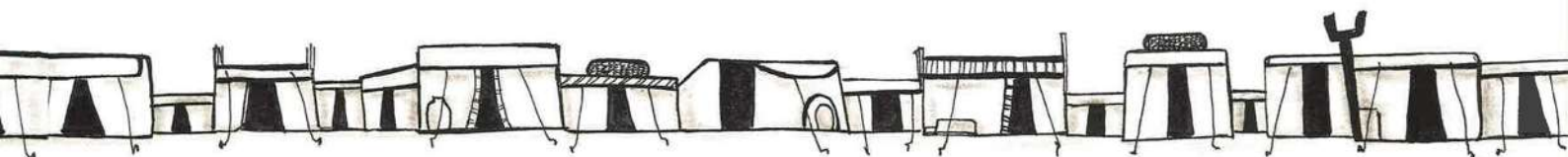




**Female Survivors and Problems of Integration in Syrian Society**  
**A field research**



# **Female Survivors and Problems of Integration in Syrian Society**

**A field research**

A project by Start Point

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Start Point

An NGO established in 2015, dedicated for intellectual and social development, specialized researches, and advocacy for social awareness in human rights issues.

Cover painting: (kharej alqawqa'a[Outside the shell]), Dima Nshawi

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## Summary

This research aims to identify prominent variables that may play a role in the integration process of female detainees—who survived the Syrian regime prisons—with their surroundings and local communities.

One hundred female survivors were interviewed, utilizing a field survey specifically designed to probe social, economic, psycho-personal variables that determine the capacity for reintegration. Many results were found to be related to social, economic and psychological hindrances blocking the way back to social life as it was before detention.

The targeted sample varied in localities, and showed some differences between local communities; between families; and between survivors themselves.

In all cases, inhibiting and inducing factors of integration overlap with each other according to a system of prevalent values, customs, mores and rules of conduct in local communities. This is true in spite of Syria's instability, which plays a role in further inhibiting integration in light of a martial, political, and economic situation described as “thorny”, “confusing”, and sometimes “terrifying” to say the least.

Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a relationship between female survivors and their local communities in isolation from the aforementioned situation, for it is precisely this the Syrian regime built upon during its rule before the revolution, and indeed proved to be efficient politically and socially for the regime during the different phases of the upheaval. By so, women were exploited in the worst possible ways by the regime and its security authorities, this is in order to repel women from any effort for political mobilization, or to use them to threaten male activists, leaving female survivors captivated by preconceived perceptions of their surrounding communities.

## **I. Theoretical framework of research:**

### **1. Research question and its importance:**

Women in Syria endured the consequences of the ongoing war and its escalating violence more than any other segment of society. They suffered from all kinds of violence for a variety of reasons, specially accentuated were those committed by pro-regime forces during detention in prisons, security branches, or at one of the innumerable detention centres under the control of the Syrian regime.

Along with the increasing number of female detainees in the regime's security branches, many testimonies on different kinds of violations during detention were reported and documented in "reports by local and international organizations". Yet, most of these reports were limited in that they only documented testimonies or reported individual cases of women subjected to violations, in the absence of systematic academic researches and studies concerned with the reality of "survived" women and their relationship with their surrounding local communities during post-release phase.

"Surviving" women as (victims) who survived violence belong to larger embracing communities. Such communities have a great impact on increasing or decreasing consequences of inflicted violence, and are connected to a system of social, religious, and cultural values peculiar to each social setting, and to the statuses of individuals within such a system of values.

Statistics of various human rights NGOs indicated "through testimonies documentation" that many surviving battered-women were subjected to multiple social pressures: e.g. "stigma", which many women claimed to experience, causing them to remain silent and sacrifice their present and future rights<sup>1</sup>. Eventually, this unveils how inherited values reduce women in such cases to mere signifiers of honour and chastity. With the virtual loss of such values (after surviving violence), social and psychological pressures intensify so much that they may lead to the elimination of a woman's very existence.

From here we see the importance of conducting systematic and scientific studies that dismiss prevalent views and stereotypical opinions based on rumours and rhetorical inputs of media, and use the scientific method to construct arguments, so that such studies explore what happened to surviving women, reveal their reality and position within their local communities, and clarify the effects of new contingent circumstances and social values—with all the latter's rigidity and might, or flexibility and tolerance—at achieving social integration during post release phase.

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<sup>1</sup> Al mu'taqalat al suriyat bayn ijam al nizam wa nabz al mujtama'[Syrian female detainees between regime criminality and social ostracization]. Al Jazeera Net. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/p3oZaW>



## **2. Aims:**

The research aims to achieve the following:

- I. Identify forms of violence Syrian women experienced during detention in the regime's various agencies.
- II. Identify social determinants that contribute to the post-release integration of surviving women.
- III. Identify economic determinants that contribute to the post-release integration of surviving women.
- IV. Identify psycho-personal determinants that contribute to the post-release integration of surviving women.
- V. Assess personal experiences of surviving women during post release phase.
- VI. Make recommendations and suggestions for organizations and institutions concerned with female survivors of detention (fully or partially).

## **3. Key terms & concepts of research:**

**Determinants:** a set of factors (social, economic and psycho-personal) that determine disparity, concordance and integration of survivors in their local communities. Namely, determinants are the set of circumstances that may inhibit or encourage the resumption of normal life of detainees.

**Violations:** every intended damage, whether physical or psychological, that befalls women due to the ongoing war in Syria. These include: “insults, threatening, arbitrary arrest at checkpoints, verbal or sexual harassment, sexual assault, abduction, detention, blackmail..” etc.

**Physical violence:** every act of targeting women in particular that causes—or intended to cause—physical damage or pain, it includes battering and assault, as well as all kinds of sexual violence. Yet, due to the importance and dangers of sexual violence, we will discuss it independently, just like the issue of honour killings, which are used as war weapons against women.

**Psychological violence:** A form of violence, very common in Syria, where perpetrators use it against detainees to induce psychological traumas that vary in intensity, such as anxiety, chronic depression, acute depression and PTSD. Psychological violence also interplays with what is called emotional violence or mental violence.

Sexual violence: every act—or attempt—to use sex or sexual stimulation as a tool to exercise power on the victim, with the aim to control, hurt, degrade, or sometimes take revenge from her.

Rape: Enforcing sexual intercourse with the use of violence. In cases of detention, this is not limited to physical contact, but rather other tools are used, such as; canes, batons, glass bottles, and sharp objects.

Female survivors\ victims of violence: every woman detained by a Syrian state agency or a related militia during the Syrian revolution, and released thereafter. Generally, usage of the term (survivor) is preferred in fields related to psychosocial support for its capacity to inspire endurance, while (victim) is more used in legal and medical fields.

Local community: a group of people in a delimited geographical setting, governed by certain values and standards that are applied to all of its members, and that determine the status of its individuals accordingly.

Embracing community: the surrounding community of a female survivor, it is constituted of her nuclear family, extended family, relatives, neighbours, and all of the social circles that are combined to form an integrated system of values.

Stigmatization: severe condemnation of any behaviour considered foreign to the cultural mores peculiar to each society, which usually causes stigmatized people to be ostracized by their families and societies. Stigmas play a major role in denying female survivors from talking about their experiences, fearing from the social consequences aroused by disclosure.

Social integration: return of female survivors from detention to a life that corresponds to their previous social situation, without the repercussions of stigma or degradation which block their efforts in rejoining their local communities. Social sciences' literature contends that (integration) is basically a set of interactions between different members of a group, who utilize a variety of ways and mechanisms in order to reach a sense of necessity for homogeneity and harmony. Therefore, integration reflects the position of an individual, group of individuals, or a social segment, in interaction with others who share the same values and standards within their societies. From this point, the concept of integration corresponds to homogeneity, communication, harmony, and interaction. These concepts are but a continuation of “integration” as in social sciences.

Integration is expressed through the multiple interactions of different members of a social group, and is related to several elements; the family as an institution for social upbringing; work, an essential factor in determining integration; and also psychological readiness.

The Syrian revolution: the peaceful popular upheaval of March 2011, which started in the form of demonstrations, protests, sit-ins, and civil disobedience across Syrian cities, towns and villages, aiming to regain basic human rights like freedom, dignity, justice, citizenship, and democracy, from the Ba'athist Assad regime's hands.

#### **4. Method:**

This research adopts a “descriptive analytic method”<sup>2</sup> which is used to uncover the relationship between the reality of surviving Syrian women and their embracing local communities, communities that may increase or decrease pressure upon them. It also helps us in discovering the factors that played a role in the social integration process of surviving women.

A survey was used to achieve this goal, by linking many variables that may reveal the relationship between a surviving woman and her surrounding community during post release phase.

#### **5. Sample:**

It is not possible to talk about female Syrian detainees at the regime's prisons without mentioning the difficulties faced by any researcher in this field. Such difficulties are caused by the keen sensitivity of such topics on the personal level of a detainee, and there is of course the lack of cooperation by lots of women for understandable reasons that can be put in their own social and personal context for each detainee separately.

However, the research team was diligent in ensuring the representation of all local milieus of Syria, which most of the surviving detainees belong to.

A sample of 100 surviving female detainees was interviewed either directly, or via Skype, regardless of their distribution in Syria or in the various countries of refuge.

The sample included a variety of local milieus; Homs and its countryside, Damascus and its countryside, Hama and its countryside, Idlib and its countryside, Alepoo, Dara'a, Deir Al-Zour, Jableh, and Latakia,

#### **6. Questionnaire and data collection:**

A questionnaire was designed to measure the level of social integration of females who survived Syria's state detention. The design made sure to represent variables that increase or decrease the process of social integration.

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<sup>2</sup> Descriptive analytic method is a flexible umbrella term that includes many submethods and subtechniques like social surveys and case studies. This method is based on defining the phenomenon's characteristics, describing its nature, and describing the quality of the relationship between its variables, causes, directions, and aspects in an effort to discover a certain phenomenon or issue in hand, and learn about its matters of fact.

It included 57 questions assigned to four sections: (general data/ data on period of detention / social determinants of integration / psycho-personal determinants of integration).

All data were collected by a group of field researchers based in Syria or Turkey. Direct or Skype interviewing was used as we mentioned. The research team was cautious in dealing with social or psychological sensitivities that may ensue interviewing detainees, therefore, only females were selected as interviewers in most cases.

