



Joint Submission by the Committee to Protect Journalists and the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression

for the 54th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group, January-February 2027

The Syrian Arab Republic

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Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM): SCM is an independent Syrian human rights organization founded in 2004 and registered in France. It works to promote and protect freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and fundamental human rights in accordance with international human rights law. SCM documents human rights violations, provides legal support to victims, contributes to accountability efforts through strategic litigation, and advocates for truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Since 2011, SCM has held Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Head of media and freedoms program, Yara Bader, yara.bader@scm.ngo, +33601987996.

I. Executive Summary

1. As organizations promoting freedom of expression and the rule of law, this submission focuses on the Syrian Arab Republic's ("Syria") compliance with international human rights obligations related to freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press and on progress made since the last review in 2022 in general and since the fall of the Assad Regime in particular.¹

¹ The "Assad Regime" refers to the period in which Hafez al-Assad and then his son Bashar al-Assad controlled Syria between November 1970 and December 2024.

2. In particular, the concerns raised in this submission relate to:

- Killings of journalists²
- Physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists
- Arrest, arbitrary detention, incommunicado holding and enforced disappearances of journalists, media and human rights defenders
- Use of counter-terrorism legislation to restrict freedom of the Press and freedom of expression
- Restriction of access to information concerning detainees and missing persons, and the lack of effective investigations into violations
- Restrictions on the operation of media outlets, censorship and licensing restrictions of the press and online

II. Human rights instruments referred to in this submission

1. Syria is a state party to several core international human rights treaties that are directly relevant to the protection of freedom of expression, media freedom, and the rights of journalists. These include the following international instruments.³
3. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1948) enshrines the principle of freedom of opinion and expression, noting that “the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontier.”⁴ Articles 8, 9, 10, and 11 protect the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence, and the prohibition on arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.⁵

² The submitters define “journalists” as people who cover news or comment on public affairs in print, in photographs, on radio, on television, or online. Writers, editors, publishers, producers, technicians, photographers, camera operators, and directors of news organizations are all included. See Committee to Protect Journalists, “Frequently Asked Questions”, available at: <https://cpj.org/about/faq/>.

³ Syria’s ratification status of various treaties can be viewed here: United Nations Human Rights, Ratification Status – Syria, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=170&Lang=EN.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 8-11, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

4. Syria acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“**ICCPR**”) on 21 April 1969. The ICCPR sets forth the principle in Article 19 that “[e]veryone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference” and to “freedom of expression” which includes “freedom to seek, receive and impart information.”⁶ Those rights are subject to certain restrictions only as provided by law and necessary “[f]or respect of the rights or reputations of others” or “[f]or the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.”⁷ Article 9(1) of the ICCPR provides that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law.⁸ Article 9(2) of the ICCPR requires that anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his or her arrest.⁹ Article 9(3) of the ICCPR provides that: “Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release.”¹⁰
5. Syria also acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (21 April 1969)¹¹ and the Convention on the Elimination of All

⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 19(1) and 19(2), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 19(3), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(1), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(2), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

¹⁰ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 9(3), available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

¹¹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>.

Forms of Discrimination against Women (28 March 2003),¹² while maintaining reservations to several provisions.

6. Syria acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 19 August 2004.¹³ The Convention against Torture is particularly relevant to the protection of journalists and media workers, given the prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment in detention.
7. Syria has signed, but not ratified, the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.¹⁴

A. National Legal Framework

1. Under the Assad Regime

8. Under the Assad Regime, Syria implemented various legislative measures that curtailed journalistic freedom and resulted in increased policing and criminalization of freedom of expression and media.
9. Legislative Decrees No. 14 of 1969 and No. 69 of 2008 effectively established legal impunity for security forces in Syria.¹⁵
10. Syria's Law No. 19 of 2012 generally refers to the country's Counter-Terrorism Law, which established an overly broad definition of "terrorism".¹⁶ The Counter-Terrorism Law was widely used in practice to criminalize any act intended to disturb public

¹² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>.

¹³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>.

¹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-all-persons-enforced>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch (Apr. 21, 2011), "Syria: Rein in Security Services", available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/04/21/syria-rein-security-services>.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch (Jun. 25, 2013), "Syria: Counterterrorism Court Used to Stifle Dissent", available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/25/syria-counterterrorism-court-used-stifle-dissent>.

security, damage infrastructure, or create panic using weapons or any other tool deemed to achieve the same purpose.

11. Syria's Law No. 20 of 2022 on Combating Cybercrime was enacted to regulate digital spaces but is widely condemned by human rights organizations as a repressive tool used to stifle free expression and criminalize dissent.¹⁷ The law broadened the definition of "cybercrime" – bringing within its scope the sharing of digital content such as posts and footage on social media – and imposed significant fines and penal sentences.¹⁸
12. Syria's Law No. 19 of 2024 established the Ministry of Media; however, the law received criticism from international watchdogs and human rights groups due to its consolidated governmental control over media, resulting in the imposition of censorship measures and the stifling of dissenting opinion.¹⁹

2. Under the Transitional Government²⁰

13. Syria's legal framework governing freedom of expression and media is currently in a period of transition following the collapse of the former Assad Regime in December 2024.
14. The 2025 Constitutional Declaration, which was adopted as the legal framework for the transitional period, expressly guarantees "freedom of opinion, expression, information, publication and the press" (as provided in Article 13). It also recognizes that the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in international treaties ratified by Syria form an integral part of the constitutional framework (Article 12(2)).
15. However, the Constitutional Declaration has been the subject of significant legal and political criticism, given concerns regarding the scope of the constitutional guarantees, the concentration of executive powers, the lack of effective institutional safeguards, and

¹⁷ Syrian Network for Human Rights (Aug. 18, 2023), "Law No. 20 of 2022 Promulgated by the Syrian Regime Further Perpetuates the Oppression of Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Has Been Used as a Grounds for Dozens of Cases of Arbitrary Arrest and Torture", available at: <https://snhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/R230812E.pdf>.

¹⁸ Syrians for Truth & Justice (Jun. 14, 2022), "Syria: Cybercrime Law is an Additional Tool for Suppressing Freedom of Expression", available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-cybercrime-law-is-an-additional-tool-for-suppressing-freedom-of-expression/>.

¹⁹ Syrian Network for Human Rights (Jun. 13, 2024), "The Syrian Regime's Law No. 19 of 2024 on Establishing a Media Ministry Blatantly Violates Freedom of Media, Opinion, and Expression", available at: <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>.

²⁰ The submitters refer to the current government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in place after the fall of the Assad Regime, as the "Transitional Government" throughout.

the absence of sufficient guarantees for the independence of the judiciary and the protection of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression.²¹

III. Implementation of recommendations from previous review

16. Our commentary on the recommendations supported from the previous Universal Periodic Review (“UPR”) cycle is contained in the matrix of relevant recommendations in Appendix 1. One recommendation that was accepted can be considered “implemented”. That recommendation is contained in the following theme: Recommendation 133.152 for Theme: A41 Constitutional and legislative framework. Twelve recommendations that were accepted or noted can be considered “partially implemented”. Those recommendations are contained in the following themes: (i) Recommendation 133.16 and 133.123, for Theme: D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, (ii) Recommendation 133.44 and 133.150 for Theme: B52 Impunity, (iii) Recommendation 133.143, 133.168, 133.169, 133.71, and 133.214, for Theme: B31 Transitional Justice, (iv) Recommendation 133.167 for Theme: A12 Acceptance of international norms and (v) Recommendations 133.155 and 133.166 for Theme: A41 Constitutional and legislative framework. However, several other recommendations relevant to freedom of expression and press freedom and which were supported are “not implemented”.

