

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

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## RULE OF FEAR: ISIS ABUSES IN DETENTION IN NORTHERN SYRIA



Vehicles drive past a flag of the al-Qa'ida-linked Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, fluttering at the entrance to the city of al-Raqqa, 4 October 2013.

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### 1. Introduction

This briefing describes serious abuses of human rights committed in detention facilities run by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS),<sup>1</sup> an armed opposition group that currently controls significant swathes of territory and people in northern Syria, including in al-Raqqa governorate and in and around Aleppo and Idlib. In these areas, ISIS claims it is fighting to establish an “Islamic state” and has introduced harsh rules that it said were based on Shari’a (Islamic law), including cruel and inhuman punishments such as flogging and summary killings in public.

In the areas they control, ISIS forces have committed numerous serious rights abuses, including some that amount to war crimes; they include abductions, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and unlawful killings.

Those targeted by ISIS for abduction and arbitrary detention have included a wide range of individuals, including people suspected of committing ordinary crimes, such as theft or murder, and others accused of committing religiously prohibited acts, such as *zina* (sex out of

wedlock) and alcohol consumption. As well, ISIS forces have targeted local people suspected of organizing protests and opposition to their rule, including community activists and members of local councils set up to provide services to residents following the withdrawal of Syrian government forces, other civil society and media activists, and commanders and members of rival armed groups, including those operating as part of the Free Syrian Army (FSA). ISIS is also alleged to have abducted foreign nationals, including journalists, staff of international organizations and religious figures.

This briefing is based on research conducted between 20 November and 5 December 2013 by an Amnesty International researcher who visited Gaziantep, Nizip and Akçakale in Turkey to interview former detainees held by ISIS in northern Syria. Amnesty International interviewed nine former detainees in person, separately, and spoke to another earlier by telephone. The former detainees interviewed had been abducted and detained by ISIS forces in al-Raqqa governorate and Aleppo city. They had spent periods ranging from a few hours to 55 days in ISIS detention, all between May and November 2013. All left northern Syria or went to Turkey after their release by ISIS forces but at least one continues to move between the two countries. All expressed fear for their own safety and that of their relatives, some of whom remain in Syria. They agreed to speak to Amnesty International on condition that the organization should not publish their names or other details that could expose their identities.

The accounts they gave provide a chilling picture of conditions in detention facilities run by ISIS in northern Syria. The former detainees described how they and others were seized arbitrarily by armed men wearing masks and carted off to places of detention whose location they frequently did not know and where they had no contact with their families or the outside world. Often, they had little idea why they had been detained and only fears as to what might become of them. Some encountered children in detention, including boys who were threatened and flogged; one spoke of being present in a cell with a father as he heard his 13-year-old son apparently being tortured but was powerless to act. Others spoke of prisoners being flogged on the orders of a man whom ISIS had apparently appointed as a Shari'a court judge, but who showed not the least respect for any sense of due process and summarily ordered detainees to be taken to be killed, including a prisoner who had the temerity to mock him behind his back.

The former detainees all shared a sense of relief at their release from detention and escape from the area controlled by ISIS but they remained acutely concerned for their relatives and others that they left in detention and who remain vulnerable to ISIS's cruel, capricious and arbitrary rule. They asked that the world should wake up to the plight of those now suffering under ISIS in northern Syria.

ISIS's domination has grown significantly over the months following its declared formation in April 2013, particularly in areas in northern Syria that have come under opposition forces as the Syrian conflict continues to degenerate into a war of attrition between the forces of the government of President Bashar al-Assad and a proliferation of often mutually antagonistic armed groups, including groups composed of foreign fighters. With more than 100,000 Syrians killed since anti-government protests broke out in early 2011 and millions of other Syrians either internally displaced or now refugees abroad, the conflict has wrought, and continues to wreak, a terrible toll. It has been marked on all sides by criminal disdain for international principles relating to the protection of civilians and the conduct of warfare: government forces have repeatedly attacked civilian residential areas using aircraft and artillery, used snipers to shoot down civilians on the streets, and tortured detainees, including children, on an industrial scale. They also stand accused of deploying chemical weapons. For their part, opposition forces have also carried out gross abuses of human rights, including torture and summary killing of captured soldiers and other detainees and car bomb and other attacks targeting areas in which civilians who support the government reside. The situation has continued to deteriorate, notwithstanding international efforts to address the threat of chemical weapons, as arms and fighters have continued to flood in from abroad and fighting and control of territory and people has become localized and fragmented.

ISIS, which is linked to al-Qa'ida in Iraq, is an armed opposition group whose fighters, all Sunni Muslims, are drawn from many countries. They reportedly include individuals with

previous experience of armed conflicts in Chechnya and Iraq and militants drawn from a range of countries including Tunisia and Morocco in North Africa and states in the Gulf, as well as Syrian fighters. They claim to advocate a strict form of Shari'a rule and use extreme force to impose it in areas that they control or where they are present. In Syria, they are reported to have been responsible for a number of bombings of targets in government-held areas, some of which caused civilian deaths and injuries, to have assassinated commanders of other armed opposition groups, such as the FSA, and to have tortured and executed captured members of rival armed groups. It is unclear how they are financed but widely believed that they have received support from Sunni Muslim sources within Gulf states. It is believed that they have also made extensive use of Turkey in order to gain entry into Syria and to bring in fresh fighters, arms and other supplies.

Amnesty International is urging ISIS to end its reign of abuse in northern Syria, including the abductions, torture and unlawful killings of detainees and others, and to respect the human rights of the area's beleaguered population and others who come under its control. It is also appealing to the government of Turkey and other governments to take urgent, concrete steps to cut off the flow of arms and other support to ISIS on account of its human rights record and violations of international humanitarian law, and renewing its call to the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

### **1.1 Background: The rise of ISIS**

The Syrian conflict, which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)<sup>2</sup> has classified as a non-international armed conflict since 2012, has seen the emergence of an array of different armed groups that have generally continued to increase in both strength and power during the past two years. Some of these groups appear to be fighting simply to oust President Bashar al-Assad and his government, but others openly advocate the establishment of an Islamic state and have sought to apply Shari'a (religious) rules in the areas that they now control.