## **II. Female detainees during the Syrian revolution:**

Detention and arrestment based on political affiliation is not a new issue in Syria, it was practiced since the military coup d'état of the Ba'athists in 1963, and rose dramatically during the dictatorship of Hafez Al-Assad after the 1970s, especially in the 1980s when security forces committed atrocities against human rights in an attempt to suppress the opposition, which included an armed rebellion by some segments of the Muslim Brotherhood. Intelligence agencies arrested thousands of members—or those suspected to be members—of the Muslim Brotherhood, they were tortured and abused endlessly. They also arrested the communists with all their political manifestations, as well as countless leftists, Iraqi Ba'athists, Nasserists, and members of Palestinian factions (lots of whom disappeared afterwards). During the Syrian presence in Lebanon, numerous Palestinians, Lebanese, and other Arabs were also arrested, and till today, hundreds are still missing. In this context, what draws attention is the near absence of accurate numbers and statistics, and the acceptance of media's approximations and speculations as sufficient sources, however, there is an agreement between many scholars that the number of missing people in Hafez Al-Assad's prisons hit the seventeen thousand mark approximately.

In 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1980, commando units of the Defence Companies commanded by Rifa'at Al-Assad, brother of Hafez, killed approximately 1000 unarmed prisoner, most of whom were islamists at Palmyra prison. The victims' names were never announced, nor did the authorities recognize the incident at all.

Less than two years later, Hama, the fourth biggest city in Syria and an opposition stronghold by then, was besieged by several brigades including some Special Forces units and Defence Companies' commandos. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1982 at 2 A.M., a fierce war was initiated by the army against tens of anti-regime islamists. Regime forces committed atrocious violations, including levelling districts to the ground over the heads of their dwellers, like Al-Keylaniya, Al-Baraziya, Al-Barudiya, and Al-Sharqia districts... other hundreds were killed by the month-long artillery shelling at other districts. Moreover, regime forces proceeded to commit a series of mass executions, killing hundreds of people near the municipal stadium and other places for false pretexts, of which the most comprehensible was dwelling in districts where gunmen appeared.

Estimations on the number of killed people in Hama vary widely, some reports give 25 thousand dead, while others elevate the number to 40 thousand.

Hafez Al-Assad's war on Hama with all its massacres was not to cut off the Muslim Brotherhood and stop them from controlling the city, rather it was planned long before in the corridors of intelligence agencies and sectarian leaders, who found the justification and staged the pretext to achieve two goals, of which the first was to destroy Hama, and the second to silence the Syrians once and for all.

Hafez Al-Assad, or the Father as he is called, dealt with Hama's people, who he suspected to be disloyal to him, or affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, or merely sympathetic to it, just like Bashar Al-Assad did, his Son, with his oppositionaries, their families, relatives, and friends since the beginning of the Syrian revolution.

The regime's agencies committed a series of organized and systematic violations that overpassed plain rape to cases of gang rape, sexual transgressions in front of male members of the family(brothers, husbands, and fathers) and more.. all of which were mentioned by those who lived through that period. In this regard, in her book "Just Five Minutes: Nine Years in the Prisons of Syria"<sup>3</sup>, (Hiba Al-Dabbagh) mentioned lots of violations, rapes and other cases from her own experience during her detentions. Lots of women were arrested, of which many had no relation to the Brotherhood, yet their detention continued for years merely because of suspicion. If only were it to stop at detention, for lots were destined to a crueller punishment under the lashes of the Assad regime.

(Al-Dabagh) mentions lots of cases, we only refer to some that show the criminal attitude of the regime during that period:

- (Omar Hamida—Aleppo's head of State Security Branch—was hitting "N" on her abdomen, and crying with frenzy to her fetus "come out! And testify in front of god that you are a Ba'athist")
- (They took ".." from her cell, and offered her as a hostage, they then started negotiating the rebels for her life in exchange of the rebel's surrender"
- (X) told us that Omar Hamida undressed her, hung her, and made his men assault her in front of her husband before sending the latter to Palmyra prison to die there in the great massacre.)

What we intend by all the above is to show the structure of violence and terror used by the Father's regime in one of the most famous internationally-obscured massacres, which was mainly meant to solidify an image of excessive cruelty and repression in the imaginarium of the Syrian people when criticizing the governance of the Assads. At the 2011's revolution, this was a source of demoralization for those who lived through that period, indeed, the previous generation knows that the regime will push violence and criminality to the maximum, if not more. Even more, it formed a narrative for the Syrian collective unconsciousness of how would the regime deal with women, whether during raids of security forces—supported by the army and militias—, or in what awaits women in prisons and detention centres. Such a narrative is further backed by impunity for the perpetrators, whose victims' families weren't given the chance to hold them accountable for their crimes since this was the policy of both Assad the Father and his Son.

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<sup>3</sup> Dabbagh, H. (2007). *Just Five Minutes: Nine Years in the Prisons of Syria*. Bayan Khatib(Trans.). Library & Archives Canada: Ontario.

Therefore, maltreatment of detainees wasn't a new phenomenon, considering that what happened in the prisons of Seydnaya and Palmyra is being re-experienced daily since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, whose detainees re-lived what they have heard from their parents' accounts on the inconceivable violations of the regime against its oppositionaries.

When dealing with the political opposition, state agencies followed a militia-and-gang like reasoning, in contrast to a reasoning of a political system and government, ignoring all laws, systems, judicial principles, human rights doctrine and the rest of binding international laws. This allowed them to arrest all kinds of people, whether women or men, elderly or infants, for mere suspicion of opposition to dictatorship or backing the revolution, this was conducted during raids, abductions or at checkpoints, favouring women in particular, with their children if necessary, as to be used as abductee hostages to negotiate a rebel surrender.

The dictator Bashar literally inherited Syria from his father Hafez, and crowned himself a president in July 2000. During the first months of his rule, he tried to delude Syrians to believe in a new political phase different from his father's (which was a nightmare for Syrians), hence he called for his press and media to brag about (constructive criticism, transparency, democracy, reform, law...etc.). More so, state agencies—which don't just arrest people, but count their breaths at that period—allowed for some political and cultural activities to take place, cultural forums started to appear in consequence, intellectuals started conferring on the topic of civil society, leading to the occurrence of what is called Damascus Spring, which didn't last for long, as Bashar went back to his Father's political attitude in August 2001, filling prisons and security branches with politicians, journalists, and human rights activists.. etc.

The Son's dictatorship remained like this until the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2011, when Syria's revolution for dignity and freedom started, quickly spreading to all Syrian cities and towns, with the participation of all segments of the Syrian society, including women.

Most arrests during both Assads rule were implemented without legal warrants, and with obscuring both the authority implementing the arrest and the place of detention. The number of documented forcibly disappeared individuals taken by state agencies is 71533 person; of which 64214 are civilians, including 4109 children and 2377 women. Whereas other approximations of human rights organizations indicate the number of forcibly disappeared individuals with more than 150 thousand detainee, in addition to the fact that many were killed due to torture; in this regard, between March 2011 and December 2015, more than 17723 detainee were documented to be killed under torture, according to Amnesty International. What draws attention in this policy is targeting children with torture-until-death in detention centres. "Alice Mufarej" a Syrian politician recounts: "During my detention in the Political Security Branch of Rief Dimashq(Damascus

Countryside governorate), I saw a 12 years old child brought to prison as a hostage to pressure his wanted father to surrender himself, later, I saw the same child naked with a swallowed bluish body drawing his last breaths”<sup>4</sup>. Approximations of human rights organizations indicate that more than 50 thousand detainee were killed in detention. Since the first day of the revolution, security forces showed full effort to arrest all of those who participated in peaceful protests that called for ousting of the regime, whereas not only male revolutionaries were arrested, but also hundreds of anti-regime girls and women.

Syrian women were one of the major forces behind the Syrian revolution in the strife against dictatorship. They participated from the first days in Damascus’ sit-ins, and protests of Dara’a, Homs, Banyas, Hama, Salamiya, Qamishli, Amuda, Eastern and Western Ghouta, and other Syrian towns and cities. More so, they were present in all peaceful activities that pervaded Syria. Just beside their fellow men, women printed and distributed leaflets, and wrote banners and delivered them to protests, in addition to their role in humanitarian and relief work. In effect, Syrian women were an integral part of the Syrian revolution, this in consequence justified their arrest, along with all the drawbacks of arrest that encompass all kinds of physical and psychological torture. According to the UN, more than 9000 woman including 1500 student were arrested by state agencies since the beginning of the Syrian revolution in 15 March 2011.

After six years in revolution, the Syrian regime continues to conduct wide campaigns of arbitrary arrests, imprisoning tens of thousands of civilians including thousands of women and girls.

From a report by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network or EuroMed Rights (EMHRN) titled: Violence against Women, Bleeding Wound in the Syrian Conflict<sup>5</sup> we quote: “The SNHR[Syrian Network for Human Rights] estimates that the number of rapes of women approximately reaches 6000, resulting in numerous cases in forced pregnancy... women regularly face sexual abuse of varying degrees including verbal harassment, harassment within governmental detention facilities. Several cases of rapes have been reported during detention periods.”

Anti-regime activists and human rights proponents are specifically targeted in arrest campaigns within cities known to have an anti-regime stance. According to the SNHR, just between March 2011 and April 2013, 5400 woman, including 1200 student, were arrested by Syrian security agencies, with many arrestees remaining in unknown places of detention, keeping in mind that such campaigns have never stopped from occurring.

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<sup>4</sup> Syrian Center for Legal Researches & Studies. (2017). *Altafjir fi suriya, tasnifuhu–aliyatuhu–ahdaf alatraf alfa’ila fih* [Forced displacement in Syria, its classification–its mechanisms–goals of the parties active in it]. Retrieved from <http://www.sl-center.org/news/68?language=arabic>

<sup>5</sup> Nassar, S. (2015). *Detention of Women in Syria: A Weapon of War and Terror*. Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Retrieved from [http://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/EMHRN\\_Womenindetention\\_EN.pdf](http://euromedrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/EMHRN_Womenindetention_EN.pdf)



According to the Violations Documentation Center in Syria (VDC), 766 woman and 34 female minors were forced to remain in state detention centres. The VDC declared that 810 woman were arrested between September 2012 and March 2013<sup>6</sup>. Human rights organizations estimate the number of forcibly disappeared individuals since March 2011 until today at 60.000 cases at least, including an unknown ratio of women. The Syrian Centre for Statistics and Research documented 340 cases of women arrestment, most of whom have been referred to Syria's Counter-Terrorism Court.