IV. Update on situation for freedom of expression since the last review

A. General Observations

17. Despite a number of positive developments following the political transition, serious concerns remain. Under both the Assad Regime and Transitional Government, there have been threats to freedom of expression and press freedom on multiple fronts: (i) the killing, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of journalists; (ii) physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists; (iii) arrest, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of journalists, media and human rights defenders; (iv) use of counter-terrorism legislation to restrict freedom of the Press and freedom of expression; (v) restriction of access to information on detained individuals and a lack of investigation into violations; and (vi) restrictions on the operation of media outlets, censorship and licensing restrictions of the press and online. All these factors are limiting the right of freedom of expression and press freedom in Syria.
18. Though the submitters recognize that many of these threats and documented violations occurred under the Assad Regime, there is still evidence that they continue to occur under the Transitional Government. Syria remains bound by its obligations under international human rights law regardless of changes in government. The transitional authorities bear the responsibility to prevent continuing violations, investigate past abuses, provide effective remedies, and ensure guarantees of non-recurrence. Equally, there are many

²¹ See Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (Mar. 28, 2025), “A Legal-Political Analysis of the Constitutional Declaration”, available at: <https://scm.bz/en/a-legal-political-analysis-of-the-constitutional-declaration/>.

necessary remedial actions arising from the Assad Regime that the Transitional Government has yet to address. These issues must be simultaneously addressed by the state in order to ensure the aforementioned rights. For the purpose of this submission, the submitters have focused specifically on limitations to the freedom of expression and press freedom in Syria after the fall of the Assad Regime and the events leading up to the regime change, *i.e.*, post-December 2024, as this is the reality currently experienced by journalists and civilians in Syria.

B. Specific issues of concern

19. For each of the themes below, a detailed list of incidents reported between 2022 and July 2025 is contained in Appendix 2.

1. Killings of journalists

20. According to information documented by the submitters and publicly available sources, in the last five years, at least nine journalists have been killed in Syria in connection with their work. Six of these killings took place in connection with or after the fall of the Assad Regime and of these six cases, four took place in connection with the journalist in question covering military altercations either in connection with the regime change or unrest in the Governorate of Sweida. In most of these nine cases, the victims have been identifiable as journalists by wearing vests, helmets and/or driving cars with the “press” insignia. The submitters are not aware of any prompt, effective, independent or publicly disclosed investigation into these killings..
21. In addition to the killings in connection to military altercations, there has been one instance where a journalist, Alaa Mohammed, was killed in his own home, reportedly linked to his work as a political commentator on YouTube.²² Mohammed belonged to the Alawite minority, the same minority as the Assad family which has been particularly exposed to violence following the regime change with more than 1,400 people, mostly Alawite civilians, killed in March 2025 following sectarian altercations.²³ The killing of Mohammed, and the lack of investigation and condemnation from the Transitional Government, is alarming and raises serious concerns for the safety of journalists in Syria, in particular for journalists belonging to different minorities or political views from the Transitional Government.

2. Physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

22. Since the fall of the Assad Regime in December 2024, journalists operating in Syria have been subjected to a persistent pattern of physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation by

²² Committee to Protect Journalists (Feb. 24, 2026), “Syrian journalist Alaa Mohammed found dead at home in Lattakia”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2026/02/syrian-journalist-alaa-mohammed-found-dead-at-home-in-lattakia/>.

²³ BBC (Feb. 18, 2026), “I would scream in my sleep: Women from Syria’s Alawite minority tell of kidnap and rape”, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cn5g751pl7lo>.

multiple armed actors. The documented incidents reveal a troubling environment in which members of the press, despite being clearly identifiable through press insignia, have been targeted with gunfire, subjected to arbitrary detention, and threatened while carrying out their professional duties. These incidents have occurred across various regions of Syria and implicate a range of perpetrators, including Israeli military forces, Turkish and Turkish-backed forces, Russian military personnel, and unidentified armed actors. The submitters are particularly concerned by the frequency and severity of these incidents and the apparent absence of accountability mechanisms.

23. The incidents documented in this report reveal several concerning patterns. First, Israeli forces operating in southern Syria, particularly in areas adjacent to the occupied Golan Heights and Quneitra governorate, have been implicated in a significant proportion of the documented incidents of physical violence, detention, and intimidation against journalists. Methods employed include direct gunfire, arbitrary detention at gunpoint, confiscation and destruction of journalistic equipment and materials, physical restraint including blindfolding and zip-tying, strip searches, and prolonged pursuit of journalists across terrain. Second, journalists have been targeted despite being clearly identifiable as members of the press, wearing vests, helmets, or other insignia marked “Press.” Third, the incidents have affected both local and international journalists, including Syrian, French, Spanish, and other foreign nationals. Fourth, in several instances, journalists were targeted while documenting matters of legitimate public interest, including military operations, damage to civilian infrastructure, and security incidents. The submitters are concerned that the absence of effective investigation and accountability for these incidents creates an environment of impunity that may embolden further attacks on the press.

3. Arrest, arbitrary detention, incommunicado holding and enforced disappearances of journalists, media and human rights defenders

24. Since the fall of the Assad Regime, there have been numerous incidents of arrest and detention of journalists, revealing concerning patterns. Journalists have been detained by Syrian security forces and transferred to unknown locations without disclosure of the reasons for their arrest. Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza was taken from his home by Syrian security forces and was held incommunicado for a week before being released without any formal charges. The Syrian Ministry of Information confirmed his arrest but stated only that it was “related to security concerns and not connected to his journalistic work”.²⁴ Later the same year, US journalist Bilal Abdul Kareem was arrested by Syrian security forces in al-Bab and taken to undisclosed locations. To the submitters’ knowledge, no formal charges have been publicly disclosed and Abdul Kareem still remains in custody as of the date of this submission with his family having no information about his whereabouts. Abdul-Kareem has been a vocal critic of the

²⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jun. 30, 2025), “Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza detained in Syria, whereabouts unknown”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/06/kurdish-journalist-hassan-zaza-detained-in-syria-whereabouts-unknown/>.

Transitional Government, criticizing it for compromising its Islamic values to appease the international community.²⁵

25. Detained journalists have faced significant delayed access to legal counsel and lack of transparency. In particular, the case of Ahmed Polad and Eva Maria Michelmann raises serious concerns with respect to press freedom in Syria. Polad and Michelmann's whereabouts remained unknown for several months until it was discovered in April 2026 that they were held in a detention center in Damascus and Aleppo, respectively. Several months after her detention, after extensive lobbying from the German government, Michelmann received access to legal counsel and was released three months later. However, Polad who is Kurdish-Turkish, remains in detention without access to legal counsel and without the Transitional Government releasing further details on his whereabouts or well-being.

26. Violations are not limited to the Transitional Government; abuses against journalists in northeastern Syria have also been documented. One such case involves media worker Firas Al-Barjas, who was arrested by the Syrian Democratic Forces in Raqqa and detained in Al-Aqtan Prison. He was subjected to torture, ill-treatment, and enforced disappearance starting on October 7, 2025, and was released on January 26, 2026.

<https://rsf.org/ar/%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D9%86-%D8%AA-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%AC-%D9%81%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AC%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%B2-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B0-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1>

<https://snhr.org/arabic/2025/12/24/%D8%A5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B3/>

27. In addition, journalists have been detained and assaulted by foreign military forces operating in Syria, including by Russian military guards who, in March 2025, assaulted

²⁵ Middle East Eye (Dec. 24, 2025), "Journalist Bilal Abdul Kareem arrested in Syria", available at: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/journalist-bilal-abdul-kareem-arrested-syria>.

Souria Post journalists Hashim Al-Abdullah and Ehab Khaled at the Hmeimim air base, beating them, threatening them with death, and confiscating their materials during four hours of detention.