One such group is Jabhat al-Nusra li Ahl al-Sham min Mujahidi al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad (Al-Nusra Front for the People of the Levant from the Levant Mujahideen in Areas of Jihad), generally known as Jabhat al-Nusra. The formation of this group was announced in an audio-taped message from its leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, that was issued on 24 January 2012.<sup>3</sup> Jabhat al-Nusra has engaged in major battles against Syrian government forces, sometimes in alliance with other armed opposition groups, as in early March 2013 when it forced Syrian government troops to withdraw from the city of al-Raqqa.

In April 2013, the leader of al-Qa'ida in Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, released an audio message<sup>4</sup> in which he announced that Jabhat al-Nusra was merging with the Islamic State of Iraq, which was an alias for al-Qa'ida in Iraq, to form a new armed group, the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (known in Arabic as al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham).

This prompted an immediate public denial by Jabhat al-Nusra's leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, in an audio message uploaded on YouTube on 10 April 2013.<sup>5</sup> Al-Jolani also pledged allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama Bin Laden's successor as leader of al-Qa'ida, who also issued an audio message<sup>6</sup> in which he said that al-Baghdadi had failed to consult or inform him about the proposed merger and formation of ISIS and, in consequence, he had ordered its disbandment. According to al-Zawahiri, the Islamic State of Iraq was to remain active in Iraq while Jabhat al-Nusra should operate in Syria. Al-Baghdadi, however, rejected this in an audio message reply<sup>7</sup> and refused to disband ISIS.

Former al-Raqqa residents told Amnesty International that they first became aware of the presence of ISIS in their home area in around mid May 2013, when masked armed men carried out an “execution-style” unlawful killing of three men, all said by their killers to be Alawite Muslims, in one of al-Raqqa city’s public squares.<sup>8</sup> Before shooting dead the three Alawite Muslims, one of the masked men used a megaphone to read out a statement in which he identified ISIS as the armed group carrying out the killings and said they were in reprisal for mass killings committed by Syrian government forces and pro-government groups earlier that month in al-Bayda and Banias.<sup>9</sup>

Thereafter, according to former residents, signs and notices on buildings that until then had referred to Jabhat al-Nusra were replaced by others that bore the name of ISIS, shown on black flags bearing the words “There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is Allah’s prophet.”

Most Jabhat al-Nusra leaders in al-Raqqa pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi but one, known as Abu Sa’ad al-Hadhrami, reportedly did not do so. He is said to have fled to an unknown location but later to have returned to al-Raqqa in about September 2013 and to have been abducted shortly afterwards.

As it has grown in strength, ISIS has increasingly clashed with other armed opposition groups and a key Kurdish opposition party, the Democratic Union Party (known by its Kurdish initials of PYD) over the months following its declared formation. ISIS has engaged in fierce fighting with the al-Farouq Brigades and in August 2013 fought against the Ahfad al-Rassoul (Grandsons of the Prophet) Brigades when taking full control of al-Raqqa city. In September, ISIS forces fought against members of Liwa’ ‘Assefat al-Shemal (the Northern Storm Battalion), another armed group, in A’zaz, close to the Syria-Turkey border. Most recently, in December 2013, ISIS forces clashed with fighters belonging to Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiya (Ahrar al-Sham Islamic Movement) in Aleppo.

The US State Department announced on 11 December 2012 that it considered Jabhat al-Nusra to be an alias for al-Qa’ida in Iraq and listed it as a Foreign Terrorist Organization,<sup>10</sup> subject to Executive Order 13224,<sup>11</sup> which empowers the US Treasury to block the assets of, and transactions with, foreign individuals and organizations that commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism.<sup>12</sup>

A few months later, the UN Security Council’s Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee<sup>13</sup> added both Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS to its list of individuals and entities subject to an assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo on 30 May 2013.<sup>14</sup> It considered both groups to be aliases for al-Qa’ida in Iraq; it had previously included al-Qa’ida in Iraq on this list on 18 October 2004.<sup>15</sup>

## **2. Abduction and detention**

Most former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International said that the ISIS forces who abducted and detained them did not say who they were or that they belonged to ISIS, and gave no reason for taking them into their custody and did not tell them where they were being detained. Detainees were usually blindfolded immediately so unable to see where they were being taken, and had their wrists secured. At their places of detention, whose locations were not revealed to them, they were told the accusations against them and were beaten and tortured under interrogation. Accusations ranged from allegations of having committed crimes such as theft, embezzlement or murder to what they claimed were breaches of Shari’a, such as behaviour deemed immoral, to giving out information considered harmful to ISIS – often used against journalists and community and media activists. Other detainees, particularly members of the local councils that were set up to organize the provision of services to local

people after Syrian government forces withdrew from the area, were accused of supporting or collaborating with the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (commonly known as the Syrian National Coalition), the internationally recognized opposition body to the al-Assad regime, or with the USA.

Some former detainees told Amnesty International that they were abducted in the street by armed ISIS fighters wearing masks, as in the case of a 59-year-old man who was seized by four masked gunmen near al-Raqqa, at 10.45pm on 3 October 2013. He told Amnesty International what happened when he stopped to drop off a friend to whom he had given a lift and a car drove up and blocked him from continuing his journey:

*“Four men wearing black masks got out of the car and walked in my direction. One approached the right side of the car and another the left side. One said, ‘We want you for five minutes at the Shari’a Committee.’<sup>16</sup> They took my laptop and other documents that were in the car. They let my friend go and then placed me in the back seat of their car. One asked what my name was and after a few minutes, they took off the glasses I was wearing and blindfolded me.”<sup>17</sup>*

He was not ill-treated by his masked abductors but other former detainees reported that their ISIS captors had beaten and threatened them at the time of their abduction. For example, a man aged 38 who lived in Tell Abyad described how he was assaulted by masked ISIS gunmen who made him stop his car on the afternoon of 15 May 2013:

*“I was driving home when a car followed me and signalled to me to slow down by switching its lights on and off. As I slowed down, people in the car opened fire in my direction, apparently to scare me. I stopped the car and before I knew it, four masked gunmen were already holding me. One hit my head with a gun while another beat me repeatedly on my back with a rifle. They put me in their car and blindfolded me. They took me to a place that was so quiet. I could see by looking down through my blindfold that the ground had a desert-like look. I thought they were going to kill me. They spent some time talking on the phone. Then they put me in the boot of the car and drove for about four hours until we reached the detention place.”<sup>18</sup>*

Another man, aged 20, told Amnesty International that masked ISIS gunmen abducted him from the street in a crowded part of the al-Bab neighbourhood of northern Aleppo, in late November, but onlookers were too afraid to come to his aid. He tried to run away but was unable to escape.