Women arrestment has always been a thorny issue in the eyes of society, as it entails social problems of which unfortunately women are the sole bearer, thus, a woman pays a double price, once when detained for participating in a revolution for freedom, and another when rejected by society for being a surviving detainee, by virtue of what may she have "incurred" from incidents related to sexual rape, wherein women are turned into a psychological weapon held by the tyrannical regime to win over its opponent; the Syrian people.

Women released from detention face lots of difficulties, of which timidity of their surrounding community in dealing with their detention circumstances will not be the first, since everybody expect them to be subjected to physical abuse that suggest promiscuity, inasmuch as fiscal hardships that allow for their survival will not be the last.

Syrian women lived through a harsh reality in the years of the Syrian revolution, they suffered from the cruellest types of torture and faced all kinds of abuse, owing to Syrian regime's policy of deliberate and systematic sexual assault against Syrian women as a general punishment, whether in the aim of obtaining information and extracting confessions, or just to take pleasure in humiliating and intimidating others with terror, motivated by reprisal from a related family member of the victim.

We can say that there are three main patterns of violence against women in Syria<sup>7</sup>:

1. Sexual assault and torture in security branches:

During the past six years of the Syrian revolution, security posts located in pro-regime areas were in so tragic a state that one may fail to believe their reality, whether in terms of the unprecedented overcrowding, or the systematic torture-until-death policy along with food and water depravity. In these dungeons of torture, what is most distinguishable in treating arrested women is the policy of sexual exploitation during interrogation, by using the most degenerate and heinous methods in which their bodies are turned into objects of the ugliest perverse, degenerate and morbid practices. After interrogation, the policy of sexual exploitation changes to sexual blackmail all along the detention period,

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<sup>6</sup> Suriya watan la sijin [Syria is a homeland, not a prison], Syrian's women network. Retrieved from <http://swnsyria.org/?cat=42>

<sup>7</sup> Syrian Human Rights Organization (Sawasia)

this is achieved by selecting chosen victims and opening their cells for them to roam outside and do some cleaning work within the detention centre, especially cleaning torturing rooms or spaces—dubbed “torturing yards”, which in consequence allows them to get some clean air, warmth of the sun, sometimes a cigarette, or even some extra ration of food in exchange of despicable compromises.

## 2. Sexual violence in prisons and places of detention:

Detention centres in pro-regime areas witnessed a wide range of systematic torturing methods and repeated sexual crimes. This happens in different degrees and is related to the prison or place of detention, it may decrease or increase accordingly, yet it will definitely be an essential tool in subjugation and humiliation.

## 3. Torture in irregular places of detention:

Irregular places of detention, whether those controlled by army regiments like the 4<sup>th</sup> Armed Division, the Republican Guard and the many other affiliated checkpoints, bases or even schools, municipalities and institutions; or private mansions of leaders of the Shabiha<sup>8\*</sup> militias, and their foreign allies like the Lebanese Hezbollah or the Iranian Fatemiyoun Brigade; or what is known as National Defence Forces or other pro-regime irregular forces, have all witnessed stark retaliatory exploitation of anti-regime Syrian women that were caught in their hands.

It is a type of war rape whereby women are turned into an exploitable object in itself as a consequence of the policies of sectarian instigation and conflict inducement upheld by Bashar Al-Assad since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, such policies were meant as part of a rebuffing strategy against the general popular demands of Syrians for dignity and freedom.

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\* Shabiha: a local name for armed pro-regime civilians, who later in the revolution were organized into militias.

### III. Results of Field Study:

#### a. General characteristics of the sample:

This passage will deal with the general characteristics of the study's sample, which include information about age, educational level, marital and work status, educational level and political orientation of parents, standards of living, and place of residence.

##### 1. Sample of study in age groups:

The data showed that the sample was concentrated in the (24-29) age group at 31%, followed by (35-39) at 22% and (30-34) at 16%, while falling to 3% for (18-23) and 6% for (50 or more). This suggests the cognitive and social maturity of the girls and their awareness of what is happening around them during the revolution. On the other hand, the numbers also indicated that the violence practiced by the Syrian regime wasn't limited to one age group, but rather women from all ages and from all Syrian cities and regions were subjected to arrest (Refer to Table 1).

Age	Count	%
18-23	3	3
24-29	31	31
30-34	16	16
35-39	22	22
40-44	13	13
45-49	9	9
50 or more	6	6
Total	100	100

Table (1) showing age cohorts of the sample

##### 2. Participants' places of origin:

The results showed that our participants were residents in most cities and towns that had prominent roles in pushing the revolutionary movement in its peaceful phase, before turning into an armed rebellion instigated by different reasons which the regime was its main player. The percentage of participation in our sample from Homs and its countryside (that is Homs city, Al-Wa'ar, Al-Bayada, Talbisi, Krak des Chevaliers—Qala'at Al-Husn—, and Al-Rastan) was 31%. In Damascus countryside (Qatana, Judaidat Artuz Al-Balad and Al-Fadel, Al-Mua'adamiya, Dareya, Duma, Saqba, Al-Zabadani, and Ma'araba) it was 22%. In Damascus (Damascus city, Al-Qadam, Al-Midan, Nahr Aysha, and Jobar) it was 20%. In Hama and its countryside (Hama city, Al-Hader, Share' Al-Arbe'in, Al-Ghab Al-Hwaiz, Al-Salamiya and its countryside) was 20%. In Idlib and its

countryside, and Aleppo, it was 6% and 3% respectively, and 1% for each of Jableh, Latakia and Deir Al-Zour (Refer to Table 2).

In spite of the difficulties faced by the researchers, whether because of distance or because of the fear of interviews held by participants, the sample gave a fairly clear outlook on the society of detainees. Homs (the capital of the revolution) came first, followed by Damascus countryside, Damascus, and the rest of cities and regions that entered the revolutionary torrent respectively.

	Original place of residence	Count	Total	%
Homs	Al-Wa'ar	3	31	31
	Al-Bayada	6		
	Talbisi	3		
	Al-Rastan	11		
	Krak des Chevaliers(Qala'at Al-Husn)	3		
	Homs city	5		
Damascus	Al-Qadam	3	20	20
	Al-Midan	10		
	Nahr Aysha	5		
	Jobar	2		
Rif Dimashq (Damascus Countryside)	Dareya	6	21	21
	Ma'arba	3		
	Duma	5		
	Saqba	2		
	Qatana	1		
	Judaiddat Artuz	1		
	Al-Zabadani	1		
	Al-Mua'adamiya	2		
Dara'a	Dara'a city	1	1	1
Hama	Al-Hader	3	15	15
	Al-Madina district	3		
	Share' Al-Arbe'in	3		
	Al-Ghab Al-Hwaiz	1		

	Al-Salamiya	5		
Idlib	Idlib city	3	6	6
	Jabal Al-Zawiya	3		
Latakia	Latakia city	1	2	2
	Jableh	1		
Deir Al-Zour	Al-Muhasan	2	2	2
Aleppo	Aleppo city	1	3	3
	Salah Al-Din	2		
Total			100	100

Table (2) showing participants' original place of residence

### 3. Place of residence in time of arrestment:

On the other hand, the data showed that the place of residence in time of arrestment was distributed over many regions. This reflects the fact that these women were active in many areas not within their original habitat (Refer to Table 3).

Place of residence in time of detention		
Homs: Al-Rastan	Judaidat Artuz Al-Balad	Homs: Krak des Chevaliers
Damascus	Qatana	Hama: Al-Madina
Idlib	Al-Mua'adamiya	Deir Atyah
Homs: Al-Wa'ar	Artuz	Banyas
Aleppo	Duma	Homs city
Damascus: Harasta	Judaidat Artuz Al-Fadl	Ma'arba
Homs: Talbisi	Hama: Al-Salamiya	Homs: Al-Furuglus
Homs: Al-Insha'at	Jableh	

Table (3) showing place of residence in time of arrestment

### 4. Marital status of participants in time of arrestment:

The results showed that 67% of our sample were married, 25% were singles, 6% widows, and 2% divorced. It is worth noting that these results, where married women have the highest percentage, are counter intuitive since singles are more engaged in revolutionary activities and therefore should have the highest percentage of detainees. This counter intuition is caused by the autocratic nature of the regime, for it arrests wives and mothers of political activists in order to pressure them for surrender, or to let them

bear the responsibility for their family's detention in front of the social public opinion of their local communities (Refer to Table 4).

Marital Status	Count	%
Single	25	25
Married	67	67
Divorced	2	2
Widowed	6	6
Total	100	100

Table (4) showing the marital status of participants in time of arrestment

### **5. Educational level of the sample:**

The results showed a relatively high level of education for the sample. Undergraduates came first with 35%, followed by those who have a high school diploma at 30%, while postgraduates were last with 2%. This suggests the maturity of these revolutionaries on the social and cultural level, and the importance of the revolution in achieving their dreams of a change. Many of these women supported the revolution by standing beside their husbands and sons in their political activity. Finally, Middle school diploma holders had 16%, primary school diploma holders had 9%, and 8% were illiterate (Refer to Table 5).

Educational level	Count	%
Illiterate	8	8
Familiar	-	-
Primary school	9	9
Middle school	16	16
High school	30	30
Undergraduate	35	35
Postgraduate	2	2
Total	100	100

Table (5) showing the educational level of participants

### **6. Educational level of parents:**

The results showed a relatively low educational level for the parents of our participants, 42% of participants' mothers were illiterate versus 38% of illiterate fathers. 23% of mothers held a primary school diploma in front of 12% for fathers. In terms of middle school diploma, 25% of fathers had one, in comparison to 13% of mothers. The

reason behind this inadequate level of education is that most of these parents come from a generation that did not achieve a high level of education, in addition to the fact that most had come from rural environments known to be generally neglected in governmental education policies and development planning.

High levels were limited to 10% of undergraduate education for fathers, and 2% for mothers. And 8% for both in terms of obtaining a high school diploma (Refer to table 6).

