21/2018	7/26/2018	South of the zoo in Sector 5 of Raqqa City	402	Redacted
Jam'a al Qadim Mosque Grave	8/26/2018	9/16/2018	Shbaat 23 Street, close to old mosque, Sector 3 of Raqqa City	94	Redacted
Al Badou Neighbourhood (Grave 1)	6/15/2018	6/18/2018	Within the garden, east of Hawari School in Al Badou neighbourhood, Sector 7 of Raqqa City	14	Redacted
Al Badou Neighbourhood (Grave 2)	12/15/2018	12/19/2018	Within a garden west of Al Shuhdaa Mosque, opposite Bayan Rotisserie in Al Badou Alley, Sector 7 of Raqqa City	12	Redacted
A graveyard in Fayyad Al Akari house in Al Badou neighbourhood (Grave 3)	7/3/2018	7/9/2018	South of Asfar warehouse, in Al Badou neighbourhood, Sector 7 of Raqqa City	41	Redacted
A graveyard in Ahmad Al Shohabi house in Al Badou neighbourhood (Grave 4)	7/30/2018	8/2/2018	South of Asfar warehouse, in Al Badou neighbourhood, Sector 7 of Raqqa city	23	Redacted
Al Badou Grave, Arabic home (Grave 5)	8/27/2019	9/11/2019	In Arabic house in Al Badou neighbourhood west of Al Asfar warehouse	21	Redacted
Al Najjarin Grave	8/1/2018	8/5/2018	South of Al Baydaa Garden in Al Nahda neighbourhood, Sector 9 pf Raqqa City	27	Redacted
Al Rasheed Mass Grave	4/17/2018	6/9/2018	Al Rasheed Stadium east of the courthouse, Sector 8 of Raqqa City	533	Redacted
Al Baydaa Garden Grave	3/14/2018	6/12/2018	South of Al Baydaa Garden in Al Nahda neighbourhood, Sector 9 of Raqqa City	33	Redacted
Children's Garden Grave	4/16/2018	9/20/2019	Within the garden in Al Ferdous neighbourhood, Sector 8 of Raqqa City	5	Redacted
Al Nahda Neighbourhood Park Grave	6/14/2018	12/18/2018	Within the garden close to Jawad Anzour School, Sector 10 of Raqqa City	19	Redacted
Muthalthiya Park Grave	12/12/2019	12/13/2019	In a park opposite Bilal Mosque east of Jazra	7	Redacted

			junction, Sector 12 of Raqqa City		
Panorama Park Grave	1/10/2019	2/12/2019	At southern entrance to Raqqa City and north of Jisr al-Jadeed	793	Redacted
Al Fakhikha Grave	1/20/2019	6/9/2019	On agricultural land south of Raqqa City	673	Redacted
Al Tala'a Camp Grave	6/9/2019	9/18/2019	On agricultural land in the camp south of Raqqa City	815	Redacted
Kasrat Afnan Grave	9/21/2019	10/5/2019	South of the city on the main road	40	Redacted
Kasrat Faraj Grave	9/24/2019	9/30/2019	Southwest of Raqqa City on the main road within Maqas Park	15	Redacted
Jabal Shamiya Grave	10/6/2019	10/20/2019	South of Raqqa City within Jabal (mountain) Shamiya	42	Redacted
Mansouriya Grave	10/21/2019	10/23/2019	South of the town of Mansouriya, west of Al Raqqa City	18	Redacted
Western Salhabiya Grave	10/30/2019	ongoing	West of Raqqa City in the town of Western Salhabiya	124	Redacted
Maqla' (Quarry) Grave	11/5/2019	ongoing	South of Raqqa City in a stone quarry	46	Redacted
Total				3,797	