*“I didn’t want to be taken by them... so I started running. They ran after me, all masked, and captured me. I started shouting loudly to get the attention of the crowd of people: ‘What have I done, what have I done?’ I could see people looking at me, but no one said a word. They were all killed by fear... They [the masked gunmen] dragged me into a yellow taxi, and I was surprised that the driver was also masked, and they drove off. They blindfolded me... Then the driver said, ‘Let us get closer to God by killing him.’ He stopped the car, and I could hear that he loaded a rifle and said, ‘Say the shahada [the Islamic creed] because you’ll die.’ I didn’t say anything. He repeated it but I did not respond. I was not scared. I was detained by the regime before... Then, they said, ‘Let’s take him to the Maqar [in reference to one of the ISIS positions in Aleppo].’”<sup>19</sup>*

### **3. Detention facilities**

ISIS operates an unknown number of detention centres in the areas they control, to which there is no independent access and in which detainees are subjected to grossly inhumane

conditions. Former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International often were not certain where they had been held; the ISIS fighters who seized them invariably refused to say where they were taking them and during their captivity their ISIS guards failed to disclose their whereabouts. In only one out of the 10 cases interviewed by Amnesty International did ISIS acknowledge to a family of a detainee that it was holding him, about two weeks after he was taken into custody. Consequently, many detainees' relatives have been unable to locate them and detainees usually have difficulty getting word to their families except by chance means, such as through fellow detainees who were released.

Known ISIS detention centres include **Mabna al-Mohafaza** (the Governorate Building), also known as **Qasr al-Mohafez** (the Governor's Palace), in al-Raqqa city, the public building from where the al-Assad government-appointed al-Raqqa provincial governor exercised his authority until he was ousted by Syrian opposition forces, and which Jabhat al-Nusra, and later ISIS, has used as its headquarters.

Former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International who learnt that they were held at Mabna al-Mohafaza described being forced downstairs to what they believed to be the building's basement where, they said, some rooms had openings near the ceiling that were at ground level.<sup>20</sup>

Those held said they saw and heard other detainees, including children, who were not held separately from adults. They also witnessed or heard detainees being beaten or tortured by ISIS guards, who generally wore masks, and were told that some detainees had been taken away and executed after brief and grossly unfair summary "trials". They were not able to estimate the number of detainees held at Mabna al-Mohafaza and could not tell if there were detainees held elsewhere in the large building.

Former detainees said they were held in a room in a U-shaped building in **Sadd al-Ba'ath** (al-Ba'ath Dam), built in the late 1980s on the Euphrates River in the town of al-Mansura, al-Raqqa governorate. The main ISIS official in charge of interrogation, summary "trials" and imposition of "punishments" such as summary killings also serves as the judge in the Shari'a court in al-Mansura. According to former detainees, the judge, who is the only one who does not wear a mask although he always wears an explosive belt, oversees daily interrogation sessions, frequently involving floggings and other brutal treatment of those being questioned, except on Fridays and Saturdays, when he visits his family home in al-Karama village in al-Raqqa governorate. Detainees are questioned and beaten in the same room in which other detainees are confined, in full view, and the judge is also alleged to have summarily "tried" and sentenced detainees in the same room.

Former detainees also accuse the judge and some ISIS guards of threatening to kill those they are holding and throw their bodies into the Euphrates or one of the lakes linked to the dam; "I'll make you food for the fish", a term that ISIS interrogators and jailers are alleged to have used frequently. This may be no more than a threat, as Amnesty International has not obtained any evidence to indicate that detainees' bodies have been disposed of in this way. However, one former detainee said ISIS guards had told him and other detainees that they had thrown dead bodies into the Euphrates and another former detainee reported being advised by a doctor who had been brought in to treat him when he became ill in detention that he and others should not drink from a certain tap because it used water from the Euphrates and "the river is polluted from the dead bodies."

ISIS has not publicly acknowledged using Sadd al-Ba'ath as a detention facility.

**Al-'Akershi oil facility** in the village of al-'Akershi, 20 kilometres east of al-Raqqa city, is a detention centre that ISIS fighters are said to have begun using first as a military training camp. One former detainee told Amnesty International that he learnt he was being held there from another detainee who belonged to ISIS and told him that he had been at the training camp when he was accused of being an infiltrator from another armed group, detained and moved to the detention facility at the site. The former detainee, who was held at the oil facility for about 40 days, said he had also heard Islamic and military-style chanting on some occasions during his incarceration, as well as what appeared to be live fire military training.

Another former detainee interviewed by Amnesty International also described such chanting and training-style gunfire, which suggests that he too may have been held at the al-'Akershi oil facility, although he was never able to learn where he was being held. He said he thought a large number of people held prayers nearby because, from his cell, he could hear their voices and the sound of a large number of people kneeling down. He said he was kept in solitary confinement for 55 days and allowed no opportunity to speak or communicate in any way with other detainees.

**Idarat al-Markabat**, an ex-Ministry of Transport building located in the industrial area of al-Raqqa, is also used as a detention facility by ISIS. Amnesty International interviewed one former detainee who was held in solitary confinement there for one week in October 2013. He learnt where he was being held only when he recognized the building at the time of his release.

**Al-Mer'ab** (also referred to as the **Garage**), located in the industrial area of al-Raqqa, was used by the Syrian government's traffic department in the city to park vehicles and deposit related equipment, according to residents. It is now used as a detention facility apparently as a gathering point before detainees are released.

In Aleppo, ISIS uses **Mashfa al-Atfal** (Children's Hospital), located next to three buildings occupied by other armed groups, in the Qadi 'Askar area and **Maqar Ahmed Qaddour**, which was previously a base for another armed group, in the al-Haidariya area.

