

Syria: Stop Torture of Children

Security Forces Detain Juveniles, Occupy Schools Human Rights Watch 3 February 2012 (...)

Syrian army and security officers have detained and tortured children with impunity during the past year, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch has documented at least 12 cases of children detained under inhumane conditions and tortured, as well as children shot while in their homes or on the street. Human Rights Watch has also documented government use of schools as detention centers, military bases or barracks, and sniper posts, as well as the arrest of children from schools.

Human Rights Watch urged the United Nations Security Council to demand that the Syrian government end all human rights violations and cooperate with the commission of inquiry dispatched by the UN Human Rights Council and the Arab League observer mission. The government should stop deploying security forces in schools and hospitals, Human Rights Watch said. (...)

(...) Human Rights Watch has documented widespread government violence against peaceful demonstrators, systematic killings, beatings, torture using electroshock devices, and detention of people seeking medical care. (...)

(...) Children, some as young as 13, reported to Human Rights Watch that officers kept them in solitary confinement, severely beat and electrocuted them, burned them with cigarettes, and left them to dangle from metal handcuffs for hours at a time, centimeters above the floor. Detention facilities where children reported being tortured include: the military security detention center in Homs, the military security detention center in Tartous, the Baloonah detention center in Homs, the Palestine detention center in Damascus, and the 291 detention center in Damascus. All children interviewed said that they received inadequate food and water in detention, and most received no medical treatment for torture-inflicted injuries. (...) (...) Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that: "No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," and that "No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child ... shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time." Syria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993. (...)

(...) In October 2011, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture called for an absolute ban on solitary confinement for juveniles, while the Committee on the Rights of the Child has also noted in General Comment No. 10 that solitary confinement should be "strictly forbidden" for those under the age of 18. (...)

(...) Syrian activists have reported dozens of cases in which children have been killed by sniper fire or shelling from government security forces in residential areas. In interviews with Human Rights Watch, army defectors confirmed that they fired arbitrarily in residential areas in some cases. (...)

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