4. Use of counter-terrorism legislation to restrict freedom of the Press and freedom of expression

28. The Transitional Government has made progress in changing legislation in order to limit restrictions on the Press and freedom of expression, but improvements still need to be made.
29. Under the Assad Regime, Law No. 19 of 2022 established a Ministry of Media that controlled the Press and permitted censorship that contravened a number of human rights instruments²⁶ to further increase state influence.²⁷ Counter-terrorism and cybercrime legislation was also used to restrict freedom of expression by facilitating prosecution of journalists, with the death penalty as a consequence.²⁸
30. The Assad-era framework was heavily criticized by media organizations for being inconsistent with international human rights standards.²⁹ There were numerous instances of accreditation licenses being denied, delayed or revoked. For example, in July 2023, the Assad Information Ministry revoked the accreditation of two local BBC journalists because of “misleading reports relying on statements and testimonies from terrorist and anti-Syrian authorities”.³⁰

²⁶ Syrian Network for Human Rights (Jun. 13, 2024), “The Syrian Regime’s Law No. 19 of 2024 on Establishing a Media Ministry Blatantly Violates Freedom of Media, Opinion, and Expression”, available at: <https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>.

²⁷ Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (May 3, 2024), “The New Media Draft Law in Syria”, available at: <https://scm.bz/en/the-new-media-draft-law-in-syria-2024/>.

²⁸ Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (Oct. 20, 2022), “Legal Review of the Cybercrime Law No. 20 of 2022”, available at: <https://scm.bz/en/legal-review-of-the-cybercrime-law-no-20-of-2022/>.

²⁹ Syrians for Truth and Justice (Sep. 19, 2024), “Syria: Ministry of Information Stifles Digital Platforms Citing ‘Indecent Content,’ ‘Offending National Constants’”, available at: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-ministry-of-information-stifles-digital-platforms-citing-indecent-content-offending-national-constants/>.

³⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 10, 2023), “Syria revokes accreditation of 2 BBC journalists”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2023/07/syria-revokes-accreditation-of-2-bbc-journalists/>.

31. Since December 2024, conditions for Syrian journalists have improved. Freedom of movement has expanded and punishment for critical reporting is less widespread. The Information Ministry has also committed to introducing a new media law.³¹
32. However, there has been no replacement cybercrime legislation and the status of the anti-terrorism laws is unclear. These legislative measures remain capable of being used to restrict journalistic activity unless amended or repealed.³²
33. No formal consultation process on media legislation involving journalists or press freedom organizations has been publicly documented. The submitters encourage the Transitional Government to engage with stakeholders further so as to draft effective legislative protections for journalists. Until active measures have been taken to remove or restrict the operation of counter-terrorism legislation against journalists, Syria has not made concrete progress toward media freedom.

5. Restriction of access to information on detained individuals and a lack of investigation into violations

34. Under the Assad Regime, there was a considerable lack of information on missing and disappeared persons as well as access to the detention facilities where they were being held. Legislative Decrees No. 14 of 1969 and No. 69 of 2008 granted immunity to security and intelligence forces for acts committed while on duty. Syria ranked fourth on CPJ's 2024 Global Impunity Index with 11 unsolved journalist murders in the index period.³³

³¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 5, 2025), "A year after Assad's fall, Syrian journalists enjoy freedom but also new risks", available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/12/a-year-after-assads-fall-syrian-journalists-enjoy-freedom-but-also-new-risks/>.

³² Reporters Without Borders (Jan. 7, 2025), "RSF calls on Syria's new authorities to adopt seven priority measures in line with their promises to safeguard press freedom", available at: <https://rsf.org/en/rsf-calls-syria-s-new-authorities-adopt-seven-priority-measures-line-their-promises-safe-guard-press>.

³³ Committee to Protect Journalists (Oct. 28, 2021), "Justice remains elusive in the vast majority of journalist murders", available at: <https://cpj.org/2021/10/justice-remains-elusive-in-the-vast-majority-of-journalist-murders/>; Committee to Protect Journalists (Nov. 1, 2022), "Killing with impunity: Vast majority of journalists' murderers go free", available at: <https://cpj.org/reports/2022/11/killing-with-impunity-vast-majority-of-journalists-murderers-go-free/>; Committee to Protect Journalists (Oct. 2023), "Haiti joins list of countries where killers of journalists most likely to go unpunished", available at: <https://cpj.org/reports/2023/10/haiti-joins-list-of-countries-where-killers-of-journalists-most-likely-to-go-unpunished/>.

35. There are at least 45 unresolved disappearances of journalists,³⁴ including that of Austin Tice, an American journalist disappeared and possibly executed.³⁵ The lack of justice for those who have been murdered is a source of heavy criticism.³⁶
36. The Transitional Government is addressing the accountability gap by establishing the National Commission for Transitional Justice (“NCTJ”) and National Commission for the Missing (“NCM”), responsible for investigating violations and clarifying the fate of those missing and forcibly disappeared. There have now been several criminal proceedings brought against those allegedly responsible for violations under the Assad Regime, including Atef Najib, the former Governor of Daraa, and the former Grand Mufti of the Republic.³⁷
37. However, there are barriers to progress. The Commissions have been criticized for providing little transparency on how senior Regime members would be held accountable, particularly those with “command responsibility”.³⁸
38. The Transitional Government should continue efforts to ensure accountability those responsible for violations and provide information on those detained.³⁹ Measures have been put in place to create a framework of accountability but allowing greater access to detention centers and more widespread investigations would alleviate transparency concerns.

³⁴ Reporters Without Borders (Dec. 8, 2025), “Portraits of 45 Syrian journalists held hostage or missing under Bashar al-Assad — and whose fates remain unknown”, available at: <https://rsf.org/en/portraits-45-syrian-journalists-held-hostage-or-missing-under-bashar-al-assad-and-whose-fates>.

³⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jun. 16, 2025), “CPJ calls for answers as US journalist Austin Tice reported executed in Syria”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/06/cpj-calls-for-answers-as-us-journalist-austin-tice-reported-executed-in-syria/>.

³⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists (Oct. 30, 2024), “Haiti, Israel most likely to let journalists’ murders go unpunished, CPJ 2024 impunity index shows”, available at: <https://cpj.org/special-reports/haiti-israel-most-likely-to-let-journalists-murders-go-unpunished-cpj-2024-impunity-index-shows/>.

³⁷ Justice Info (Dec. 2025), “Justice for Syria: who is doing what?”, available at: <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/153370-justice-for-syria-who-is-doing-what.html>.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, (Feb. 4, 2026), “Syria: Renewed Hope for Justice, Accountability”, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/02/04/syria-renewed-hope-for-justice-accountability/>.

³⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 11, 2024), “CPJ calls on new Syrian leaders to protect journalist safety, hold Assad’s media persecutors to account”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/12/cpj-calls-on-new-syrian-leaders-to-protect-journalist-safety-hold-assads-media-persecutors-to-account/>.