#### **4. Torture and other abuse of detainees**

According to former detainees interviewed by Amnesty International, ISIS guards and interrogators frequently torture detainees, particularly by beating them with generator belts, thick pieces of cable, sticks or other implements. They also subject detainees to a method known as the *aqrab* (scorpion), in which they are forced to remain in a contorted stress position – according to which they have one arm folded behind the back with the hand uppermost while their other hand is made to reach over one shoulder so that their wrists can be handcuffed together – for long periods, inducing severe pain and possible long-term muscular or other damage.

In one case, a former detainee told Amnesty International that he was tortured with electric shocks and beaten with a cable while suspended with only one foot touching the floor. Three out of 10 former detainees whom Amnesty International interviewed said they had been held in solitary confinement for part or all of their detention.

Former detainees also described seeing fellow inmates subjected to flogging by guards, sometimes on the orders of a man who acts as a judge in the Shari'a court in al-Mansura. Some detainees are also alleged to have been executed on his orders.

#### 4.1 Adult detainees

One man aged 20 who had been detained at Maqar Ahmad Kaddour in early October 2013 told Amnesty International that his ISIS abductors failed to search him before putting him in a cell in which he found six other detainees, with whom he then shared his cigarettes. However, ISIS had declared the smoking of tobacco to be *haram* (prohibited under Islam), and the ISIS guards threatened the detainees and subjected one to a flogging after one of them opened the cell door and smelled tobacco smoke.

*"He shouted loudly 'smoking, smoking' and left hurriedly and returned with others. They searched the room but didn't find any cigarettes. They asked repeatedly who had smoked. We all had, but we remained silent. Then one guy came forward and said it was him who smoked. They ordered him to sit on his knees and tied his hands to the back. Then a Chechen man came and spoke to us in formal Arabic, saying, 'You are thieves and you should be killed.' The Chechen man ordered the confessed smoker to stand up and he slapped him hard on the face. A Moroccan jailer held the Chechen's arm and they went outside and spoke for around a minute. They came back and the Chechen said, 'Religiously I cannot hit you on your face.' He then took a whip and flogged the detainee four times on his back. Every time, he whipped him, the Chechen jailer would raise his arm until his armpits showed before hitting hard."<sup>21</sup>*

Another detainee held at the same detention centre, a young man aged about 19, was repeatedly flogged by his captors, according to a fellow inmate who spoke to Amnesty International after his release. His ISIS captors accused the young man of collaborating with Ahfad al-Mursaleen Brigade, another armed group that had engaged in clashes with ISIS, and beat him repeatedly apparently to extract a confession and to punish him. The floggings were carried out in the middle of the night but were overheard by Amnesty International's informant, who said he was woken by the loud voices of the torturers and then heard the pleas of the victim and the sounds of the beating:

*"They flogged him for 10 continuous minutes... then they would ask him a question. He would say a few words before they start flogging again... They would ask him a question and, again, as he talked, they would flog him hard. When he finally was placed in our room, he couldn't move at all. He remained still because he was in a lot of pain."<sup>22</sup>*

A civil society activist, aged 21, who was detained for several days at Mabna al-Mohafaza in al-Raqqa during the last week of August 2013, told Amnesty International that he was brutally assaulted by an ISIS guard while in a cell in which about 40 other detainees were present.

*"I was approaching the door of the cell to request to go to the toilet when a masked man wearing an explosive belt opened the door. So I told him I wanted to go to the toilet. He hit me with a generator's belt on my back and ordered me to stay inside the room. He asked us to gather in one corner and sit down, and said that when he would point at someone, this person should stand up and say his name... He pointed at me, so I stood up and gave my name... He accused me of being a collaborator of the regime. I said: 'Don't say that, sheikh, I've left my studies for the last two years for the sake of the revolution, and then you come and say that I am a Shabih [pro-Assad militiaman]'. He started flogging me with the scourge while saying: 'We don't recognize anything called revolution. This is a revolution by kafirs [non-believers]. We are here to set up an Islamic state.' He flogged me eight times and then I hid behind another detainee who received the rest of the lashes."<sup>23</sup>*

Two former detainees whom Amnesty International interviewed separately both reported the case of a man aged in his late twenties who they saw in detention at Sadd al-Ba'ath in al-



Mansura, a town in al-Raqqa governorate, during the Muslim month of Ramadan (July-August) 2013. ISIS apparently suspected the man of challenging its legitimacy and organizing opposition to its rule over the area. He was held for some 15 days during which he was interrogated in front of other detainees by the al-Mansura Shari'a court judge, and flogged on his orders. One of those who witnessed it told Amnesty International:

*"Once, after [the detainee] was flogged over 150 times, [the Shari'a court judge] looked up at the jailers who were flogging him and said: 'It's as if you've become sympathetic to him?' and then took the whip himself and started flogging him with all his strength."*<sup>24</sup>

Despite the brutality to which they subjected him, ISIS forces are said to have released the local man after about two weeks.

A man, aged 25, who was detained at Mashfa al-Atfal in Aleppo during the second week of August 2013, told Amnesty International that he was tortured with electric shocks:



A 25-year-old man bears marks he said resulted from being tortured with electric shocks when detained by ISIS at Mashfa al-Atfal. © Private

*"They took me to a room that smelled of sweat and diesel. They sat me on the floor, tied my hands behind my back and fastened the handcuffs to the extent that I lost any feeling in my hands after five minutes. I was wearing my undershirt. A man, possibly 'Abu Huraira', asked me: 'How are you, Ali?' When I said I was OK he gave me an electric shock. This was the first of many electric shocks, which continued for about 40 minutes. Some shocks were stronger than others. I felt as if there was a device that controlled the strength of the shocks. I was screaming throughout.*

*"They kept on giving me electric shocks until my muscles started seizing up. They also gave me a shock on my neck; after that my sight became very blurry. It only came back to normal the following day. The man ordered me to stand up, but I couldn't. They pulled me up to stand but I kept on falling. I lost feeling in my body. When I couldn't stand, they sat me on my knees and made me drink water.*

*"My hands were still cuffed behind my back. They then put a rope through my cuffs and pulled me up while tightening the rope to the pipes on the ceiling. I was pulled so high up that my toes could hardly touch the floor. My shoulder could not bear the weight of my body and it broke... So my body fell a little bit closer to the floor and I was able to stand on one leg. Then they started hitting me using the cable."*<sup>25</sup>

The young man was released about a month later. He continues to suffer from pain in his shoulder.

