

# The Newsletter of the Victim Support Project

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A solidarity stand in Hijaz Square in Damascus. April 1, 2025/[Facebook](#)

## Introduction:

Syrian organizations and associations established by the families of detainees remain at the forefront of the struggle for truth and justice in cases of enforced disappearances throughout the country. These victims' groups represent a glimmer of hope for many in achieving justice for victims, working to highlight the suffering of affected families and exert pressure on authorities to provide clear information about the fate of detainees and missing persons. They also advocate for holding those responsible for violations accountable.

These groups include Families for Freedom Movement, Caesar Families Association, Massar Families Association or the Coalition of Families of Persons kidnapped by ISIS, Taafi Initiative, Synergy Associations, Families Of Truth & Justice, Release Me Organization, and A Good Seed Initiative.

Activists within these groups document cases of detention and enforced disappearance, offering legal and psychological support to families of the missing and raising awareness of these issues at both local and international levels. Through their efforts, these human rights associations aim to lay a common foundation for achieving peace and stability in Syria, rooted in the principle of justice as a cornerstone for rebuilding trust among community members and fostering reconciliation.

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**Between April 1 and September 30, 2024, the victims' groups actively engaged in joint statements and advocacy activities on both regional and international levels, effectively mobilizing public opinion:**

## **Joint events and activities**



The Syria Campaign

### **Statement by Victims' groups on the Establishment of a National Commission for Missing Persons in Syria**

On May 17, 2025, the victims' groups—Caesar Families, Massar, Taafi, Families for Freedom, Release Me, Families of Truth and Justice, and Synergy Association—issued a joint statement regarding the Syrian Interim Government's decision to establish a National Commission for Missing Persons in Syria. The groups welcomed this step and called for it to be pursued seriously and responsibly to ensure justice and uncover the fate of all missing persons without exception.

The groups emphasized that addressing the issue of missing persons in Syria cannot be separated from the effective participation of victims' groups and their families. They stressed that any envisioned commission must respond to their demands for truth and justice and that its establishment should align with a comprehensive vision for transitional justice. The statement underscored the importance of full coordination with the Independent Commission for Missing Persons in Syria, leveraging its expertise and resources, and building on previous achievements to strengthen national efforts to uncover the truth and uncover the fate.

### **Statement on Decree No. 20 Establishing the National Commission for Transitional Justice**

The victims' groups—Caesar Families, Massar, Taafi, Families for Freedom, Release Me, Families of Truth and Justice, and Synergy Association—welcomed, in a statement, the issuance of Decree No. 20 on May 17, 2025, which establishes the National Commission for Transitional Justice. They considered it a step toward opening a national path to justice and redress. However, they also expressed deep concern about the content of the decree and the limited powers granted to the commission. The statement, published on May 23, 2025, pointed out that restricting the commission's mandate to violations committed by only one party to the conflict undermines the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitutional Declaration and contradicts international human rights law. This,

they warned, risks turning the commission into a tool for discriminating among victims rather than ensuring justice for all without exception. The groups emphasized the importance of acknowledging all violations committed over the past decades by all parties and holding perpetrators accountable in accordance with the principle of non-impunity. They called for the decree to be followed by a dedicated law issued by a future legislative authority, clearly defining the commission's powers and ensuring its independence through inclusive consultative mechanisms involving victims, survivors, and civil society.

### **Transitional Justice Symposium and the Families' Vision**

On May 20, 2025, the Caesar Families Association, in cooperation with the Charter for Truth and Justice associations, organized an online [symposium](#) titled "Transitional Justice and the Families' Vision." The event brought together a distinguished group of legal and humanitarian experts to spotlight the demands and vision of families in the transitional justice process. The symposium featured contributions from the Head of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria, Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), and the Senior Legal Advisor at the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights. The session was moderated by the Director of the "Taafi" Initiative. The event also saw active participation from the Caesar Families Association.



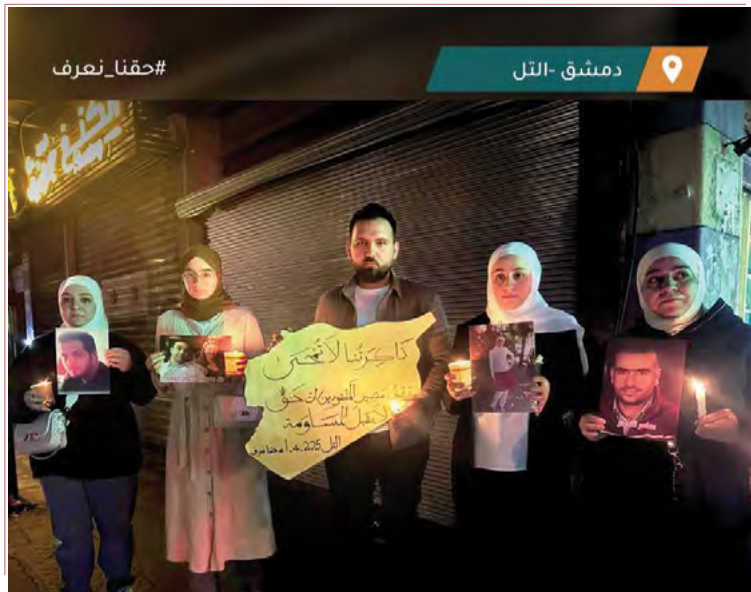
### **Proposal for the Establishment of an Independent National Commission on Missing Persons**