6. Restrictions on the operation of media outlets, censorship and licensing restrictions of the press and online

39. The Transitional Government has improved conditions for domestic and foreign journalists.
40. Under the Assad Regime, foreign media outlets were banned if adverse to the Regime and accreditation was often denied.⁴⁰ For example, in February 2022, Rudaw Media Network's broadcast license was suspended after it reported on activities of the Syrian Democratic Forces.⁴¹ Domestic journalists experienced similar treatment.
41. The Transitional Government has made public statements about its focus on reduced punishment for negative reporting and the planned introduction of new media law. Equally, the restrictions on foreign media and journalist accreditation are no longer as prominent.
42. However, concerns have been raised about the continued restrictions on publication of unfavorable material under the Transitional Government. The accreditation process continues to be a complex process,⁴² with some journalists self-censoring as a result.⁴³
43. Foreign journalists have also had to disclose an excessive amount of information on their accreditation applications such as the subject matter for their work, previous publications on Syria, where they will be going in the country and whom they will be meeting. Approval of applications is often non-existent or heavily delayed. Some journalists have been banned from publishing in Syria and required to pledge that they will not report on the country upon entry, citing 'security' reasons. Foreign journalists have faced

⁴⁰ Syrian Network for Human Rights (Jun. 13, 2024), "The Syrian Regime's Law No. 19 of 2024 on Establishing a Media Ministry Blatantly Violates Freedom of Media, Opinion, and Expression", available at:

<https://snhr.org/blog/2024/06/13/the-syrian-regimes-law-no-19-of-2024-on-establishing-a-media-ministry-blatantly-violates-freedom-of-media-opinion-and-expression/>.

⁴¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Feb. 9, 2022), "Northeast Syrian authorities assault Rudaw news crew, suspend network's licenses", available at: <https://cpj.org/2022/02/northeast-syrian-authorities-assault-rudaw-news-crew-suspend-networks-licenses/>.

⁴² Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 5, 2025), "A year after Assad's fall, Syrian journalists enjoy freedom but also new risks", available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/12/a-year-after-assads-fall-syrian-journalists-enjoy-freedom-but-also-new-risks/>.

⁴³ Middle East Forum (May 6, 2026), "'Guided Freedom': Syria's Ministry of Information and Foreign Journalists", available at: <https://www.meforum.org/mef-online/guided-freedom-syrias-ministry-of-information-and-foreign-journalists>.

significant obstacles in accessing and reporting from Syria. This has been contradicted by representatives of the Transitional Government.⁴⁴

44. Foreign journalists have faced significant obstacles in accessing and reporting from Syria during the transitional period. The accreditation process requires applicants to provide an extensive amount of information, including the subject matter of their work, previous publications related to Syria, planned movements inside the country, intended interviewees, and details of their reporting activities.⁴⁵ Journalists have also reported delays and a lack of transparency in obtaining approvals.
45. Beyond administrative obstacles, international media outlets have faced restrictions on access to sensitive areas. In its investigation into the violence against Alawite communities on the Syrian coast in March 2025, The New York Times reported that the new Syrian authorities effectively sealed off the area to foreign reporters as the violence unfolded, forcing its journalists to leave the region. The newspaper stated that, despite being unable to access the area directly, its team had to rely on phone interviews and verified visual material to document the events.⁴⁶ SCM further verified this account through direct communication with a journalist from The New York Times, who confirmed that the newspaper had indeed been prevented from conducting on-the-ground coverage in the affected area.
46. These practices raise concerns regarding transparency, media access, and the ability of independent journalists to document events of public interest during the transitional period. They also appear inconsistent with public statements by representatives of the Transitional Government emphasizing openness toward international media and a commitment to facilitating journalists' work in Syria.
47. Censorship is still occurring, most notably in August 2025, when a theatrical production was suspended after actors criticized the Transitional Government's conduct during the Alawite and Druze violence.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 5, 2025), "A year after Assad's fall, Syrian journalists enjoy freedom but also new risks", available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/12/a-year-after-assads-fall-syrian-journalists-enjoy-freedom-but-also-new-risks/>.

⁴⁵ Syrian Arab Agency (Jun. 23, 2025), "The Ministry of Information adopts a new link to receive requests from journalists wishing to visit Syria", available at: <https://sana.sy/en/syria/360891/>.

⁴⁶ New York Times (Apr. 20, 2025), "Inside a City Swept by Roving Gunmen, Deadly Grudges and Fear", available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/20/world/middleeast/syria-alawite-massacre.html>.

⁴⁷ UK Home Office (Apr. 14, 2026), "Country policy and information note: criticism of the government, Syria, April 2026", available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/syria-country-policy-and-information-notes/country-policy-and-information-note-criticism-of-the-government-syria-april-2026-accessible>.

48. The Transitional Government also imposed restrictions on independent reporting in certain Aleppo neighborhoods following the government's recapture of those areas.⁴⁸
49. Ultimately, the Transitional Government should further implement measures to accept press freedoms and make the process of obtaining licensing clearer.

V. Recommendations to the Syrian Arab Republic

50. The submitters encourage the Transitional Government of Syria to address each of these Recommendations within the following UN UPR cycle.

A. Killing, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of journalists

51. Take all measures, particularly legislative, to end all forms of torture, violence, and other ill-treatment inflicted on journalists, including excessive force and degrading treatment.
52. Commit Syria to upholding its international human rights obligations, particularly with respect to the prohibition of torture and cruel or degrading treatment.
53. Ensure the government pursues and finalizes an independent, effective, and impartial investigation into the murders of Mustafa al-Sarut, Anas Alkharboutli, Jihan Belkin, Nazim Dashdan and Alaa Mohammed promptly and in full transparency, and brings all those responsible to justice to ensure accountability.

B. Physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

54. Implement the necessary legal and structural measures to ensure the protection and safe passage of journalists investigating armed operations, security incidents and civil unrest throughout all regions of Syrian territory. The necessary budget and staffing allocations should be provided for full implementation.
55. Take measures, through legislation and in institutional structures, to end intimidation and threats to journalists by state and non-state actors.
56. Adopt legal safeguards protecting the confidentiality of journalistic sources and prohibit compelling journalists to disclose confidential sources or unpublished materials except in accordance with strict international human rights standards.

C. Arrest, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances of journalists, media and human rights defenders

⁴⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists, (Jan. 12, 2026), “ Journalists detained, barred in Syria as government regains Aleppo areas”, available at: <https://cpj.org/2026/01/journalists-detained-barred-in-syria-as-government-regains-aleppo-areas/>.

57. Under Decree No. 19 of May 2025, use the National Commission for the Missing to specifically investigate the status of journalists and media workers who went missing under the Assad Regime and remain so. Such investigations should be published.
58. Permit investigatory bodies such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic access to the records of former detention facilities in order to facilitate the investigation of the whereabouts of missing journalists and media officers.
59. Ensure that all journalists are granted the right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial court in a timely manner.
60. Establish a publicly accessible mechanism for regularly publishing data on killings, attacks, arbitrary detention and investigations concerning journalists, including information on the progress and outcomes of criminal proceedings.
61. Establish an independent national mechanism for the protection of journalists, with the participation of journalists' organizations and civil society, mandated to assess risks, receive complaints, coordinate preventive and emergency protection measures, monitor attacks against journalists and media workers, and contribute to ending impunity by publishing regular public reports on violations and the progress of investigations and prosecutions, in accordance with international human rights standards and in cooperation with relevant United Nations mechanisms.

D. Incommunicado holding and lengthy pre-trial of journalists

62. Implement an institutional and legal structure that prevents journalists from being deprived of their liberty on account of their professional activities, particularly permitting prompt access to legal counsel and information provided to family members.
63. Provide a public record of the legal basis and charges against all journalists detained in Syrian prisons or holding centers since December 2024.
64. Ensure that journalists and members of the media who are detained are held in safe and sanitary conditions with adequate access to food, water, and bedding and are not subject to degrading treatment. Independent organizations should be permitted to access these facilities in order to assess the implementation of this obligation.
65. Abolish detention without trial and ensure that arrests and detentions comply with international human rights law.
66. Release any journalists in pre-trial detention who have not been brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law and/or have not been accorded a trial within a reasonable time and/or are appealing their conviction.