Two other former detainees said they were subjected to the *aqrab* (scorpion) method of torture; one estimated that he was kept in this contorted posture for about 30 minutes while

the second said he spent about 90 minutes in it. Both are believed to have been held in al-'Akershi oil facility. One, aged 38, told Amnesty International:

*"During the first week or 10 days, I was beaten up four to five times a day. Every day, they would load a gun next to my head. I did not know the accusations yet during those 10 days. On one day, one interrogator ordered another to put me in the aqrab position. As my wrists were cuffed in this position, I felt my chest and shoulder about to crack. It was only then that I heard the accusations against me for the first time. They accused me of collaborating with the kafirs [non-believers]. I was forced into the aqrab position for one hour and a half during which I was flogged repeatedly. I thought that I was going to faint. They kept me like this for an hour and a half. When they untied me, I could not move my arms."<sup>26</sup>*

#### **4.2 Children**

ISIS forces have also subjected children to beatings and floggings in detention. According to a former detainee who was held briefly at Mashfa al-Atfal in Aleppo, he heard a guard assaulting a child in his presence as he and tens of other detainees were held waiting to be questioned by an ISIS interrogator of Moroccan nationality known as Abu Dojana. He did not see the assault because he was blindfolded but told Amnesty International that he heard it clearly:<sup>27</sup>

*"I was blindfolded and handcuffed. I heard the jailers asking someone why and how he removed his blindfold. The voice of this someone seemed to be a child no more than 12. He said he hadn't done so and that it had slipped by itself. Then I heard two slaps that sounded to be on someone's back. The child was at first defiant and shouted: 'Don't you hit! I didn't remove them.' Then I could hear really strong slaps falling on someone's back; the child stopped being defiant and he was now sniffing and crying."*

At Sadd al-Ba'ath, according to the independent accounts of two former detainees, flogging victims included children apparently aged around 13 or 14 who were brought in on suspicion of committing thefts. Again, the flogging was ordered, and even administered, by the Shari'a court judge.

*"The first child, aged 13 to 14, was accused of stealing a motorcycle. He was detained for around four days and each day he was flogged up to 40 times. After admitting to stealing the motorcycle, [the Shari'a court judge] told him he'd send him the following day to bring the motorcycle from its hiding place. The boy said, 'Let me do it today.' [The judge] refused. The boy insisted, saying, 'Why not today?' [The judge] would get angry easily... He shouted at the boy to come forward, ordered him to lie on the ground and he whipped him with a cable around 30 to 40 times."<sup>28</sup>*

Another child of around the same age was held for about a week at Sadd al-Ba'ath, where his captors inflicted 30 to 40 lashes on him each day. One former detainee recounted:

*"Once, after being flogged to give names of others who had helped him in the thefts, the boy gave them the name of someone from ISIS whom they brought to Sadd al-Ba'ath and flogged, and it turned out that the boy was lying. He was then flogged many, many times."<sup>29</sup>*

Another detainee held there at the time described the same incident and said:

*"I counted 94 lashes falling on this child... and then I could count no more."<sup>30</sup>*

Still younger children were among those held by ISIS at Mabna al-Mohafaza in al-Raqqa, according to a former detainee interviewed by Amnesty International who spent 18 days at the detention centre in October 2013. He said that he saw five children, all boys, who were held either in the same cell with him or in adjacent cells. He saw two of them for the first time on or around 10 October, when ISIS guards pushed them into his cell. One was about eight years old; the other was 14. As they pushed them into the cell, one of the guards shouted “Teach this donkey how to pray”, in reference to the younger of the two boys, who was crying and continued weeping in the cell.

It appeared that the two boys had been among a larger number of people picked up from an area in which ISIS was exerting its authority. ISIS captors had asked the younger boy if he knew how to pray and berated him when he said he did not. However, both boys were freed after between three and four hours in detention.

Other children held at Mabna al-Mohafaza included two Kurdish boys, cousins aged 14 and 15 from Kobani (known as ‘Ain al-‘Arab in Arabic), whom ISIS forces had seized in a rural part of al-Raqqa governorate and brought to the detention centre in mid-October 2013. The former detainee who encountered them there told Amnesty International:

*“The older boy was put in our cell and his cousin was in another cell... As usual, we could hear voices of people being tortured. Then, we could hear the voice of a boy screaming from pain. The Kurdish boy in our cell became so anxious and was pacing around after recognizing that the voice was his younger cousin’s. He told me, ‘He’s only 14.’ The boy tortured was shouting, ‘I had nothing to do with this, I had nothing to do with this,’ and he was screaming. The boy was flogged continuously for 10 minutes. After around half an hour, the masked men opened our cell’s door and took away the older boy. He was away for two hours... I could hear voices of people being tortured but couldn’t distinguish his voice. After he returned to the room, he walked in with a stiff-looking back, sat down and didn’t say a word.”<sup>31</sup>*

The same former detainee also told Amnesty International how a man whom ISIS accused of supporting the Abu Wa’el Brigade, another armed group in conflict with ISIS, was detained together with his son, aged 13. The boy was held in an adjacent room, from which his anguished father and other detainees heard screams of pain as his ISIS captors apparently tortured him.

A former detainee believed to have been held in al-‘Akershi oil facility was transferred after more than 40 days of solitary confinement to a collective detention facility. Other detainees held there told him it was al-Mer’ab. He said all the detainees he met there had been tortured, including several boys aged about 14 and 15 who still had marks on their backs caused by flogging.<sup>32</sup>

Another former detainee told Amnesty International<sup>33</sup> that he saw five boys aged between 14 and 16 brought in to Maqar Ahmed Qaddour in al-Haidariya, Aleppo, for detention and interrogation shortly before his own release in early October 2013. ISIS forces had seized them at one of their armed checkpoints because they suspected the five of belonging to or supporting the FSA, which is in conflict with ISIS. He did not know what became of them.