Educational Level	Father		Mother	
	Count	%	Count	%
Illiterate	38	38	42	42
Familiar	5	5	12	12
Primary school	12	12	23	23
Secondary school	25	25	13	13
High school	8	8	8	8
Undergraduate	10	10	2	2
Postgraduate	2	2	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100

Table (6) showing the educational level of participants' parents

## 7. Standards of living:

Self-assessment in regards of standards of living of a participant's family showed a general medium tendency with 56% describing themselves as thus. 29% said they had a high standard of living, while 15% said they had a low standard of living. This indicates how Syrian women—and people—participated in the revolution because of their aspirations for freedom and democracy, not because of poverty and scarcity, this is why the Syrian revolution was named The Revolution of Dignity not The Revolution of Hunger, or Bread, as happened in other societies (Refer to Table 7).

Standard of living	Count	%
Low	15	15
Medium	56	56
High	29	29
Total	100	100

Table (7) showing standards of living for the families of participants

## 8. Political orientation of participants' families

The results showed that most of our participants' families were in opposition to the Syrian regime with 59% of participants identifying their families as oppositionaries, followed by families with mixed attitudes, that is having both supportive and opposing constituents with 25%, followed by 16% of no political stance, that is having no interest in the political affairs and the revolution against the despotic regime. This suggests the presence of a political awareness for the parents especially that their generation was contemporary to the period of regime's consolidation of power through choking different and opposing voices that may stand against the smallest excesses of internal policy against citizens. The Syrian revolution pushed the previous generation to join it, which encouraged their posterity of the new generation to make it through. Fears and concerns of neutral or mixed families are understandable, it seems that such positions spawn from confusion and fear from change or from past experiences with the regime's violence that reached an uncontrollable level of massacring as in Hama 1982 (Refer to Table 8).

Political orientation	Count	%
Pro-government	-	-
Anti-government	59	59
Mixed	25	25
No attitude	16	16
Total	100	100

Table (8) showing the political orientation of participants' families

## 9. Habitation in time of arrestment:

The results showed that most participants lived with their families of procreation with 61% as thus, while 38% lived with their families of orientation, only one case lived in a field hospital for occupational/revolutionary necessity. It is worth noting from these results that all participants came from socially established families that are rooted in the Syrian system of customs and mores that emphasize the necessity for single women to live with their families of orientation, and married women with their families of procreation or sometimes with the families of orientation. This explains the reason behind arresting some of them as to pressure wanted male revolutionaries or Free Syrian Army(FSA) fighters—also generally males—at the beginning of the revolution (Refer to Table 9).

Habitation status in time of arrestment	Count	%
With family of procreation (husband and children)	61	61
With family of orientation (father, mother, brothers and sisters)	38	38



With friends	-	-
Alone	-	-
Field hospital	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (9) showing Habitation status in time of arrestment

**b. Data about detention period:**

**1. Period of detention:**

The proportions of detention periods varied in our sample, 40% came first with a period of 1-3 months of detention, followed by 4-6 months with 26%, 7-9 months with 18%, 10-12 months with 7%, and 9% for those who were detained for more than a year. It is notable that these periods are less than what are given to male detainees, since the FSA and other factions insist on releasing female detainees in prisoners exchange negotiations with the regime (Refer to Table 10).

Period of detention	Count	%
1 to 3 months	40	40
4 to 6 months	26	26
7-9 months	18	18
10-12 months	7	7
A year or more	9	9
Total	100	100

Table (10) showing the periods of detention for our participants

**2. Accusations and charges against survivors:**

The results showed that most charges of participants were related to protests calling for freedom and dignity with 31%, followed by 22% for giving food and medical aid to families besieged by the pro-regime army and its allies. 18% were charged with having one of their families as a member in the FSA, which makes such detainees effectively hostages in place of wanted individuals who had the opportunity to escape. 18% were charged with helping an FSA member to defect for not accepting to kill his fellow Syrians, usually a husband or a son, or another male family member. 11% were charged with having a revolutionary activity in the revolution. 9% were arrested for coming from areas liberated by the FSA. 3% were given the charge of weapons smuggling, while having no charge at all were as much as the latter. 1% were given many charges; despising the president, weakening nationalist feelings, debilitate national spirit, forming an unauthorized gathering, forming an unlicensed gazette, communicating with foreign

media, leaking information, having an SMS in mobile sent from a wanted telephone number, humanitarian and media work, working in a field hospital, and Al-Qazzaz bombing in Damascus/Quba' mosque bombing in Homs. This corresponds to the narrative of the regime and its security and media agencies in justifying arrests and violations against the Syrian people, especially women (Refer to Table 11).

Charges given to our participants	Count	%
Participating in protests	31	31
Supporting the people and rebels with food and medical aid	22	22
A family member who is an FSA fighter	18	18
Helping conscripts and officers to defect	18	18
Revolutionary activity	11	11
Being from a liberated area	9	9
Smuggling weapons to the rebels	3	3
No charges	3	3
Despising Assad	1	1
Weakening nationalist feelings	1	1
Debilitate national spirit	1	1
Forming an unauthorized gathering	1	1
Forming an unlicensed gazette	1	1
Communicating with foreign media	1	1
Leaking information and having a relation with the FSA	1	1
Having an SMS in mobile sent from a wanted telephone number	1	1
Humanitarian and media work	1	1
Working in a field hospital	1	1
Al-Qazzaz bombing in Damascus/Quba' mosque bombing in Homs	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (11) showing the charges given to our participants

### **3. The party implementing the arrest:**

The results showed variability in parties that arrested our sample's participants. 45% were arrested by security agencies affiliated to the Ministry of Defence, 30% were arrested by the Syrian Arab Army (the Assad army) which is supposed to protect them

and other Syrians in principle. 22% were arrested by local militias (Shabiha) who usually abduct people for ransom, and 3% were arrested by the civil police apparatus, which is supposed to be the only security institution allowed to detain people who break laws and commit violations (Refer to Table 12).

Party implementing the arrest	Count	%
Security agencies(e.g. the Mukhabarat[state intelligence service])	45	45
The army	30	30
Local pro-regime militias (Shabiha)	22	22
Police	3	3
Total	100	100

Table (12) showing the party that implemented the arrest

#### **4. The how and the where behind arrests:**

Regarding how our participants were arrested, 47% were arrested on a military or security checkpoint, 31% in house raids, 16% were abducted, and 5% were ambushed (Refer to Table 13). These results confirm the dependence of the regime on forced arrests, without minding legalities of implementing detention.

How arrests occurred	Count	%
On a military or security checkpoint	47	47
Raid	31	31
Abduction	16	16
Ambush	5	5
During exodus from an area and entry of pro-regime forces	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (13) showing how arrests occurred

Regarding where our participants were arrested, the place of arrestment varied with the Syrian geography, yet most arrests occurred at one of the thousands of military or security checkpoints dispersed on roads or within Syrian cities and towns.

Many arrestees moved between different prisons and security branches, in accordance to the branch they already were wanted to, or to the checkpoint or area they were arrested at.

One of such cases was of an arrestee from Homs, who moved between: Palestine Branch, 215 Branch, A'adra prison and Homs prison.

This is also the case of an arrestee from Aleppo, who moved between: Military security Branch of Aleppo, Military security Branch of Hama, Military Police Branch of Hama, Military Police Branch of Homs, Homs central prison, Palestine Branch, and A'dra prison (Refer to Table 14).

Place of arrestment	Count	%
Flashing(temporary)* checkpoint between Idlib and Khan Shekhun	3	3
Banyas – Bab Al-Mahata	3	3
Military Security Branch roundabout checkpoint in Suwaidaa	3	3
A Shabiha flash checkpoint between Homs and Al-Rastan	6	6
From home in Dara'a – Al-Autostrad	3	3
A checkpoint between Hama and Al-Salamiya	6	6
From home in Hama	3	3
An institute in Idlib	3	3
From home in Daraya	3	3
From home in Damascus – Al-Mazze	3	3
Air Force Intelligence Directorate checkpoint in Homs	3	3
Damascus—Sahnaya checkpoint	3	3
Al-Masafi checkpoint before entering Hama	3	3
Al-Tal/Tal-Mnin checkpoint	3	3
Judaiddat Artuz checkpoint	3	3
From home in Hama- Share' Al-Arbe'in	6	6
From home in Damascus Countryside Governorate	3	3
From Grain Silos checkpoint in Homs countryside	3	3
Al-Mugambu checkpoint in Aleppo	9	9
Political Security Branch checkpoint in Homs	3	3
Al-Hawrani hospital in Hama	3	3
4 <sup>th</sup> Division checkpoint in Qara	3	3

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\* Literally translated “flying checkpoints” are a kind of mobile checkpoints commonly used by the Syrian regime amid the Syrian revolution. It is made of a normal patrol unit assembled at sensitive and strategic roads and conjunctions for a while—one day at maximum— and disassembled thereafter. It pops up suddenly and unexpectedly, which makes it ideal for ambushes and kidnappings.

Homs Refinery checkpoint	3	3
From home in Harasta	3	3
From home in Homs	3	3
A checkpoint in Damascus Countryside	3	3
Al-Ra'ies roundabout in Homs, near Al-Haram for remittance services	1	1
A checkpoint in Homs	2	2
From street	1	1
Aleppo	1	1
From home in Dara'a	1	1
Al-Ra'ies bridge/Al-Baramkeh in Damascus	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (14) showing place of arrestment

## **5. Psychological violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

Forms and manifestations of violence practiced by security agencies varied considerably. Cursing and insulting using words unutterable by socially and psychologically decent individuals was practiced 100% of times, followed by threatening with rape with 40%, and threatening with murder with 22%. Some have mentioned other kinds of psychological violence, like torturing friends in front of the arrestee, threatening with arresting a family member, sleep deprivation, putting one in a cell that has dead bodies killed under torture, continuous hearing of a water tap, long periods of in interrogation, arresting son in front of the arrestee, threatening with arresting daughter, and forcing the arrestee to attend a torturing session of anti-regime youths (Refer to Table 15).

Psychological violence	Count	%
Insults, curses, and obscenity	100	100
Rape threats	41	41
Murdering threats	22	22
Torturing friends in front of me	1	1
Threatening to arrest my family	1	1
Preventing me from sleep	1	1
Putting me in cells where there are bodies of individuals died under torture	1	1
Sound of water tap	1	1

Interrogation for 12 hours	1	1
Arresting my son in front of me and subjecting him to psychological illness	1	1
Threatening with arresting my daughter	1	1
Forcing me to attend a torturing session of oppositionary male youths	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (15) showing psychological violence experienced by our sample

## **6. Physical violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

In regards of physical violence, all of the detainees were subjected to the ugliest types of physical violence. 100% of the participants were slapped and beaten with feet and hands (punched, knocked, and kicked), 81% were thrashed with cables or whips, 46% were hanged from their hands and electrified, 6% were thrashed using sticks and thrown with hot water(Yerba maté water), and the same percentage were subjected to nails ripping. Also, there was head beating, back breaking, tying up on wall with a tube, German chair, choking, hitting with metal screws, ribs breaking, hitting with a rubber rod, and forcing to sleep beside males in aisle (Refer to Table 16).