E. Use of counter-terrorism legislation to restrict freedom of the Press and freedom of expression

67. Repeal all provisions of legislation, including the Penal Code, Law No. 19 of 2012, Law No. 20 of 2022, Law No. 19 of 2024 and Legislative Decrees No. 14 of 1969, and No. 69 of 2008, that criminalize journalistic expression through charges of defamation, the undermining of state authority and weakening of national unity and that permit immunity to security and intelligence force members.
68. Through consultation with journalists and civil society, adopt a new media law structure that guarantees freedom of press, establishes an independent regulatory body and a transparent and objective accreditation process for both domestic and foreign journalists.

F. Restriction of access to information on detained individuals and a lack of investigation into violations

69. Use the National Commission for Transitional Justice to specifically investigate the cases of journalists and media workers who were murdered, disappeared, tortured or arbitrarily detained during the Assad Regime and under the Transitional Government. Ensure these investigations lead to those responsible being held accountable under the justice system.
70. Publish official lists of all individuals currently held in Syrian detention centers and of those who have died in detention facilities and prisons.
71. Provide families of missing persons with information on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, and grant impartial organizations access to all detention facilities.

G. Restrictions on the operation of media outlets, censorship and licensing restrictions of the press and online

72. Cooperate with United Nations Human Rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur, on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression.
73. Develop accreditation and licensing procedures for both domestic and foreign journalists which are transparent, accessible, and applied without political or security-based discrimination, and that foreign journalists are not subjected to conditions that restrict editorial independence as a prerequisite for access.

VI. Appendices

- A. Annex 1 Matrix of Recommendations from the Previous Cycle with Comments on Progress
- B. Annex 2 Timeline of Relevant Events

Annex 1

Matrix of Recommendations from the Previous Cycle with Comments on Progress

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
Theme: D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment			
133.16 Immediately end all acts of torture and ill-treatment, in line with its obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, identify those missing and disappeared and release all those arbitrarily or unlawfully detained, including journalists, human rights defenders and political dissidents (Norway); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Noted	B11 International humanitarian law B41 Right to life, liberty and security B31 Transitional justice D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances H1 Human rights defenders Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents - Families of those missing, disappeared and unlawfully detained	Partially implemented. Following the fall of the Assad government, prisons and detention facilities were opened, and the detainees found alive inside were released. However, the fate and whereabouts of tens of thousands of people who were forcibly disappeared or otherwise went missing under the Assad Regime remain unknown. There are also instances of the Transitional Government unlawfully detaining individuals. Those missing and unlawfully detained have yet to be identified and some are suspected of already having been killed.
133.123 Put an end to all acts of torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and incommunicado detentions and release activists and human rights defenders arbitrarily detained (Italy); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances H1 Human rights defenders Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders	Partially implemented. The Transitional Government has released some journalists imprisoned under the Assad Regime. However, the submitters are aware of some other individuals who remain unlawfully detained or missing. A number of journalists and human rights defenders have been found dead under the Transitional Government.

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
		- Media - Political dissidents	
133.134 Terminate the practices of enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention and all forms of torture (Iceland); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - general	Not implemented. The Assad Regime continued to use enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest, detention and suspected torture after accepting this recommendation. The Transitional Government is suspected of continuing these practices on a smaller scale. There have been no steps taken to implement legislative prohibitions of these practices, though the Transitional Government has expressed an interest in doing so.
133.170 Release all political prisoners and stop targeting, among many others, civil society and political opponents through, inter alia, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention (Denmark); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	Not implemented. The submitters are aware of a number of missing and disappeared individuals who have yet to be released or identified as killed during the Assad Regime. The Transitional Government is suspected of continuing practices of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention in its efforts to exert control over the country.
Theme: B52 Impunity			
133.44 Provide records containing the names and locations of all persons detained in government-controlled facilities, including those who died during such detention, to relevant	Noted	B51 Right to an effective remedy B52 Impunity B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment	Partially implemented. The submitters recognize that the Transitional Government has committed to cooperating with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons (IIMP), the International Commission on Missing

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
United Nations agencies, in order to contribute to the search for the disappeared, truth and justice (Uruguay); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1		D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents - Families of those missing, disappeared and unlawfully detained	Persons (ICMP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to determine the status of all missing persons and to strengthen technical and institutional coordination. In May 2026, it was announced that the National Commission for Missing Persons (NCMP) confirmed that the children of Dr. Rania al-Abbasi were likely dead. Establishing the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the National Commission for Missing Persons represents an important institutional step toward implementing this recommendation. However, implementation can only be assessed as partial given the incomplete governing legal frameworks, the lack of clarity regarding institutional independence, and the limited information available regarding working mechanisms and practical outcomes, including coordination with international mechanisms and the participation of victims.
133.150 Investigate attacks against journalists and human rights defenders and sentence those accountable (Lithuania);	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice B52 Impunity B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses	Partially implemented. The submitters are aware of some investigations that have been initiated for killings that occurred under the Transitional Government but no resolution has been reached and no public

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1		Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	information is available on the progress. There are a number of outstanding cases that require investigation that have yet to be initiated.
Theme: B31 Transitional justice			
133.54 Cease all forms of incommunicado detention and take all feasible measures, in line with Security Council resolution 2474 (2019), to find and reveal the fates of those detained or disappeared (Austria); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Noted	A12 Acceptance of international norms B31 Transitional justice B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents - Families of those missing, disappeared and unlawfully detained	Not implemented. There are instances in which the Transitional Government has arbitrarily detained civilians and journalists. Information on the whereabouts of detained or disappeared individuals held under the Assad Regime and who have yet to be released is not available.
133.120 Publish official lists of all individuals who are currently held in Syrian detention centres and of those who have died in detention facilities and prisons (Sweden); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Noted	A12 Acceptance of international norms B31 Transitional justice B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention	Not implemented. The submitters are not aware of any list of individuals who are currently detained or have died in custody which has been published by the Transitional Government. In December 2024, journalists, victims' families, Syrian and international human rights organizations, and the Syrian Civil Defence accessed

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
		D32 Enforced disappearances H1 Human rights defenders Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	detention centres previously under the control of the Assad Regime, such as Saydnaya Prison. However, this access resulted in the destruction of documentation and evidence, including the identity records of former detainees. Preserving evidence and documents related to human rights violations, including detention records, official archives, and information related to missing persons, represents a central challenge during the transitional period. This requires establishing clear mechanisms to protect these materials, ensuring that they are managed in accordance with professional standards, and preventing their tampering, loss, or destruction, in a manner that supports truth-seeking and accountability efforts.
133.143 Establish a national mechanism to identify and hold accountable all perpetrators engaged in human rights violations and abuses, especially arbitrary detention, torture, abduction and enforced disappearance (Poland); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law B31 Transitional justice B52 Impunity B53 Support to victims and witnesses D1 Civil and political rights – general measures D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances	Not implemented. The submitters recognize that the Transitional Government was not in control of the country when most of the human rights violations were committed under the Assad Regime. While the National Commission for Missing Persons and the National Commission for Transitional Justice were established on 17 May 2025, these bodies do not constitute an independent national mechanism for identifying and ensuring

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
		Affected persons: - general	accountability for all perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses. Their mandates, independence, and operational capacity remain limited, and no comprehensive accountability framework has been established. Although a small number of criminal proceedings have been initiated against individuals alleged to be responsible for crimes committed during the Syrian conflict, these efforts remain selective and do not amount to a comprehensive national process capable of ensuring accountability for all perpetrators, including those responsible for arbitrary detention, torture, abduction, and enforced disappearance. There have been several criminal proceedings against individuals alleged to be responsible for violations during the Syrian conflict such as Atef Najib, the former Governor of Daraa, and the former Grand Mufti of the Republic. However, the vast majority of key regime individuals and perpetrators have not yet been held accountable.
133.168 Release arbitrarily detained political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders and peaceful protesters and respect the	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses	Partially implemented. The submitters are aware of a few individual journalists who have been released from detention by the Transitional Government. However, there