### **4.3 Solitary confinement**

One former detainee told Amnesty International that ISIS forces held him at the al-‘Akershi oil facility detention centre for 40 days, during all of which he was kept in solitary confinement and closely monitored to ensure that he had no communication with other

detainees. His captors did not explain why he was held in these conditions, nor did they reveal their identity:

*“For 40 days, I did not see the face of a human being. Even when my jailers came in to my cell, they were masked.”<sup>34</sup>*

For the first 23 days, he was held mostly in what had been a bathroom on the ground floor of a building that comprised six halls. One of these contained the bathroom, a tap and a toilet; another was a kitchen; a third contained at least seven solitary confinement cells; two were used to hold groups of detainees; and one was used by the ISIS guards. Elsewhere, there were other rooms that were also used to hold detainees in solitary confinement in degrading and constricted conditions, apparently as punishment. He experienced this himself on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of his detention:

*“I was taken outside, blindfolded, and placed in a 2m by 2m electrical room full of electrical equipment and wires leaving only a 1m by 1m space for me. The ground was wet with some kind of fuel and it was hazardous and just not right to put someone there. They also handcuffed my hands in front of me and locked my feet with a metal chain that was itself chained to the ceiling to another chain and locked to the ceiling... so I could hardly move. I spent two days like that.*

*“I was then returned to the bathroom. On the 19<sup>th</sup> day, for the first time, I initiated a brief conversation with a detainee who was using the tap next to the bathroom where I was held. A jailer saw us and he punished me by placing me in a room outside the ground floor of the building. That room was around 5m wide and 5m long, but again, I couldn’t make use of the space. The room had a window, but I couldn’t reach it because my hands were cuffed in front of me and my feet chained to the ceiling in such a way that I could only walk within a space of one metre squared.”*

After 23 days, the detainee was moved from the ground-floor bathroom, to which he had been returned, to one of the seven solitary confinement cells in another of the ground-floor halls, where he remained for a further 17 days until his release.

Another detainee who spent 55 days in detention, including more than 40 days in solitary confinement at a detention centre whose location he did not know but which, from the description he gave, appears to have been the al-‘Akershi oil facility, told Amnesty International that his ISIS captors tortured him by beating him with cables and punched and kicked him. They also threatened to execute him but eventually released him, following which he fled to Turkey. He told Amnesty International:

*“After 40 days, they dragged me outside the building. Although I was blindfolded I could feel the air. They asked me, ‘How would you like to die?’ I said, ‘It does not matter. I am dying in any case.’ So they loaded their guns. One said, ‘I want to shoot him,’ but I then heard a second voice say, ‘No, let me do it,’ followed by a third that said: ‘No, I will shoot him.’ Then one said, ‘Let him walk and we’ll shoot him when he’s away and we’ll leave him to the dogs to eat him.’ One of them then said, ‘He should say the shahada [Islamic creed] but another replied, ‘No, he is impure, he shouldn’t say it.’*

*“After this, one asked me if I would like to go back to my family, to which I said, ‘Yes.’ He said I could do so but said, ‘First you must drink one third of a litre of diesel.’ I refused, and he started beating me on my head. Another of them kicked me. One then said he had six kilograms of olive oil and if I could drink it they would let me go. I again refused, and they*

*started beating me again. This was after 40 days of torture and solitary confinement so I felt I had nothing to lose.”<sup>35</sup>*

After this brutal episode, his ISIS captors returned the detainee to his cell. Two days later he was moved out of solitary confinement and moved to a cell with other detainees until his release.

At the Mabna al-Mohafaza in al-Raqqa, according to a former detainee aged 21 who was released in the last week of August 2013, he and another detainee about to be released heard muttering noises coming from a metal closet as guards prepared to free them.

*“The jailers removed our blindfolds and we were waiting to get back our possessions. The detainee with me asked me, ‘Can you hear that?’ I listened closely and I could hear muttering of indistinct words coming out from the metal closet behind us.”<sup>36</sup>*

They did not see the person making the sounds, but came away convinced that they were made by an individual confined within the closet, apparently in solitary confinement.

### **5. Rough justice – “trial” and punishment**

Some of the prisoners whom ISIS forces brought into the Mabna al-Mohafaza in al-Raqqa were summarily “tried” and killed during his presence there, according to a former detainee who was held at the detention centre for most of October 2013. He told Amnesty International that during the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha (mid-October 2013), four alleged members of armed groups fighting against ISIS were “sentenced” to death after brief and perfunctory “trials” that lasted barely a minute, then taken away and apparently killed.

One of the four was said to be a fighter belonging to the Ahfad al-Rassoul Brigade, two others were alleged to be Abu Wa’el Brigade fighters, and the fourth was accused of belonging to another armed group. They were tried before the ISIS-appointed emir of al-Raqqa city according to the former detainee who witnessed the proceedings:

*“The emir of al-Raqqa came in and sat down. He called out the name of a man, called Fadhel. He stood up. The interrogator said to the emir, ‘This is the PKC guy’ [in Syria “PKC” is used to refer to the Soviet Union-made Kalashnikov machine guns]. The emir said: ‘You are fighting the Islamic state. Take him away to qisas [retribution],<sup>37</sup> make his head fly.’ A jailer immediately tied him up and took him away. Then, the second man was called. The interrogator told the emir, ‘This man fought us.’ The emir asked the man: ‘Do you have anything to say?’ As the man started talking, the emir said: ‘Take him for execution.’ The third and fourth fighters were dealt with in the same manner.”<sup>38</sup>*

According to the witness, the four condemned men were brought back to the cells after about two hours, handcuffed and wearing blindfolds, as the bus that had been due to take them to their place of “execution” had been delayed.

*“Then, after several hours, while we were sleeping, there was a loud bang on the door. We woke up. Fadhel’s name was called out. He went and did not return. Then after around half hour, the name of the second person was called; he went and did not come back... The third name was called, probably after a while, and then the fourth. None of them returned. There was a 10 to 15-minute wait between each of the four detainees being called.”*

Two former detainees who were held at Sadd al-Ba’ath in al-Mansura told Amnesty International that prisoners who had been sentenced to die were usually taken for “execution”

on Wednesdays and Fridays, to be executed in public places in al-Raqqa governorate's towns and villages after noon prayers on the same day. It remains unclear how ISIS determines the place at which each summary killing is to be carried out, as prisoners do not appear to be returned to their home area to be put to death or to the scene of their alleged "crimes".

Two former detainees told Amnesty International<sup>39</sup> independently that they had shared a cell at Sadd al-Ba'ath with three men who were taken away to be killed during Ramadan (July-August 2013). They named two of them as **Khalil Ibrahim al-Shawakh** and **Hassan (or Hussein) Sharida**, both of whom were accused of behaviour deemed immoral.