Physical violence	Count	%
Beating up using hands and feet	100	100
Slaps on face	100	100
Thrashing with a cable and whip	81	81
Hanging from hands and electrifying	46	46
Fierce hitting, breaking teeth, and skin burning	6	6
Nails ripping	6	6
Beating and fire burning	5	5
Thrashing with a stick and throwing hot water (Yerba maté water)	3	3
Hitting hands with metal screws	3	3
Beating until breaking one's back	3	3
Beating on one's head	2	2
Tying up on wall using tube	3	3
German chair	2	2
Choking	1	1
Ribs breaking	1	1

Hitting with a rubber rod	1	1
Forcing to sleep beside males in aisle	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (16) showing physical violence experienced by our sample

## **7. Sexual Violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

The results showed that 54% of the participants in our study were subjected to sexual violence, leaving 46% that didn't report such instances. From those who were subjected to sexual violence, 55.5% of them were raped, 27.5 were sexually harassed, 11% were threatened with impalement, 4% were gang raped, and 2% were raped in a checkpoint.

Sexual violence	Count	%
Rape	30	55.5
Sexual harassment	15	27.5
Threatening with impalement	6	11
Gang rape	2	4
Rape in a checkpoint	1	2
Total	54	100

Table (17) showing sexual violence experienced by our sample

In front of these numbers, we must note that many female detainees don't report their rape in an attempt to forget and overcome the psychological consequences of rape, or because of the social stigma stuck onto the detained woman and her whole family.

It is known that Syrian women are subjected to social behavioural standards harsher than those imposed on men. This is the reason behind the fact that many Syrian families—especially in the revolution—tend to block their female members from dealing with political issues for fear of arrest, and the consequential shame begotten for family and local community that is caused by what she might “incur” during detention from psychological, physical and sexual violence.

All of the documented numbers about Syrian female detainees during the Syrian revolution, including the ones mentioned in our study, don't break away from the regime's typical treatment of detainees during its period of tyranny. The rapes, violations, and etc. were part of what we have already mentioned in talking about the behaviour of Assad the Father's regime amid the famous massacres of Hama 1982, Seydnaya, and Palmyra.

It is worth mentioning that the statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) puts rape, and all other kinds of sexual violence under the category of war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

#### **8. Communication with family during detention:**

In regards to the possibility of communication with family during the detention period, 52% had communicated with their families, while 48% had not any kind of communication with their families (Refer to Table 18).

Occurrence of communication	Yes	No
Count	52	48
%	52	48
Total	100	100

Table (18) showing communication status with family during detention

In terms of the facility of communication, 42% reported paying bribes to security agencies' officials and personnel. 24% reported having communication rights after bribing an influential figure in A'adra prison, which reached in one of the cases to 8 million Syrian Liras, while 12% reported communicating with their families via other released detainees who were given the necessary telephone numbers before release (Refer to Table 19).

Facility of communication	Count	%
Paying amounts of money	22	42
Applying via a formal request	-	-
Via an influential figure in prison administration(A'adra prison)	24	46
Via other released detainees	6	12
Total	52	100

Table (19) showing the facility of communication with parents during detention

In regard to the reasons that prevented the detainees from communicating with their families, 79% reported not having relations with men in power, followed by 19% who reported fear of families from coming to the notorious security branches of Syria, and 12.5% who said they weren't able to pay the required bribes for the influential security institutions—the vocations of brokering and mediation were made well known in the late history of Syria; wherein each influential person has his group of brokers and mediators who facilitate communication with the relatives of the detainee and the higher personnel



for sums of money that can be large in some cases—12.5% also reported that their families never knew their place of detention, 6% reported that their families refused to communicate with them, and 2% had a complicated case that prevented communication(Refer to Table 20).

Reasons preventing communication	Count	%
No access to men in power(no mediation)	38	79
Family's fear of government	9	19
Inability to pay the money	6	12.5
Not knowing place of detention	6	12.5
Refusal of family	3	6
Complication of case	1	2
Total	48	100

Table (20) showing the reason for not communicating with family during detention

#### **9. Manner of releasing the detainees:**

Regarding the release of detainees, 42% answered that they were let out normally, 35% were released via prisoners exchange(like the nuns prisoners exchange, and another case in exchange of a Shabiha fighter), 10% used mediations and paying large sums of money that reached 8 million Syrian Liras as a bribe to influential figures in authority, 6% via mediators through interrogation officers, and 3% by bribing court judges, with the same percentage in exchange with collaborating with the government, while only one case was released in the Iranian prisoners exchange deal (Refer to Table 21).

Manner of release	Count	%
Release proper	42	42
Prisoners exchange	35	35
Mediation and paying large sums of money	10	10
Mediation through some interrogators	6	6
In exchange for snitching	3	3
Bribing the court judge	3	3
Exchange with Iranian prisoners	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (21) showing the manner of release

### **c. Social determinants of integration**

In discussing detention experiences in Syria amid the revolution or even before it, it is imperative to also mention the horrible negative psychological and social consequences that impact the life of the arrestee, which change the stream of his/her life and may even turn in it upside down, not to mention when having a female arrestee in a society most of its constituents look at women as “Hurmahs”<sup>\*</sup>, let alone when such a woman is released from detention, when instead of finding happiness and jollity in celebration of freedom, she finds stories and tales themed with all varieties of stigmas that will be stuck with her and her family for stuffing her nose in political discourse where she shouldn't be.

By the beginning of the revolution, the structure of the Syrian society remains, like other societies in the region, based on traditional gender roles, whether in family or in the different state institutions. Women were still taking traditional or pre modern roles and statuses. Within this established social order, women still represent the most fragile link in a society where the rule of law, social justice and individual freedoms are absent. This helps fostering traditional gender roles in the constituents of the Syrian social organization in general, and of the local communities in particular, which indeed many detained women faced in the revolution. On the level of our research, the milieus and localities that make up the sample varied, which made the contrasted reactions of the detainees' embracing communities evident.

Here, we will discuss the effects of the detainee's social background and the dominating pattern of relations in her society, in addition to her awareness of her own place, status and role, in front of her fears and concerns during her detention, and the changes that occurred regarding her familial and social situations which contribute to the return and recovery of her place and life as it were before experiencing detention.

#### **1. Social and familial fears and concerns:**

The results showed a variety of fears and concerns felt by the surviving detainees, fear of divorce came first with 58% of the sample reporting it, followed by stigmatization with 48%, 33% feared a family boycott, with the same percentage reporting having concerns on their family's fate, 25% had fears for their children, 18% feared implicating their family and revolutionary colleagues in their case, and only 5% reported not having any concerns or social apprehensions (Refer to Table 22).

What is meant by stigmatization in a local community is severe condemnation of any behaviour considered foreign to the dominant social mores. It usually causes stigmatized women to be ostracized by their families and surrounding community, this is why many women who survived detention refuse to share their experiences of sexual and psychological violence with their social surrounding.

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<sup>\*</sup> Hurmah: roughly translated as “the forbidden one”.

Concerns	Count	%
Relations severance with family	33	33
Spousal split up(divorce)	58	58
Stigma	48	48
Fear for children	25	25
No concerns	5	5
Fear from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in the case	18	18
Fear for the family's fate	33	33
Total	100	100

Table (22) showing fears and concerns during detention

### **1-1- Social concerns and fears, and the marital status of the detainee**

The results showed that there is a relationship between the fears and concerns of female detainees, and their marital status. In terms of singles, 60% had concerns about stigmas, followed by 48% who had concerns about relations severance with family, 24% feared a friends boycott, with the same percentage also fearing from revocation of their engagement or relationship, 20% were concerned about their family's fate, and 4% feared from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in their case. While in case of married women, the concerns were different, as the highest percentage were concerned about getting a divorce with 86%, followed by 49% fearing stigma, 39% fearing for the family's fate, 33% fearing for their children, 31% fearing a family boycott, and 13% fearing from implicating their families in their case.

As for divorced women, their fears were related to implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in their case, and fear for their family's fate.

Finally, in terms of widowed women, 50% had concerns about implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in their case, with the same percentage having fears for their children, followed by 17% who have fears for family, with as much portion having no concerns at all (Refer to Table 23).

Marital Status	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed		Total
Concerns	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Relations severance with family	12	48	21	31	-	-	-	-	33

Spousal split up(divorce)	-	-	58	86.5	-	-	-	-	58
Stigma	15	60	33	49	-	-	-	-	48
Relations severance with friends	6	24	3	4	-	-	-	-	9
Fear for children	-	-	22	33	-	-	3	50	25
No concerns	-	-	4	6	-	-	1	17	5
Fear from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in the case	1	4	9	13	1	50	4	67	18
Fear for the family's fate	5	20	26	39	1	50	1	17	33
Revoking engagement or breaking a romantic relationship	6	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Total	25		67		2		6		100

Table (23) showing the relationship between marital status, concerns and fears during detention

Within the reality and status of women in local communities, social concerns differ according to the marital status of the detainee, and depend on the importance of familial and social ties in her eyes. Married ones will think in the future of their relationships with their husbands and children, while for singles, their concerns will be much more complicated, as in terms of her association with her family, of her marital future, and of the looks she begets from her local community as a single female detainee, with all the stories told about what female detainees are subject to in the regime's dungeons from harassment to rape, etc.

### **1-2- Social concerns and fears, and the educational level of detainee**

The results showed a relationship between the educational level of the detainee and the nature of her fears and concerns experienced during detention. For illiterates, the highest concern was social stigma and fear of divorce with 75% reporting so, followed by 50% who feared for their families' fate, and 37.5% who feared family boycott and the same percentage reported having fears for their children.

As for those who passed primary school, the highest percentage of 98% came with fear of divorce, and as much for social stigma, followed by 67% who reported fear for their children, and 55% who reported fearing for their families' fate.

In case of those who passed middle school, 94% feared divorce, followed by 69% who feared a family boycott, 62% who feared stigma, and 37% who had fears for their families' fate.