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
human rights of detainees (Portugal); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1		D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	are a number who continue to be arbitrarily detained or missing, for whom information is not available. Requests have been made of the Transitional Government to gain access to centres in order to verify their status and the conditions in which they are held. These requests have been unsuccessful.
133.169 Immediately release human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience, particularly those detained and imprisoned for participating in peaceful demonstrations since March 2011 (Canada); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	Partially implemented. The submitters are aware that a number of individuals, including some prisoners of conscience arrested during the March 2011 protests, have been released from detention. However, a significant number of individuals remain arbitrarily detained or continue to be missing, with no information available regarding their fate or whereabouts. In addition, concerns persist regarding reports of new cases of arbitrary detention under the Transitional Government, highlighting the need for effective safeguards to prevent the recurrence of such violations.
133.171 Release all political detainees, end torture, grant impartial organizations access to all detention facilities and provide families of missing persons with information on their relatives (Finland);	Accepted	B31 Transitional justice B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention	Partially implemented. The submitters are aware that a number of individuals have been released from detention. However, access to detention facilities where many others are believed to be held remains limited, and information concerning missing persons

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1		D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	continues to be unavailable despite repeated requests. Concerns also remain regarding reports of arbitrary detention under the Transitional Government, underscoring the need to ensure independent monitoring of detention facilities and effective measures to prevent the recurrence of arbitrary detention.
133.214 Reveal the fate and whereabouts of all detained, disappeared and missing persons, release all persons unjustifiably detained immediately and permit full international monitoring (Germany); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A12 Acceptance of international norms A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses Affected persons: - general	Not implemented. While the submitters are aware of a number of individuals who have been released from detention following changes in the political context, these releases do not constitute implementation of the recommendation, as no comprehensive measures have been taken to ensure accountability, establish the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, or guarantee access to detention facilities and relevant documentation. Access to many detention facilities remains restricted following the unregulated entry into these centres in December 2024, which resulted in significant destruction, loss, and potential compromise of documentation and other evidence. As a result, information concerning persons who remain missing continues to be difficult to obtain despite repeated requests. To the submitters' knowledge, independent international monitoring of

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
			detention facilities has not yet been permitted, raising ongoing concerns about the preservation of evidence and the risk of further loss or deterioration of information essential for accountability and justice.
Theme: A12 Acceptance of international norms			
133.63 Harmonize its national legislation with its international human rights obligations (Pakistan); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A12 Acceptance of international norms A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law Affected persons: - general	Not implemented. Though the Transitional Government has expressed its intention to align its legislation with human rights obligations, particularly freedom of expression, this change has yet to occur and consultation is limited. However, the submitters recognize that the Transitional Government has taken initial steps and understand that legislative reform in times of conflict can take time. The submitters encourage consultation with human rights and media rights stakeholders in order to align national legislation and international human rights obligations.
133.64 Harmonize the legal framework on the fight against terrorism, including Law No. 19/2012, to ensure that it is compatible with international law, in order to correct inaccuracies that could restrict fundamental freedoms (Mexico); Source of position	Accepted	A12 Acceptance of international norms A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law D1 Civil and political rights – general measures Affected persons: - general	Not implemented. The Transitional Government has expressed its intention to align its legislation with human rights obligations, particularly freedom of expression, and so on 11 December 2025, abolished its counter-terrorism courts, which were used to detain political dissidents and journalists through terrorism charges. However, the remaining legislation, such as

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1			Law No. 19 of 2012, known as the 2012 Anti-Terrorism Law, has yet to be repealed. Despite this, the submitters recognize that the Transitional Government has taken initial steps and understands that legislative reform in times of conflict can take time.
133.167 Ensure respect for freedom of expression, association and assembly (Ukraine); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A12 Acceptance of international norms A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law D1 Civil and political rights – general measures D43 Freedom of opinion and expression D44 Right to peaceful assembly Affected persons: - general	Partially implemented. The Transitional Government has expressed its intention to align its legislation with human rights obligations, particularly freedom of expression. Article 13 of the constitutional declaration governing the five-year transition period explicitly guarantees freedom of opinion, expression, and the press. Domestic and foreign journalists now find it easier to move and publish within Syria and a new accreditation system has been put in place for media personnel. However, according to some journalists, the accreditation system is still difficult to navigate and invasive background checks have been reported. Many journalists still feel the pressure to self-censor as a result.
Themes: A41 Constitutional and legislative framework			
133.152 Prohibit the trial of civilians in military field courts (Lithuania); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A41 Constitutional and legislative framework A42 Institutions and policies Affected persons: - general	Partially implemented. Military Decree No. 109/1968, which established the Military Field Courts in Syria, was abolished on 3 September 2023 by Law No. 32/2023. However, the broader system of military courts continued to

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
			exist until the adoption of the Constitutional Declaration following the fall of the former government, which abolished military courts. While the abolition of military field courts represents progress toward ending exceptional military jurisdictions, concerns remain regarding the preservation of court archives, case files, and evidentiary materials during the process of dismantling these institutions. The loss, destruction, or inaccessibility of such records may undermine future accountability efforts and contribute to risks of impunity.
133.155 Facilitate the creation of an independent mechanism with an international mandate to coordinate and consolidate reports of missing persons, including persons subjected to enforced disappearance (Chile); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Noted	A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law B31 Transitional justice B51 Right to an effective remedy B53 Support to victims and witnesses Affected persons: - general	Partially implemented. The submitters recognize that the Transitional Government is in the process of establishing new legislation. Progress has also been made through the establishment of the National Commission for Missing Persons and National Commission for Transitional Justice on 17 May 2025. However, information gaps and the nascent relationships between institutions in government mean coordination and consolidation of reports is difficult and slow. There are furthermore remaining concerns relating to whether these bodies are independent from political authorities, as well as the transparency of the legal

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
			framework under which they operate, including the public transparency of the laws and regulations governing their work.
133.165 Adopt all measures necessary to guarantee the cessation of all activities of persecution and harassment against human rights defenders and activists, dissident civilians and journalists (Spain); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law D1 Civil and political rights – general measures D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D31 Arbitrary detention D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	Not implemented. The Transitional Government has expressed its intention to align its legislation with human rights obligations, particularly freedom of expression, and so on 11 December 2025, abolished its counter-terrorism courts, which were used to detain political dissidents and journalists through terrorism charges. However, the remaining legislation, such as Law No. 19 of 2012, known as the 2012 Anti-Terrorism Law, has yet to be repealed. Such laws can continue to be used to persecute and harass human rights defenders and media representatives.
133.166 Adopt and implement legislation granting the rights to freedom of information and of the press aligned with international standards and revoke all the restrictions to those rights, including those in counter-terrorism laws (Portugal); Source of position A/HRC/50/6/Add.1 – Para. 1	Accepted	A41 Constitutional and legislative framework B11 International humanitarian law D1 Civil and political rights – general measures Affected persons: - Journalists - Human rights defenders - Media - Political dissidents	Partially implemented. The Transitional Government has expressed its intention to align its legislation with human rights obligations, particularly freedom of expression and of the press. Article 13 of the constitutional declaration governing the five-year transition period explicitly guarantees freedom of opinion, expression, and the press. For example, on 11 December 2025, the Transitional Government abolished the counter-terrorism courts, which were used to detain political dissidents and

Recommendation	Position	Full List of Themes	Assessment/Comments on Level of Implementation
			journalists through terrorism charges. Domestic and foreign journalists now also find it easier to move and publish within Syria and a new accreditation system has been put in place for media personnel. However, according to some journalists, the accreditation system is still difficult to navigate, and invasive background checks have been reported. Many journalists still feel the pressure to self-censor as a result. Equally, remaining legislation, such as Law No. 19 of 2012, known as the 2012 Anti-Terrorism Law, has yet to be repealed.