They said that **Khalil Ibrahim al-Shawakh**, a married man in his forties, was initially detained by ISIS forces in mid-July 2013 because they suspected him of dealing in forged currency. However, when searching his home and possessions, his captors found a memory card or stick containing brief video pictures of the detainee and a woman in underwear, following which they accused him of *zina* (unlawful sexual relations). He was tortured and forced to confess, then sentenced to death after a perfunctory hearing before the al-Mansura Shari'a court judge, despite his protestations that he had recorded the pictures in 2006 or 2007, years before the "establishment of the Islamic state" by ISIS forces in al-Raqqa. One of the former detainees told Amnesty International:

*"They flogged Khalil until he confessed how many times he had committed zina. He said he had done it over 10 times... So [the Shari'a court judge] said, 'We shall punish you with hadd.'<sup>40</sup> On a Wednesday, the jailers asked him to get ready to leave, claiming they wanted to take him to marry the woman with whom he had committed zina. Khalil wanted to wear his shoes... They told him, 'There is no need. You're going to your family.' And they took him away. After around two hours, the jailers came in and told us he had been executed in [the city of] Ma'dan."<sup>41</sup>*

**Hassan (or Hussein) Sharida**, a married man in his 20s, was also accused by ISIS of committing *zina* with an internally displaced woman who stayed in a house that he owned, according to the two former detainees who spoke to Amnesty International about his case. They said he was removed for "execution" one Friday during Ramadan in 2013. Guards told them that he had been executed in al-Mansura, and this was corroborated by new detainees brought in after being seized in the town. One former detainee recounted:

*"After killing him, the jailers told us they believed Hassan Sharida had truly repented. [The Shari'a court judge] asked him before his execution if he wanted to drink water, but Hassan Sharida said he did not because he was fasting."<sup>42</sup>*

The two former detainees did not know the full name of the third victim of summary killing but knew him only as **Abu Saleh**. He had been convicted of murder by the al-Assad authorities and had served eight years of his prison sentence by the time that armed opposition forces seized control of al-Raqqa Central Prison earlier in 2013 and he and other inmates regained their freedom. However, ISIS forces detained him again after the family of the man that he was convicted of murdering complained that Abu Saleh had returned to his village, according to what he told other detainees. He was taken to Sadd al-Ba'ath and held there while his ISIS captors oversaw negotiations with his victim's family in which he sought forgiveness and pardon in return for the payment of *dijya* (financial compensation or "blood money") by Abu Saleh's family. The latter reportedly sold a truck to enable them to pay the *dijya* and an agreement was about to be concluded when Abu Saleh was involved in an incident which "enraged" the al-Mansura Shari'a court judge. He learnt that Abu Saleh had likened him to a satirical character in a well-known Saudi Arabian television comedy series

entitled *Tash Ma Tash*. Following this, a former detainee who witnessed the repercussions of this ultimately fatal gaffe told Amnesty International:

*"[The Shari'a court judge], along with four or five men, gathered around Abu Saleh and started beating him up... flogging him wherever the whip fell: on his neck, his legs, his back, everywhere. He was moving around to protect himself. [The judge] would shout at him, 'I am Tash Ma Tash? I am a judge.' We, all the other detainees in the room, were standing facing the wall but the beating and lashes were so random that we had to move around to avoid getting hit by mistake... After three days, [the judge] came in on a Tuesday. He said that since Abu Saleh's family was able to secure 2.5 million Syrian pounds after selling the truck, ISIS was also willing to pay 1 million Syrian pounds to help secure the full amount of the diya and therefore Abu Saleh would be released. On Wednesday at 2pm, [the judge] came in and said, 'Come on Abu Saleh, the family [of the victim] agreed to the diya.'... Then when [the judge] took Abu Saleh away, the jailers told us they had taken him to execute him. The following day, [the judge] came to us as usual and said: 'Abu Saleh... we executed him.'"*

At Maqar Ahmad Qaddour in al-Haidariya, Aleppo, a man aged 22 was threatened with death after he was accused of uttering a blasphemous expression while riding a motorcycle in a crowded area, according to a former detainee who was held with him. The latter said that ISIS guards, as they passed by, repeatedly told the young man "We are going to slit your throat". According to the witness, the 22-year-old was "scared all day".

*"The following morning, a sheikh came into the room and said: 'We are going to give you a religious trial. You are a kafir [non-believer].' The guy started swearing that he hadn't made any blasphemous remark. The sheikh replied: 'Shut up. The man who heard you say it is more honest than you. We know what you have done. You are a kafir... Get him out of here.'"*

*"They took him outside the room... We could hear clearly someone sharpening a knife. And the young man was shouting now: 'Please, my sheikh, do not slaughter me.' He kept pleading for his life and asking the jailers not to use the knife. Then we heard flogging, his screams of pain, and a voice counting the lashes. We in the room were so terrified that we couldn't focus on counting the lashes... But I remember that at one point, the detainee was screaming very much and someone told him: 'Calm down, there are only 17 lashes to go.'"<sup>43</sup>*

## **5. Recommendations**

Amnesty International makes the following recommendations:

### **TO THE ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND AL-SHAM**

- Publicly condemn, from the highest level of leadership, all human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed by ISIS forces, including abductions, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, unfair "trials", summary killings, and the use of cruel and inhuman punishments such as flogging.
- Instruct all ISIS fighters and officials that such abuses will not be tolerated under any circumstances and those who commit such abuses will be held fully accountable.
- Allow independent international inspection of all places of detention and ensure that conditions and the treatment of detainees at all places conform to relevant international standards, such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and that all detainees are fully protected against torture or other ill-treatment in custody.
- End the use of punishments, such as flogging, that violate the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Immediately and unconditionally release all detainees held on account of their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression or other human rights.

- Issue clear instructions to ISIS members to treat all detainees humanely, including captured fighters from rival armed groups and other armed forces, including the FSA and Syrian government forces, and afford all detainees the protection due to them under international humanitarian law.
- Inform families about the fate of missing relatives, including those who have died, disclosing the circumstances of their deaths, and the location of their burial place.
- Remove from the ranks ISIS fighters and officials suspected of responsibility for ordering or committing serious violations of international humanitarian law, including possible war crimes.
- Co-operate with independent and impartial investigations into violations of international humanitarian, including by the independent international Commission of Inquiry.

#### TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY

- Investigate and prosecute members of ISIS suspected of committing, being complicit in or having command responsibility for war crimes in al-Raqqa, Aleppo and elsewhere in Syria.
- Prevent the entry of fighters and arms flows to ISIS forces in Syria and to other armed groups believed to be responsible for committing war crimes in Syria.

#### TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE GULF STATES

- Publicly renounce the provision of any financial or material support, including arms transfers, to ISIS and all other armed groups alleged to be responsible for committing war crimes or grave human rights abuses in Syria.
- Take effective measures to prevent the transfer of financial or material support to ISIS and other armed groups alleged to be committing war crimes and serious human rights abuses in Syria.

#### TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA

- Cease government violations of human rights and grant prompt and unfettered access to the independent international Commission of Inquiry, humanitarian and human rights organizations, and to international media to visit areas all of Syria, including access to all government-controlled places of detention by international humanitarian organizations with relevant expertise.

#### TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

- Refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.
- Call on states to suspend arms transfers to ISIS and other armed groups implicated in the commission of war crimes and serious human rights abuses.

#### TO ALL GOVERNMENTS

- Accept a shared responsibility to investigate and prosecute war crimes and other crimes under international law committed in Syria and elsewhere in the world. In particular, seek to exercise universal jurisdiction over these crimes before national courts in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty.
- As part of this shared responsibility, establish joint international investigation and prosecution teams to investigate crimes under international law committed in Syria to improve the effectiveness of investigation, improve the chances of arrest and co-ordinate prosecutions.



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<sup>1</sup> ISIS is also widely known in English as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

<sup>2</sup> The ICRC declared that the situation in Syria had evolved into a non-international armed conflict across much of the country in July 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Audio message from Abu Mohammed al-Jolani announcing the formation of Jabhat al-Nusra is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fuh1cl9vIRO>; it was uploaded on 25 January 2012 and last seen by Amnesty International on 14 December 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Audio message by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akolFvzpXTI>; it was uploaded on YouTube on 8 April 2013 and last accessed by Amnesty International on 15 December 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Audio message from Abu Mohammed al-Jolani in response to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi regarding the latter's announcement of the establishment of ISIS; uploaded on YouTube on 10 April 2013 and available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FdTjm4-6Lo>; last accessed by Amnesty International on 15 December 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Audio message from Ayman al-Zawahiri in response to messages by al-Baghdadi and al-Jolani; it was first aired on the Al Jazeera satellite television channel and uploaded on YouTube on 8 November 2013. It is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79Rnr6MIQ-c>; it was last accessed by Amnesty International on 15 December 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Audio message from al-Baghdadi rejecting al-Zawahiri's call to disband ISIS; it was uploaded on YouTube on 8 November 2013 and is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JzT9c9fWOM>; it was last accessed by Amnesty International on 15 December 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International interviewed residents and activists from al-Raqqa in Turkey in November and December 2013. Video footage of the executions was uploaded on YouTube on 15 May 2013 and is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Z3jEKWPBAI>; last accessed by Amnesty International on 15 December 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International, *Syria: Civilians in al-Bayda and Baniyas exposed to summary executions* (Index: MDE 24/037/2013), published on 26 July 2013 (available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/037/2013/en>).

<sup>10</sup> Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) are foreign organizations that are designated as "terrorist organizations" by the US Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the US Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) if they are found to have engaged in terrorist activities (as defined in US laws) and if these activities threaten US national security or the security of US nationals.

<sup>11</sup> Executive Order 13224 is an executive order that was signed into law by US President George W. Bush on 23 September 2001 as a response to the 11 September 2001 attacks. The full text of the Executive Order is available at <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/terror.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> US State Department, *Terrorist Designations of the al-Nusra Front as an Alias for al-Qa'ida in Iraq*, 11 December 2012. (available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/12/201759.htm>).

<sup>13</sup> Previously known as the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee, it was established on 15 October 1999, pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 1267 concerning Osama bin Laden, al-Qa'ida and/or the Taliban and associated individuals and entities; it has subsequently been modified to deal with issues limited to al-Qa'ida. It is composed of representatives of 15 member states – the five permanent members of the Security Council and 10 rotating members.

<sup>14</sup> These sanctions are set out in paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 1989 (2011) adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

<sup>15</sup> UN Security Council's Department of Public Information, "Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Amends Entry of One Entity On Its Sanctions List", 30 May 2013 (available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11019.doc.htm>).

<sup>16</sup> The Shari'a Committee in Aleppo is a joint body comprising members of three armed opposition groups, Liwa' al-Tawhid, Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham Islamic Movement.

<sup>17</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International on 4 December 2013 in Nizip, Turkey; name withheld for security reasons.

<sup>18</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Akçakale, Turkey, on 3 December 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 26 November 2013.

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- <sup>20</sup> Amnesty International was shown by a former detainee an image of Mabna al-Mohafaza on Google Earth. After zooming in, one can see the openings at ground level that appear to be the basement windows; accessed on 28 November 2013.
- <sup>21</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 29 November 2013.
- <sup>22</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 29 November 2013.
- <sup>23</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 28 November 2013.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 25 November 2013.
- <sup>25</sup> Phone interview conducted by Amnesty International from London on 25 October 2013.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Akçakale, Turkey, on 3 December 2013.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 26 November 2013.
- <sup>28</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 2 December 2013.
- <sup>29</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 2 December 2013.
- <sup>30</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 25 November 2013.
- <sup>31</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 27 November 2013.
- <sup>32</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Akçakale, Turkey, on 3 December 2013.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 29 November 2013.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Akçakale, Turkey, on 3 December 2013.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Akçakale, Turkey, on 3 December 2013.
- <sup>36</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 28 November 2013.
- <sup>37</sup> *Qisas* is a Shari'a-based rule that in murder cases provides for the application of the death penalty.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 27 November 2013.
- <sup>39</sup> Interviews conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 25 November and 2 December 2013.
- <sup>40</sup> *Hadd* is a fixed penalty in Shari'a.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 2 December 2013.
- <sup>42</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 2 December 2013.
- <sup>43</sup> Interview conducted by Amnesty International in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 29 November 2013.