Regarding those who passed high school, 83% feared divorce, 46% feared stigma, 33% feared a family boycott, 26% had fears for their children, and 23% had fears for their family.

In regards for undergraduates, 34% feared implicating revolutionary colleagues and family in their case, 31% had fears for their families' fate, 29% feared stigma, and 26% feared from a family boycott. While those who got a postgraduate education, only the concern for children was present (Refer to Table 24).

Educational Level	Illiterate		Fami- liar	Primary school		Middle school		High school		Under- graduate		Post- graduate		Total
Concerns	#	%	#	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Relations severance with family	3	37.5	-	-	-	11	69	10	33	9	26	-	-	33
Spousal split up(divorce)	6	75	-	8	89	15	94	25	83	-	-	-	-	58
Stigma	6	75	-	8	89	10	62	14	46	10	29	-	-	48
Relations severance with friends	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10	6	17	-	-	9
Fear for children	3	37.3	-	6	67	3	19	8	26	3	9	2	100	25
No concerns	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	10	1	3	1	50	5
Fear from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in the case	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	5	16	12	34	-	-	18
Fear for the family's fate	4	50	-	5	55	6	37	7	23	11	31	-	-	33
Revoking engagement or breaking a romantic relationship	-	-	-	-	-	4	25	2	7	-	-	-	-	6
Total	8		-	9		16		30		35		2		100

Table (24) showing the relationship between educational level, and fears and concerns during detention

It seems that the propinquity of the numbers was logical, since educational level doesn't have a big role in fending off blame and negative looks towards the detainee, and, according to the ongoing experiences, it doesn't protect her from violence or discrimination during detention, on the contrary, she may be dealt with more fiercely

since her decision in participating in the revolution stems from strong conviction. In all cases, individual differences between detainees still play a role in attuning the levels and manifestations of fears and concerns.

### 1-3- Social concerns and fears, and political orientation of the detainee's parents

The results showed a relationship between the political orientation of parents of detainees, and the detainees' concerns and fears experienced during their detention. Regarding detainees who come from anti-regime families, 44% feared for the fate of their families, followed by 32% having concerns about divorce, 24% feared implicating their family and fellow revolutionaries in their case, 17% feared for their children, 13% were concerned about stigmatization, and 8% had none.

In regards to the concerns of detainees coming from mixed families, the highest percentage, 100%, was of fear from stigma, followed by 96% fearing divorce, 56% fearing a family boycott, 40% feared for their children, and 16% feared from a friends boycott.

As for concerns of detainees coming from neutral families, the highest percentage of 94% was of fear from divorce and stigma, followed by 81% fearing a family boycott, 31% feared for their children, and 24% feared for their family's fate (Refer to Table 25).

Political orientation of parents	Pro-regime		Anti-regime		Mixed		No attitude		Total
Concerns	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Relations severance with family	-	-	6	10	14	56	13	81	33
Spousal split up(divorce)	-	-	19	32	24	96	15	94	58
Stigma	-	-	8	13	25	100	15	94	48
Relations severance with friends	-	-	2	3	4	16	3	19	9
Fear for children	-	-	10	17	10	40	5	31	25
No concerns	-	-	5	8	-	-	-	-	5
Fear from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in the case	-	-	14	24	3	12	1	6	18
Fear for the family's fate	-	-	26	44	1	4	6	24	33
Revoking engagement or breaking a	-	-	-	-	3	12	3	12	6

romantic relationship									
Total	-	-	59		25		16		100

**Table (25)** showing the relationship between political orientation of parents, and fears and concerns of the detainee during detention

It seems that parents' convictions and their attitude towards the revolution have a role in forming the detainee's perception about her surroundings' reactions in post release period. This is clarified by noticing the decrease in stigmatization concerns for detainees coming from anti-regime families, in contrast to its significant increase for detainees coming from mixed or neutral families.

#### **1-4- Social concerns and fears, and the occurrence of sexual violence**

According to the results of the relationship between sustaining sexual violence, and fears and concerns during detention; For those who faced sexual violence, the highest percentage was concentrated in the stigmatization concerns category at 83%, in contrast to 48% of those who didn't face sexual violence, 67% feared divorce in contrast to 48%, 37% fear of family boycott in contrast to 33%, and 33% feared for their children in contrast to 25% respectively (Refer to Table 26).

Sexual violence	Yes		No		
Concerns	Count	%	Count	%	Total
Relations severance with family	20	37	13	28	33
Spousal split up(divorce)	36	67	22	48	58
Stigma	45	83	3	6.5	48
Relations severance with friends	6	11	3	6.5	9
Fear for children	18	33	7	15	25
No concerns	-	-	5	11	5
Fear from implicating family and fellow revolutionaries in the case	20	37	13	28	33
Fear for the family's fate	12	22	6	13	18
Revoking engagement or breaking a romantic relationship	4	7	2	4	6
Total	54		46		100

**Table (26)** showing the relationship between sustaining sexual violence, and fears and concerns during detention

At this point, we want to emphasize that experiencing sexual violence in all its manifestations as a detainee, doesn't necessarily negate the presence of fears and

concerns about stigma or social boycott, it even plays a role on the psychological level of the detainee after her release. For those who experienced sexual violence, they have concerns about stigma, social boycott and etc. in higher rates than those who didn't experience it, and will suffer more in their personal and social life, and in interacting with others, even if they didn't report experiencing sexual violence. This means that the fears of those who experienced sexual violence must have a higher rate during detention, yet in both cases—having experienced sexual violence, or not experienced it—the severity of the effects of detention will start to appear when the detainee is released and encountered by her family and her surrounding local community.

## 2. Manner of reception after release from detention:

The results showed a significant difference in the manner of detainees' reception within their social and familial milieus. 41% of parents received their daughters in a joyful welcoming, 22% with blame, 12% with rage and anger, 6% boycotted their daughters, and 3% never met them.

Regarding husbands, 30% received their wives with a joyful welcoming, and 25% couldn't meet them because of divorce. As for brothers, 45% welcomed their sisters, 18% boycotted them, 15% blamed them, and 6% were angry of them. Sisters on the other hand were more welcoming with 57%, 21% received the detainee with blame, 3% with anger, and the same latter percentage didn't meet with the detainee after release.

For friends, 59% received the detainee with love, 18% with a boycott, 6% with blame, and 3% didn't meet them after their release. 49% of neighbours received the detainee with welcoming, 12% with a boycott, 7% with blame, and 3% didn't meet them. In regards to work colleagues, 25% received them with joyful welcoming, 4% with a boycott, and 1% with blame (Refer to Table 27).

Manner of reception	I didn't meet them		They were arrested		Pity and sympathy		Deceased		Welcoming with joy and love		Boycott		Anger		Blame	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Parents	3	3	-	-	24	24	3	3	41	41	6	6	12	12	22	22
Husband	25	25	3	3	9	9	-	-	30	30	6	6	-	-	1	1
Brothers			-	-	-	-	-	-	45	45	18	18	6	6	15	15
Sisters	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	57	57	-	-	3	3	21	21
Friends	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	59	18	18	-	-	6	6
Neighbours	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	49	49	12	12	-	-	7	7



Work colleagues	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	25	4	4	-	-	1	1
Relatives	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-

Table (27) showing the manner of reception after release from detention

Of course, there are differences between one family and another, as well as between one local community and another, in receiving the detainee after her release. Without forgetting the various complications suffered in some cases after release from detention, whether in paying large sums of money, or in the fact that the detainee may have been exchanged with pro-regime troops who are detained for the FSA and some other factions.

Yet, in spite of all we mentioned, we can't ignore the discomfort and embarrassment felt by the parents, relatives, neighbours, and all of those who make up an embracing local community for the detainee after her release, which male detainees don't face, even more, male detainees are treated in a different manner, with heroism and other qualities being projected upon them, even though many male detainees suffered from many kinds of torture and violence including sexual violence. This is caused by the system of mores, gender roles, and one's status according to one's sex in the collective consciousness of these local communities.

To further clarify this point, it is fair to remind ourselves of what a female detainee we interviewed have mentioned. One of our participants (of Hama/Al-Qusur district) reported that her familial and social surroundings blamed her with anger, and was boycotted by her siblings after coming out of detention, unlike her nephew, who was also detained, yet his family and neighbours made him a party and treated him like a hero in his locality.

### **3. Post-detention support of detainees**

The results showed that 40% of our sample received support from their whole families, with the same percentage also receiving their support from friends, 27% got their support from their siblings, 42% got it from their husbands, 14% from revolutionary colleagues, 9% from relatives, 6% from maternal aunts, 5% from work colleagues, 3% from father, with the same percentage getting it from paternal aunts as well as from friends in refuge, 3% also didn't get any support, and only one case got her support from her boyfriend (Refer to Table 28).

Most supportive people	Count	%
Whole family	40	40
Friends	40	40
Siblings	27	27

Husband	24	24
Revolution colleagues	14	14
Mother	12	12
Relatives	9	9
Maternal aunts	6	6
Work colleagues	5	5
Father	3	3
Paternal aunts	3	3
Friends in refuge	3	3
None	3	3
Boyfriend	1	1
Sample size	100	

Table (28) showing the most supportive people after release

It was natural for detainees to receive their support from those who are close to them, their families primarily, followed by their friends, this is because of the fact that families are still in the social custom the main custodian of the girl even though she is married. As for friends support, its considerable presence was understandable especially by those who participated in the revolution, since all of them were fighting for the same cause.

#### **4. New social status at post-detention**

##### **4-1- Losing relationships at post-detention period**

The results showed that 50% of our sample lost some social relationship after their release, and to learn about the parties they lost, we asked another question, we found out that 62% of those have lost their husband, 18% lost their friends, 12% lost their fiancé, 6% lost their parents, and only one case lost a work colleague, who thought she snitched on him during her interrogation (Refer to Table 29).

Lost relationship	Count	%
Husband	31	62
Friends	9	18
Fiancé	6	12
Parents	3	6
A work colleague who was arrested after me	1	2

Total	50	100
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Table (29) showing the people whose relation with was lost at post-detention period

#### **4-2- The reasons behind losing relationships:**

Detention by its own was enough reason for losing husbands or some of the surrounding people, as for other reasons that led for these loses, they were as thus: losing a husband was caused by the pressure imposed by his pro-regime family on him, losing friends was caused by their fear from the potential security danger that the survivor may bring on them, losing parents was caused by their belief that the survivor brought disgrace to them because of her detention, losing boyfriend or fiancé was caused by both the detention in itself and its relation to experiences of rape, losing a work colleague was caused by his belief that the survivor snitched on him. All of these reasons behind losing relationships are but effects of values and beliefs peculiar to each local milieu of the detainees, and of the overlap between personal life and public life in local communities that are based on concepts of honour, disgrace, and etc. of what is called social taboos (Refer to Table 30).