Annex 2

Timeline of relevant events

The following incidents were reported between 2022 and the date of this submission in July 2026. More details of these incidents can be found at: <https://cpj.org/mideast/syria/> and <https://scm.bz/en/category/violations-watch/>.

Killings of journalists

2022

- November 20, 2022: Essam Abdullah, a reporter for the Hawar News Agency (“ANHA”), was killed during Turkish airstrikes in Northern Syria. The airstrikes were carried out against Kurdish military bases following a bombing in Istanbul which Turkey alleges was carried out by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (“PKK”) and the Syrian People's Defense Units (“YPG”);⁴⁹ both groups have denied these allegations. Abdullah headed toward a bombed area in the village of Tqil Baqil in the northeastern Syrian city of Derik after the first round of airstrikes to cover civilian casualties. He was

⁴⁹ Daily Sabah (Nov. 14, 2022), “Istiklal Street bomber instructed by PKK/YPG in Syria: Turkish police”, available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/istiklal-street-bomber-instructed-by-pkkygp-in-syria-turkish-police/news>.

killed while reporting in a following airstrike. His body was found with his camera burned.⁵⁰

2023

- August 23, 2023: A suspected Turkish drone strike hit a car belonging to the all-female broadcaster JIN TV, killing driver Najm el-Din Faisal Haj Sinan and wounding journalist Dalila Agid. The car was driving near the Turkish border to Syria, from Amuda to Qamishli, where the car was attacked. Agid was covering an event to commemorate the death of two Kurdish officials in another drone attack in June 2023.⁵¹
- November 10, 2023: Mahmoud al-Harbi al-Kafri was shot to death after his car was intercepted by a group of men in Maaraba, near Damascus. 10 days prior to his death, al-Harabi reported on the alleged smuggling of a synthetic drug by a local family. A Syrian man, Mohammed Aref Abbas, was convicted for the murder of al-Harabi on March 2, 2024 and sentenced to death, but later escaped from jail.⁵²

2024

- November 30, 2024: Mustafa al-Sarut was shot and killed by a military soldier in the Al-Ashrafiya neighborhood of Aleppo. It was unclear which military the perpetrator belonged to and there was no military check point in the vicinity of the attack. Al-Sarut was travelling by car with a colleague, Milad Fadel, who was wearing a “Press” marked helmet and vest but al-Sarut was not himself wearing the insignia. Fadel was also shot but survived due to protection from his vest. Neither the Syrian Democratic Forces nor the al-Assad army has claimed the attack on al-Sarut and Milad Fadel.⁵³
- December 4, 2024: Anas Alkharboutli was killed in an airstrike by the Syrian military forces in the town of Morek while covering the recent battles between government and rebel forces. Alkharboutli was filming a Syrian army jet passing over him and a few of

⁵⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists (Nov. 22, 2022), “CPJ calls on Turkish authorities to investigate airstrikes that killed Hawar News Agency reporter” available at: <https://cpj.org/2022/11/cpj-calls-on-turkish-authorities-to-investigate-airstrikes-that-killed-hawar-news-agency-reporter/>

⁵¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Aug. 25, 2023), “Driver killed, journalist severely injured by suspected Turkish drone strike in Syria” available at: <https://cpj.org/2023/08/driver-killed-journalist-severely-injured-by-suspected-turkish-drone-strike-in-syria/>.

⁵² Committee to Protect Journalists (Feb. 2025), “Mahmoud al-Harbi al-Kafri” available at: <https://cpj.org/data/people/mahmoud-al-harbi-al-kafri/>.

⁵³ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 2024), “Mustafa al-Sarut” available at: <https://cpj.org/data/people/mustafa-al-sarut/>.

his journalist colleagues when the jet turned around and fired missiles in their direction. All journalists were reportedly wearing helmets and vests with the “Press” insignia.⁵⁴

- December 19, 2024: Jihan Belkin and Nazim Dashdan were killed in a drone attack near Aleppo as they were returning from covering clashes between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian National Army at the Tishreen Dam. Their vehicle was marked with press insignia. The attack is suspected to have been carried out by Turkish or Turkish-backed military forces. Belkin and Dashdan were both Kurdish and worked for ANHA, a media outlet affiliated with the Kurdish administration of northeast Syria and pro-PKK.⁵⁵

2025

- July 14, 2025: Sari Majid A. Shoufi, a photojournalist for Suwayda 24, went missing in connection with covering armed clashes in Sweida; he was last heard from at 6 am when he reported that the village was under attack. Shoufi was confirmed dead on 24 July, 2025 following a 10-day long search.⁵⁶

2026

- February 21, 2026: Alaa Mohammed, a YouTube political commentator from the Alawite minority, was found dead at his home in the village of Nini in the Latakia governorate. He was reportedly killed from behind after publishing a video discussing security incidents in Latakia. No suspect has yet been identified.⁵⁷

Physical attacks, harassment, and intimidation of journalists

2024

⁵⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 5, 2024), “Award-winning Syrian photojournalist Anas Alkharboutli killed in Hama” available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/12/award-winning-syrian-photojournalist-anas-alkharboutli-killed-in-hama/>.

⁵⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 20, 2024), “2 Kurdish journalists killed in suspected Turkish drone attack in northern Syria” available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/12/2-kurdish-journalists-killed-in-suspected-turkish-drone-attack-in-northern-syria/>.

⁵⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 30, 2025), “Syrian photojournalist killed while covering clashes in Sweida” available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/07/syrian-photojournalist-killed-while-covering-clashes-in-sweida/>.

⁵⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists (Feb. 24, 2026), “Syrian journalist Alaa Mohammed found dead at home in Latakia” available at: <https://cpj.org/2026/02/syrian-journalist-alaa-mohammed-found-dead-at-home-in-latakia/>.

- December 25, 2024: Ali Al-Najjar, a camera operator for Al Arabiya and Al-Hadath TV, was shot in the leg by Israeli gunfire while covering protests in Al-Sweisa, Quneitra, against Israeli military presence in southern Syria.⁵⁸

2025

- January 8, 2025: French journalist Sylvain Mercadier, Syrian lawyer Mohammed Fayad, and freelance journalist Youssef Gharibi were detained by Israeli forces in the village of Al-Rafid in Quneitra while covering the Israeli military's expansion near the occupied Golan Heights. After being spotted filming, soldiers demanded footage be deleted and seized Mercadier's laptop. When Fayad protested, he was arrested; Mercadier was also detained after intervening. Both were thrown to the ground, handcuffed, blindfolded, and held for several hours at a military base before being released in a nearby field without their SIM cards, memory cards, and camera equipment.⁵⁹
- January 13, 2025: Spanish freelancer John McAulay, Spanish photojournalist David Melero, and Syrian-Palestinian journalist Luay Al-Basha were stopped at gunpoint by Israeli forces near Al-Hamidiyah in southern Syria after encountering an Israeli military post inside Syrian territory. The journalists were pressured to delete their material in front of armed soldiers and pretended to comply, fearing possible violence.⁶⁰
- March 6, 2025: Ryad Alhussein, a camera operator for Al Jazeera, was shot in the right leg while driving near Jableh during violence sparked by a pro-Assad ambush on government forces.⁶¹
- March 10, 2025: Qahtan Mustafa, a TV reporter, and Qahtan Mustafa, a camera operator both from Al-Araby, were reporting on people returning home to the region of Latakia when they were targeted with gunfire. The car was unmarked but both journalists were wearing "press" insignia on their vests.⁶²
- May 2025: Syrian journalists Talal Sayyah and Ahmad Al-Kharyoush of Ahrar Horan were threatened while filming in Kudna, Quneitra. The journalists had arrived in response to calls from residents to document damage to a water station. As they began filming

⁵⁸ Committee to Protect Journalists (Aug. 8, 2025), "Israeli forces chase, hold, and shoot at journalists in southern Syria" available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/08/israeli-forces-chase-hold-and-shoot-at-journalists-in-southern-syria/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Mar. 14, 2025), "In Syria, 3 news crews shot at, assaulted while covering deadly clashes" available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/03/in-syria-3-news-crews-shot-at-assaulted-while-covering-deadly-clashes/>.