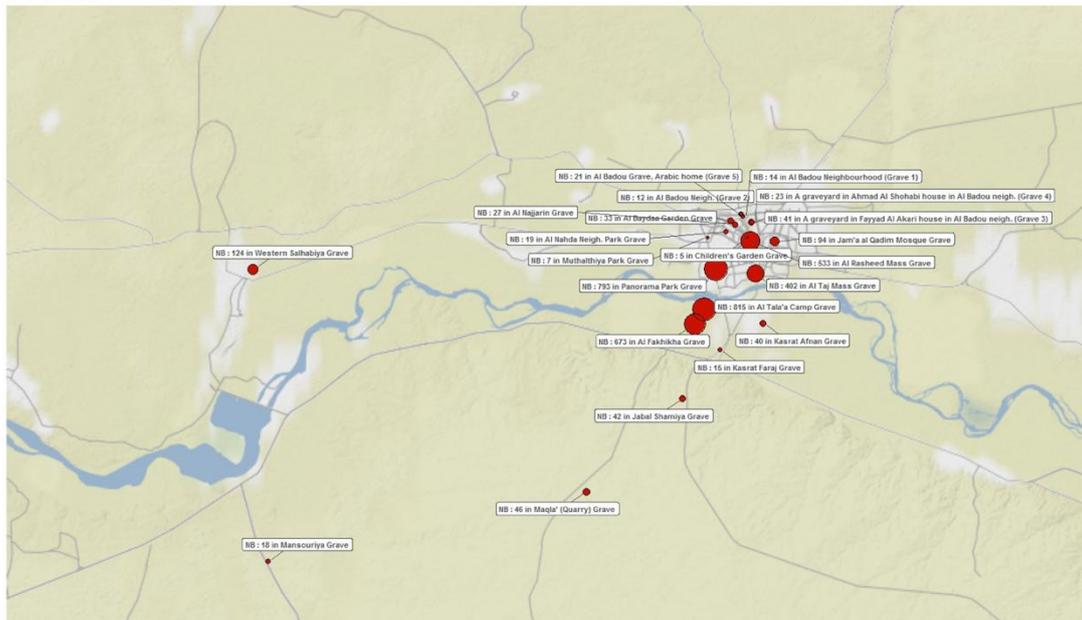
ANNEX II: INTERACTIVE MAP OF THE LOCATIONS OF THE GRAVES

NB - Number of Bodies



*Figure 1:
Mass graves in Raqqah city - Syria*

NB - Number of Bodies



*Figure 2:
Mass graves in/around Raqqah city – Syria*

ANNEX III: LAWSUIT TO DESIGNATE THE DEATH OF A MISSING PERSON, ACCORDING TO SYRIAN LAW

To the position of the Civil Status Court in the esteemed Damascus
The plaintiff (.....) and his mother (..) as one of the (missing) sons ...
Who lives in (...) as (.....).

The defendant: (.....) as a judicial agent for the missing (.....) son/daughter of (....) according to
judicial appointment No. (...) issued by the first Sharia Judge (...) resident in (....) according to Article
/ 202 / of the Personal Status law.

The lawsuit: designating the missing person as dead and registering the case.

On (...) 2012, the person named (.....) was absent from his place of residence, as he was staying in
(... ..). The matter was reported to Police, a number issued by the police department (... ..) dated ///
20XX.

Whereas, more than four years have passed since his reported disappearance, and he is in a state
where his death is presumed and where the aforementioned absentee left the plaintiff and his
younger siblings and wife while the absent or missing is old ...

Whereas, the plaintiff searched for the aforementioned absentee in every possible location he could
be, but to no avail. In addition to the criminal search in all of the governorates of the Arab Republic
of Syria according to the aforementioned search cable issued by the police, but he was not found
and due to the passing of the legal period, it is likely that the missing person has deceased due to the
security situation in the country.

Whereas the absentee left his legacy of (.....) and was careful to dispel it, and he left the minors who
are in desperate need to benefit from the money (.....).

Whereas, pursuant to the provisions of Articles 202 and 205 Personal Status Law Amended by Law
19 of 2000, which stipulates the following: (Replace the text of the second paragraph of Article (205)
of the Personal Status Law issued by Legislative Decree No. 59 dated 17/17/1953).

Its amendments are as follows:

And he decides to consider that the person is missing due to the military operations or similar cases
stipulated in the military laws and in which death is likely and presumed on the day following the
expiration of four years from the recorded date of disappearance.

Pursuant to the provisions of Article / 60 / of the Syrian Civil Status Law, the plaintiff came to seek:

1. Inviting the defendant to the nearest trial session.
2. Judgment that the person was missing from the date of ... (.....) and deceased from the date
of (...) at the end of the legal period for being declared missing.
3. Confirm the legal death of the missing person (mentioning the missing person's full name)
and record it in the civil status records of the deceased.
4. Issuing a document of legal or legal inheritance document (according to the inheritance
funds) for the missing person from the competent reference.
5. Obliging the defendant to pay fees, expenses and costs.

Respectfully,
XXX