Lost relationship	Cause
Husband	Being in detention\pressure of his pro-regime parents
Friends	I became a danger that no one want to be near of
Fiancé	Because of my detention
Parents	They believe I ashamed them
Boyfriend	Prosecution and people's thinking that she was raped
Work colleague	Accusing me with snitching on him

Table (30) showing the reasons of boycotting detainees after their release

#### **4-3- Change of marital status after detention:**

Results concerning the post-detention marital status showed a variety of changes in marital status as follows: 46% didn't witness a marital change, 25% experienced divorce, 15% saw reluctance in marriage and engagement proposals, 6% experienced a husband boycott, 3%'s engagement was revoked, with also the same percentage having married to a revolutionary, 1% broke up, and the same percentage had feelings of aversion towards men (Refer to Table 31).

Marital status change	Count	%
Nothing changed	46	46
Divorce occurred	25	25

No one proposed for marriage or engagement	15	15
Husband boycott	6	6
Engagement revoked	3	3
Break-up	1	1
I married a revolutionary	3	3
Lots of men proposed for my engagement based on the principle of Sutra* and pity, which evoked my aversion and repugnancy.	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (31) showing the change on marital status after release

All the changes in the marital status of our survivors seem compatible with what we have mentioned previously about the role of local milieus in assessing the detention experience of women. In spite of this, there was no other way in front of lots of families except to provide the survivor with different forms of support, maybe after a phase of recuperating the shock of detention for both her and them.

#### **4-4- Marital status and the nature of variability in marital status:**

The results have showed a relationship between the marital status of the detainees and the nature of variability in their marital status. 60% of singles had no one proposing for their engagement, 20% witnessed no changes, 12% had their engagements revoked, and 8% got married. As for married ones, no change occurred for 49% of them, 37% faced divorce, 9% were boycotted by their husbands, and 5%’s husbands were arrested. As for divorcees, one didn’t witness any change, and the other got married. While in case of widows, no change occurred at all (Refer to Table 32).

Change of status	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Occurrence of divorce	-		25	37				
No one to propose for marriage or engagement	15	60	-	-	-	-	-	-
No change	5	20	33	49	1	50	6	100
Husband boycott	-	-	6	9	-	-	-	-
Husband arrest	-	-	3	5	-	-	-	-
Revocation of engagement	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
Got married	2	8	-	-	1	50	-	-
Size of sample	25		67		2		6	

Table (32) showing the original marital status and changes of marital statuses

At this variable, details in the determinants of social integration seem clearer. When local communities don't accept the experience of detention for women, women's lives will change for the worse, as in the occurrence of divorce, boycott, or refusal to propose for engagement in the case of singles, which all seem inhibiting indicators for the processes of reintegration and resumption of previous life, especially in consistently changing circumstances of political, social and martial instability all across Syria, which further hinder the capacity for overcoming detention experience on the social level.

## 5. Impediments on movement after release from detention:

The results showed that most of the survivors changed their place of residence after their release, with 92% changing it, and 8% who didn't change it (Refer to Table 33).

Change of place of residence	Yes	No	
Count	92	8	100
%	92	8	100

Table (33) showing the change of place of residence after release

We found several reasons behind this change, 59% said they moved off for security reasons, 22% because of bad treatment from neighbours, 11% after divorce, 3% to continue being able to support protesters, and 1% had to escape for Turkey, with same percentage having moved off because of the presence of security troops in the same residential building as theirs, because of fear from re-arrestment, because of apprehension of the continuous recalls by the Political Security Branch, or because of recall by Syria's military field-court[a court-martial] (Refer to Table 34).

Reasons of changing place of residence	Count	%
Wanted for security agencies	54	59
Bad treatment of neighbours	20	22
Because of my divorce	10	11
To support protesters	3	3
Escape to Turkey to avoid informing for the government	1	1
Presence of security troops within place of family's residence	1	1
Fear of a new arrest	1	1
Frequent recalls by Political Security Branch	1	1
After prisoners exchange deal with the Iranian prisoners, I was called for field court.	1	1
Total	92	100

Table (34) showing the reasons of changing place of residence after release

As for impediments on the survivor's movement in her place of residence, there were a variety of reasons, which of the most important were security surveillance at 35%, fear of a new arrest with 34%, and fear of pro-regime checkpoints at 17%, which are all security fears and phobias that stem from the severe experience of detention. There is also mistrust of parents towards their daughter at 9%, sickness at 3%, and revulsion from others at 1%. These are comprehensible impediments at post-detention phase in light of the recurrence of arrests against many men and women (Refer to Table 35).

Impediments on movement after release	Count	%
Security surveillance	35	35
Fear of a new arrest	34	34
Fear of pro-regime checkpoints	17	17
Parents mistrusting me	9	9
Because of my illness	3	3
Revulsion from others	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (35) showing impediments on movement after release from detention

As for with who does the survivor lives with after her release, it was found that 31% of the survivors were living with their children, 27% live with their parents, 24% live with their families of procreation, 8% with their friends, and 3% with their siblings (Refer to Table 36).

With who do you live currently	Count	%
With my children	31	31
With my parents	27	27
With my family—of procreation—	24	24
With my friends	8	8
With my brother	3	3
With my nephew	3	3
With my husband	3	3
With my husband and my son	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (36) showing with who did the detainee live with after her release

The many divorces have imposed a new lifestyle upon the married ones, as they consequently live with their children after the spousal split. The situation of singles and married ones (who became divorced yet without children) have also changed, since many of them have travelled to other areas or out of the country, which allowed them to have lifestyles that weren't acceptable in their local communities, for instance living with friends, or living with a particular family member without the others.

## **6. Work status before and after detention**

### **6-1- Work status before detention**

The results showed that 69% of the survivors were working prior to their detention, while 31% weren't working (See Table 37).

Work experience before detention	Yes	No	
Count	69	31	100
%	69	31	100

Table (37) showing work experience before detention

As for the occupations they practiced, 30% were teachers, 25% were employed at a private company, 9% were working in clothes shop, with the same percentage also working at a beauty salon, as domestic workers, and in relief work. 3% were working as media activists, and 1% worked as a university teacher, with the same percentage also working as a doctor(MD), in nursing and first aid, as a pharmacist assistant, and as a volunteer in a field hospital (Refer to Table 38).

Work practiced before detention	Count	%
Teacher	21	30
Employee at a private company	17	25
At a clothes shop	6	9
At a beauty salon	6	9
A domestic worker	6	9
Relief activity	6	9
Media activity	2	3
Doctor(MD)	1	1

Teaching in university	1	1
At nursing and first aid	1	1
A volunteer at a field school and a field hospital	1	1
Pharmacist assistant and a student	1	1
Total	69	100

Table (38) showing the type of occupation after release from detention

## 6-2- Detainees' return to work

The results showed a high percentage of detainees, reaching 83% of who didn't go back for work, in contrast to 17% who did (Refer to Table 39).

Did you go back to work?	Count	%
Yes	12	17
No	57	83
Total	69	100

Table (39) showing the detainees' return to work

As for the reasons of not returning for work, it was found that 54% of cases were due to arbitrary termination by the government, 32% were caused by parents' prevention fearing from re-arresting the survivor again, 12% were due to the change of residency, and 2% because of security surveillance (Refer to Table 40).

	Reasons for not coming back	Count	%
	Employment termination	31	54
	Parent's prevention to work	18	32
	Change of place of residence	7	12
	Fears of parents and security surveillance	1	2
	Total	57	100

Table (40) showing the reasons of not coming back to work after release from detention

Expulsion or termination from work was the fate of the greater majority of all detainees (males and females) who were employees at different private and public institutions. The prevention of parents for allowing the survivor to work stems from the apprehension that she may get interactive again with environments that may not accept her and may even influence her life negatively, keeping in mind that work would have



contributed positively in the process of social integration of the survivor, especially that she would see herself practicing her previous economic role again, which unfortunately didn't happen.

### **6-3- Acquiring a job after release from detention**

57% of our sample looked for a job after their release, yet they couldn't find one. As for the reasons of not having a job, 53% of cases were because of parents preventing their daughters from appearing and working, 21% said it was the scarcity of jobs that stood between them and work, 10% reported that their specialty wasn't demanded in Turkey, 5% said it was the way society views detained woman, with the same percentage saying it was illness caught during their detention that hindered them from working, and 3.5% said that the reason was incapacity of those NGOs concerned with female detainees (Refer to Table 41).

Reasons for not having a job	Yes	No
Parents' preventing me from appearance and work	30	53
Scarcity of job opportunities	12	21
No demand for my specialty in Turkey	6	10.5
Because of my detention and the way society views detained women	3	5
Because of illness caught during detention	3	5
Because of absence of mediators and proper care for female detainees	2	3.5
Parents' prevention stemming from their fear for me	1	2
Total	57	100

Table (41) showing the reasons for not having a job after release

At this point, in analysing the presented data, we go back again to concentrate on the social and economic determinants for integration, which we think are irrevocably interconnected. Parents' prevention of their daughter from work was winged by the unemployment that dominated the Syrian market which implied the scarcity of jobs, and even if jobs existed, employers don't prefer detained women for reasons related to general views on detainees by the local community and of course for security reasons.

What draws attention also, is that some of the survivors have blamed NGOs and committees that are concerned with female detainees, and their incapacity in solving this issue, which although it is true to a certain degree, yet statistical data are, in explaining the reason, more inclined to explain it with the general paralysis of workforce in Syria,

and the prevention of the survivor's parents or the latter's fear for her if she works and experience work again.

## 7- Engaging in social activity after release from detention:

Regarding the detainees' recommencement of social activity at post-release period, the results showed that 63% didn't resume their social lives, while 37% did (Refer to Table 42).

Engaging in social activity	Count	%
Yes	37	37
No	63	63
Total	100	100

Table (42) showing the resumption of detainees' social activity after their release

As for the reasons of recommencing social activity, 70% said it is due to their conviction with their revolutionary mission, 16% because of the social surroundings' acceptance for their revolutionary experience, 5% to continue the effort to achieve freedom and oust the regime, and 3% because of the need for social relationships with others (Refer to Table 43).