⁶² Ibid.

interviews, Israeli soldiers opened fire, forcing them to evacuate the area immediately and leave their report incomplete.⁶³

- May 9, 2025: A BBC Arabic team led by correspondent Feras Kilani was detained at gunpoint by Israeli forces while filming near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights in southern Syria. Despite identifying themselves as journalists, the seven-member crew was surrounded by soldiers, had their equipment confiscated, and was forcibly taken to a checkpoint in Quneitra. Kilani was taken to a separate room, strip-searched, and interrogated about personal matters, while the rest of the team was blindfolded, zip-tied, and questioned. Photos and personal data were deleted from their devices.⁶⁴
- May 20, 2025: Anwar Asfour, a freelance photographer for Al Arabiya TV, was shot at by Israeli troops while reporting in Kudna, a village in the Syrian-controlled area of the Golan Heights. Asfour was covering damage to water wells resulting from a previous Israeli military operation. Despite wearing a press vest, he was targeted with direct gunfire from a short distance.⁶⁵
- June 2025: Syrian journalists Nader Dabo of Syria Monitor and 963media, and Nour Abu Hassan of Al-Modon, were chased by Israeli military vehicles for over half an hour across mountainous terrain in Quneitra province. The journalists were documenting the aftermath of Iranian drone-strike debris falling on civilian areas when an Israeli Defense Forces (“IDF”) patrol intercepted them near the border. After their car was stopped, they were interrogated in the field and accused of violating a “military zone” despite never crossing any border.⁶⁶
- July 15, 2025: Nadim al-Nablusi, a reporter for Ahrar Horan, a local media collective, suffered injuries while covering the developments in Sweida. He was hit by shrapnel following an Israeli drone strike on a vehicle of the General Security Forces of the Syrian Government.⁶⁷
- July 15, 2025: Freelance journalist Muhannad Abu Zaid was shot in the hand by a sniper while following a convoy led by the General Security Forces of the Syrian Government into Sweida.⁶⁸

⁶³ Committee to Protect Journalists (Aug. 8, 2025), “Israeli forces chase, hold, and shoot at journalists in southern Syria” available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/08/israeli-forces-chase-hold-and-shoot-at-journalists-in-southern-syria/>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 22, 2025, updated July 30, 2025), “Journalists killed, wounded, media office damaged in Syria violence” available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/07/journalists-wounded-media-office-damaged-in-syria-violence/>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Arrest, arbitrary detention, incommunicado holding and enforced disappearances of journalists, media and human rights defenders

2024

- June 10, 2024: Syrian journalist Jomaa Akash, a correspondent for Al Arabiya and Al Hadath, started receiving threats of violence from a local clan in Raqqa after his June 2024 report on drug trafficking in the city. Akash contacted the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Autonomous Authorities of the North and East Syria Region to request protection as a licensed media worker, but they took no action to ensure his safety.⁶⁹

2025

- March 11, 2025: Souria Post reporter Hashim Al-Abdullah and camera operator Ehab Khaled were assaulted and detained for four hours at the Hmeimim air base by Russian military guards. They were beaten, threatened with death, and had their journalistic materials forcibly confiscated.⁷⁰
- June 27, 2025: Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza was taken from his home by Syrian security forces and transferred to an unknown location. Mohammad Al-Saleh, Director of Press Relations at Syria's Ministry of Information, confirmed Zaza's arrest in the capital Damascus and told CPJ that it was "related to security concerns and not connected to his journalistic work," but he was not authorized to share further details as the matter was under investigation.⁷¹
- December 22, 2025: Bilal Abdul Kareem, a US independent journalist and founder of the social media-based On the Ground News, was arrested by Syrian security forces in al-Bab in northern Aleppo governorate. His wife told CPJ that two General Security Directorate vehicles surrounded the area before forces arrested him and took him to an unknown location. No reason for the detention has been disclosed. Kareem is yet to be released.⁷²

2026

⁶⁹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 8, 2024), "Journalist threatened after reporting on drug trafficking in northern Syria" available at: <https://cpj.org/2024/07/journalist-threatened-after-reporting-on-drug-trafficking-in-northern-syria/>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 8, 2024), "Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza detained in Syria, whereabouts unknown" available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/06/kurdish-journalist-hassan-zaza-detained-in-syria-whereabouts-unknown/>.

⁷² Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec., 2024), "Kurdish journalist Hassan Zaza detained in Syria, whereabouts unknown" available at: <https://cpj.org/data/people/bilal-abdul-kareem/>.

- January 18, 2026: Ahmed Polad and Eva Maria Michelmann, both working for Etkin News Agency (“ETHA”) and Özgür TV, were arrested by Syrian authorities in Raqqa. After several months of uncertainty on the two journalists’ whereabouts, it was discovered in April that they were being held in a detention center in Damascus. Michelmann only received access to legal counsel on April 23 and was later released on June 19, 2026. Polad is still held in detention.⁷³

Media Outlets Shut Down, Censored, or Subjected to Licensing Restrictions

2023

- July 2023: The Assad Information Ministry revoked the accreditation of two unnamed local BBC journalists on the stated ground that they had been "warned more than once" about "misleading reports relying on statements and testimonies from terrorist and anti-Syrian authorities".⁷⁴

2024

- August 2024: The Ministry of Information announced that it would collaborate with the Ministries of Interior and Justice to monitor "unlicensed" digital platforms for "indecent content" and content "offending national constants" and pursue legal action against such media operators. The decision resulted in compulsory licensing of digital platforms, including social media.⁷⁵

2025

- December 2025: The Information Ministry started issuing temporary as opposed to permanent media licenses. Journalists furthermore reported invasive background checks for press accreditation. Omar Haj Ahmed, Director General of Press Affairs, disputed the background check characterisation and stated press cards would be issued "with no security vetting" going forward.⁷⁶

⁷³ Committee to Protect Journalists (Apr., 2024), “Ahmed Polad, Imprisoned” available at: <https://cpj.org/data/people/ahmed-polad/> and Committee to Protect Journalists (April, 2024), “Eva Maria Michelmann, Released” available at: <https://cpj.org/data/people/eva-maria-michelmann/>.

⁷⁴ Committee to Protect Journalists (Jul. 10, 2023), “Syria revokes accreditation of 2 BBC journalists” available at: <https://cpj.org/2023/07/syria-revokes-accreditation-of-2-bbc-journalists/>.

⁷⁵ Syrians for Truth & Justice (Sep. 19, 2024) ”Syria: Ministry of Information Stifles Digital Platforms Citing “Indecent Content,” “Offending National Constants” ” available here: <https://stj-sy.org/en/syria-ministry-of-information-stifles-digital-platforms-citing-indecent-content-offending-national-constants/>.

⁷⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists (Dec. 5, 2025), “A year after Assad’s fall, Syrian journalists enjoy freedom but also new risks” available at: <https://cpj.org/2025/12/a-year-after-assads-fall-syrian-journalists-enjoy-freedom-but-also-new-risks/>.