On June 16, 2025, a coalition of victims' groups and Syrian civil society organizations—including the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression and associations such as Taafi, Caesar Families, Families for Freedom, Massar, Synergy, Families of Truth and Justice, and Release Me—held an emergency meeting to develop a vision for the establishment of an independent national commission on missing persons. The outcome of the meeting was a position paper outlining proposals to ensure genuine partnership with victims and to strengthen the commission's effectiveness and independence. The paper presented a set of principles and procedures aimed at ensuring the commission's autonomy and alignment with the rights and demands of families in their pursuit of truth and justice.

# Advocacy Activities



On April 1, 2025, the “Release Me” organization and the “Syrian Revolution Detainees Association,” coordinated vigils with participation from the “Taafi Association” and families of victims of enforced disappearance. The solidarity [vigils](#) were held under the slogan “A Candle for the Disappeared.” These vigils were attended by family members of the victims as well as activists from across Syria and the city of Berlin. They were organized in honor of those forcibly disappeared and to demand the disclosure of their fate and the realization of justice. The vigils took place in more than 22 locations, where participants lit candles and held banners expressing their unwavering commitment to truth and justice. They affirmed that absence does not mean forgetting and that justice is a right that does not expire with time.



## Guidelines for Victim Participation in Justice Processes

On April 3, 2025, the International Network of Victims and Survivors of Serious Human Rights Violations ([INOVAS](#))—including the Synergy Association, Taafi Initiative, Caesar Families Association, and the Families of Truth and Justice Association—took the initiative to develop and [publish](#) a set of guiding principles for the participation of victims in justice processes. These principles emphasize the importance of involving victims at all stages of justice processes, while respecting their choices and boundaries, and enabling them to express themselves authentically and honestly. They also stress the need for an inclusive approach that considers the diversity and differences among victims—especially in terms of gender and social context—and for ensuring accessible, transparent communication channels for all, while protecting victims from any harm or risks resulting from their participation.

The Synergy Association issued on May 7, 2025, a [statement](#) condemning the military appointments announced by the Syrian transitional government within the formations of the “Syrian National Army.” The appointments included individuals listed on international sanctions lists and accused of committing grave human rights violations that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Synergy described these appointments as “a profound setback to the course of transitional justice in Syria, and a re-legitimization of criminality under the guise of the state and military institutions,” warning against the reconstitution of the old repressive structure with new faces. The association called for subjecting these appointments to human rights standards, the immediate removal of all those involved in crimes from positions of power and influence, and the prosecution of those responsible for violations.

On May 12, 2025, members from the Caesar Families participated in a [meeting](#) with the Head of the European Union Delegation to Syria, Michael Unmacht, with the aim of shedding light on the issue of transitional justice in Syria and discussing the vision for the upcoming phase. The meeting included listening to the participants’ perspectives on the current challenges and featured an in-depth discussion regarding the transitional justice commission that is expected



to be established by the new Syrian government. All attendees emphasized the urgent need and critical importance of establishing the commission and ensuring accountability for all perpetrators of human rights violations.

During the conference titled “Witnesses of Justice: The Pursuit of Accountability and Justice in Syria - What’s Next?” held in Paris on May 28, 2025, and organized by the Caesar Files for Justice organization, Mrs. Maryam Al-Hallak, founder of Caesar Families, was [honored](#) in recognition of her long-standing efforts in defending the rights of victims and the families of martyrs and the disappeared in Syria. The conference also honored Farid Al-



Madhhan and Osama Othman from the Caesar Files team, in appreciation of their work in uncovering and documenting crimes, as well as Mrs. Fadwa Mahmoud, a steadfast voice for the families of the forcibly disappeared.

Separately, Families for Freedom held two meetings in Istanbul and Damascus during May 2025 to strengthen the role of families in transitional justice and accountability processes, and to follow ongoing developments concerning detainees and the forcibly disappeared. Members also participated in a symbolic vigil in Umayyad Square, where they expressed their commitment to justice and their rejection of any settlement that ignores victims’ rights or excludes the voices of families. They affirmed their role as active participants in the ongoing struggle for truth and accountability.

On May 25, 2025, Families for Freedom organized a [protest](#) in Umayyad Square in the capital,

Damascus, coinciding with the issuance of a presidential decree establishing the Transitional Justice Commission. The participating families expressed their rejection of limiting the commission's scope to violations committed by the regime only, arguing that excluding victims of other parties strips the justice process of its meaning and reinforces exclusion and discrimination. The families demanded the disclosure of the fate of their loved ones and accountability for all those involved in arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture—without exception. They emphasized that justice must not be partial or selective.



On June 9, 2025, Release Me, in coordination with the Syrian Revolution Detainees Association, organized solidarity [vigils](#) in 23 locations across Syria under the slogan “No Justice Without Knowing the Fate.” The purpose of these vigils was to deliver a unified message to both the Commission on the Missing and the National Commission for Transitional Justice, calling for transparency, inclusivity, and the active participation of families in the mechanisms of their work. During



the event, participants launched the “Rights Box” as a symbol of hope and continued struggle. Families placed messages inside the box addressed to the Commission on the Missing and the Transitional Justice Commission, expressing their right to know the fate of their loved ones and to hold accountable all those responsible for crimes of disappearance and detention.

On June 11, 2025, the cities of [Idlib and Azaz](#) witnessed simultaneous vigils organized by Families for Freedom in Al-Sabaa Bahrat Square and Future Square, with the participation of victims' groups and several families. Participants raised slogans rejecting impunity, affirming that true peace cannot be achieved while perpetrators remain unaccountable, and that the dignity of victims is not negotiable. They expressed their rejection of reintegrating perpetrators into state institutions and called for the inclusion of families' voices in all transitional justice processes.



At the invitation of Families for Freedom and Caesar Families, a large public [vigil](#) was held in Umayyad Square on June 12, 2025, with the participation of families of victims, detainees, and the forcibly disappeared, under the slogan “For Our Dignity and Our Right - No Peace with Impunity.” The statement issued during the vigil affirmed that the dignity of victims is non-negotiable, and that justice is not a burden but an uncompromisable right.



Participants rejected attempts to portray perpetrators as partners in civil peace and demanded genuine justice that does not recycle those responsible for atrocities into state institutions.

Between June and July 2025, Release Me and A Good Seed obtained official licenses to operate inside Syria as independent, non-governmental, non-profit organizations. Both groups began establishing formal offices within the country to launch and sustain their activities in support of the cause of the missing in Syria.

# Trainings and Projects to Support the Cause of the Missing - Support Families and Victims



Release Me concluded the implementation of its project “Independent Survivors,” which ran from October 2024 to May 2025 and aimed to promote economic empowerment for women survivors and adolescent girls from families of the forcibly disappeared.

The project consisted of two main tracks. and selected 16 adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 17. The selection process focused on creating a safe and supportive space that fosters self-confidence and learning. The participants were divided into two groups, each receiving a ten-day training supervised by a specialized trainer. As part of this activity, an interactive educational discussion day titled “Our Rights” was held for both groups, where concepts related to children’s rights were introduced using storytelling and engaging teaching methods.



Meanwhile, Families of Truth & Justice continued its efforts to support the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared through documentation, advocacy, and legal support. Between April and June 2025, the association documented 228 new cases of enforced disappearance in its database as part of its violations monitoring program.



On May 18, 2025, the [association's](#) office in Reyhanlı received a delegation from the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP). The team met with 15 members of the association's general assembly. The meeting involved an exchange of views on recent developments in Syria following the fall of the regime and explored ways to strengthen the association's capacity and assess the needs of the families of the missing in the current phase.

Families of Truth & Justice also launched a [weekly](#) live broadcast every Sunday, aimed at providing regular legal consultations to families of the missing and responding to public inquiries. One of the sessions focused on the National Commission for the Missing, during which the association's lawyers participated to answer legal questions. And organized awareness [sessions](#) attended by 40 participants to help prevent extortion and fraud. One of the sessions was broadcast live to maximize outreach and benefit.

A Good Seed continued its psychosocial support activities for children of detainees and the forcibly disappeared in Syria between April 1 and June 30, 2025. As part of this effort, the organization conducted a theater-based activity consisting of 15 sessions with the participation of 20 children from victims' families.



The organization also held a legal training workshop for adolescents on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with 20 participants.

The workshop took place over three consecutive days, from April 26 to April 28, 2025. It aimed to introduce participants to the Convention, raise awareness about its importance, and highlight its relevance to children's lives and their relationship with national laws.

A Good Seed concluded its series of activities with a closing exhibition on May 30, 2025, attended by a number of partners, active organizations and initiatives in Lebanon, as well as the families and children who participated in the program. number of children going through similar circumstances. The event welcomed around 120 attendees and featured a display of wax art created by the children, alongside a live stage performance that marked the peak of the therapeutic and expressive program.



Meanwhile, Massar conducted a series of legal awareness and training sessions for families of individuals who went missing at the hands of ISIS during April, May, and June 2025.

On April 6, legal advisor Samar Al-Bardan delivered a Zoom session titled “Post-Documentation Legal Steps in Syria,” which addressed available legal pathways for pursuing justice against perpetrators of abduction and enforced disappearance, both within Syria and through international legal mechanisms. The session also focused on the rapid political changes following the fall of the Assad regime.

To strengthen the critical thinking skills of these families, Ahmed Murad conducted a training session on May 28, 2025, titled “Enhancing Awareness on Verifying Information and Distinguishing Between Reliable and Unreliable Sources.”

As part of its psychosocial support efforts for families of those kidnapped by ISIS, Massar also held a series of six psychoeducational sessions via Zoom on April 15, 22, and 29, and May 6, 13, and 14, 2025. The sessions focused on the concept of “Ambiguous Loss”.



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