Reasons for recommencement	Count	%
My conviction with my mission	26	70
The acceptance of my surroundings for my experience	6	16
Continuing the demands for freedom and ousting the regime	2	5
Absence of impediments	1	3
Desire to be alone	1	3
Need for social relationships	1	3
Total	37	100

Table (43) showing the reasons of detainees' recommencement of social activity after release from detention

As for the reasons of not commencing social activity, 34% said it was due to changing residence and social surroundings, 29% because of frustration and edginess, 24% because of the negative way the surrounding local community views female detainees, and 11% because of parents' fears from another arrest (Refer to Table 44).

Reasons for not resuming social activity	Count	%
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Change of residence or social environment	22	34.5
Frustration and edginess	18	29
Negative view of local community for female detainees	15	24
Parents' fear from returning to revolutionary activity	7	11
Difficulties in communication and reticence.	1	1.5
Total	63	100

**Table (44)** showing the reasons of not resuming social activity after release from detention

The survivors have faced many difficulties in resuming social activities as they were before their detention. Changing the place of residence, and consequently the social milieu, also had a considerable impact in this issue. Yet, we must not forget that changing the place of residence was, in lots of cases, an effort to avoid the negative way the detainee's original local community views her, which makes us disinterested to changes in place and environment despite their high occurrence, for even if she remained in her local community and didn't change her residence, she will still not be able to recommence her previous social activity since she will conform to the values of that community, this is evidenced by the presence of a large proportion of the local community who view detained women negatively. On the other hand, in this context we can rely on the effects of the immediate experience of post detention on the general mood of the detainee; frustration, edginess, difficulty in communication, and reticence. All of which are factors caused by detention experience itself, multiplied by the difficulties of accepting her experience by the local community.

#### **d. Psycho-personal determinants of integration**

##### **1- Daily conduct of survivors after their release from detention:**

The results showed that there were many psychological and social changes in the daily conduct of survivors after their release from detention, 77% reported having withdrew from social life, 62% said they were anxious about the future, with the same percentage also saying they witnessed change in mood, while 42% said they were frustrated by others, 27% had acquired stoutness in putting forward opinions, 18% started seeing others as equal peers, and 3% shifted towards men hatred because of their husbands' negative attitude towards them (Refer to Table 45).

Conduct	Count	%
Social withdrawal	77	77
Anxiety for the future	62	62

Change in mood	62	62
Self-reliance	54	54
Depression episodes	45	45
Frustrated by others	42	42
Stoutness in putting forward opinions	27	27
Conceiving others as equal peers	18	18
Antipathy towards men because of my husband's attitude	3	3
Diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder by a psychiatrist	1	1
Total	100	100

Table (45) showing the daily conduct after release from detention

The aforementioned data have accentuated—keeping in mind the different local communities of the survivors—the emergence of many aspects of negative conduct (social withdrawal, fear for the future, depression episodes, and etc.), either because of the impact of detention regardless of its duration, or because of the pressure of her familial and social surroundings on her.

All of that didn't prevent positive conduct from emerging for some (seeing others as equal peers, stoutness in putting forward opinions, and etc.). Such emergence is caused as we think, by the interdependence of more than one factor, like personal peculiarities in accommodating the experience of detention, the role of the detainee's surrounding community, and her general outlook towards life.

### **1-1- Daily conduct of survivors and the variable of sexual violence:**

The results have shown a relationship between the changes in daily life of the survivors after their release, and experiencing sexual violence. Experiencing sexual violence was a cause of social withdrawal for 80% of the survivors, while 74% of those who didn't experience sexual violence have withdrew from social life. 74% of sexually assaulted participants have developed an anxiety for the future, while only 48% of non-sexually assaulted participants did, 63% of sexually assaulted participants witnessed change in mood while it was 61% in case of non-sexually assaulted participants, 51% of sexually assaulted participants became more self-reliant, in contrast to 56% in case of non-sexually assaulted participants, 41% of sexually assaulted participants experienced depression episodes in contrast to 50% for non-sexually assaulted participants, 48% of sexually assaulted participants were frustrated by others, while 35% of non-sexually assaulted participants were faced such frustration, 18% of sexually assaulted participants became stouter in their opinions, while 37% of non-sexually assaulted participants had

become as such, and 15% of sexually assaulted participants saw others as similar peers compared to 22% of non-sexually assaulted participants (Refer to Table 46).

Experienced sexual violence	Yes		No		Total
Conduct	Count	%	Count	%	
Social withdrawal	43	80	34	74	77
Anxiety for the future	40	74	22	48	62
Change in mood	34	63	28	61	62
Self-reliance	28	51	26	56	54
Depression episodes	22	41	23	50	45
Frustrated by others	26	48	16	35	42
Stoutness in putting forward opinions	10	18	17	37	27
Conceiving others as equal peers	8	15	10	22	18
Antipathy towards men because of my husband's attitude	3	5	-	-	3
Diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder by a psychiatrist	-	-	1	2	1
Total	54		46		

Table (46) showing the relationship between sexual violence and daily conduct

At this point, we go back to what we have mentioned earlier about the topic of sexual violence and the social determinant for integration, wherein the difference between those who experienced sexual violence and those who didn't experience it wasn't regarded as a critical variable that influences changes in personal conduct, meaning that depression may have been higher at those who didn't experience sexual violence, or more precisely, those who didn't report experiencing sexual violence. Despite this, the table shows a propinquity between the two categories, which suggests that detention is an all-encompassing experience whether the survivor have suffered from any kind of violence or haven't, such case is definitely closely linked to the social side of issue in hand.

### **1-2- Daily conduct of survivors and families' political orientation**

The results have showed a relationship between daily conduct of detainees after their release and the political background of their families, 66% of detainees who have an anti-regime family have withdrawn from social life, in contrast to 88% of those whose families are mixed, and 100% of those whose family has no political attitude. This is an indicator to the role of familial support in empowering the social personality of the survivor.

As for fear for the future, the percentages were as follows: 44% when family is anti-regime, 84% in case of having a mixed family, and 94% when family has no political attitude. In regards to change in mood, it impacted 52% of those having an anti-regime family, 64% whose family is mixed, and 94% whose family is without a political attitude. In terms of self-reliance, it was accentuated in 61% of participants whose family is anti-regime, 48% of those having mixed family, and 38% in case of having a family without a political attitude. Regarding depression, it was reported by 34% of those who have an anti-regime family, 56% of those having mixed families, and 69% of those who have parents with an attitude. Regarding frustration by others, it was present at 29% of those who have an anti-regime family, 40% of those who have a mixed family, and 94% of those coming from neutral families. Regarding conceiving others as equal peers, the percentages were as follows: 30% when having an anti-regime family, and 0% in cases of having a mixed family or being from a family without an attitude.

As for stoutness in putting forward opinions, it was documented for 39% of those whose family is anti-regime, 12% of those whose family is mixed, and 6% for those who come from neutral families (Refer to Table 47).

Political orientation	Pro-regime	Anti-regime		Mixed		No attitude		
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Social withdrawal	-	39	66	22	88	16	100	77
Anxiety for the future	-	26	44	21	84	15	94	62
Change in mood	-	31	52.5	16	64	15	94	62
Self-reliance	-	36	61	12	48	6	38	54
Depression episodes	-	20	34	14	56	11	69	45
Frustrated by others	-	17	29	10	40	15	94	42
Stoutness in putting forward opinions	-	23	39	3	12	1	6	27
Conceiving others as equal peers	-	18	30,5	-	-	-	-	18
Antipathy towards men because of my husband's attitude	-	-	-	3	12	-	-	3
Diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder by a psychiatrist	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	1
Total		59		25		16		

Table (47) showing the political orientation of families and post-release conduct

In this section, the figures were greatly impacted by the political orientation of families, indeed there was a positive correlation between anti-regime familial attitude and the absence of negative conduct of the survivor.

### 1-3 Daily conduct of survivors and their educational level

The results showed a relationship between the educational level of the survivors and their daily conduct after their release. It was found that social withdrawal occurred to 100% of those who have a primary or low level of education, while it was 75% for those who have a middle school education, 88% for illiterates, 83% for those who have a secondary school education, and 68% for undergraduates. As for anxiety about the future, it was present in 100% of those who have a primary educational level, 94% of those who have a middle educational level, 75% of illiterates, 60% of those who have a secondary educational level, and 37% of undergraduates. This is a clear indicator for the role of university degree in guaranteeing a perspective work opportunity, and hence lowering the anxiety of graduates from the coming future.

Regarding stoutness in opinions, it was found that such a phenomenon wasn't documented for those with a low educational level(illiterate, familiar, primary school, middle school), while it was 17% in case of those having a secondary educational level, and 60% for undergraduates.

Educational level	Illiterate		Familiar		Primary school		Middle school		High school		Under-graduate		Post-graduate		Σ
Daily conduct	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Social withdrawal	7	87.5	-		9	100	12	75	25	83	24	68.5	1	50	77
Anxiety for the future	6	75	-		9	100	15	94	18	60	13	37	1	50	62
Stoutness in putting forward opinions	-	-	-		-		-	-	5	17	21	60	1	50	27
Self-reliance	-	-	-		9	100	3	19	15	50	25	71	2	100	54
Change in mood	3	-	-		9	100	6	38	19	63	24	68.5	1	50	62
Conceiving others as equal peers	-	-	-		3	33	3	19	-	-	11	31	1	50	18
Frustrated by others	-	-	-		9	100	9	57	9	30	15	43	-	-	42
Depression episodes	-	-	-		3	33	9	57	12	40	20	57	1	50	45
Antipathy towards men because of my husband's	-	-	-		-		-	-	-	-	3	8.5	-	-	3

attitude															
Diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder by a psychiatrist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	1
	8		-		9		16		30		35		2		100

Table (48) showing the educational level of detainees and their conduct post-release

A positive correlation between educational level and daily conduct was found, the higher the educational level, the less adverse daily conduct is.

## 2- Detainees resumption for everyday life

The results showed that 57% of our sample have resumed their daily habits after their release, in contrast to 43% who haven't (Refer to Table 49).

	Resumption of daily life	Count	%
	Yes	57	57
	No	43	43
	Total	100	100

Table (49) showing the resumption of practicing daily habits after release

On the forms of these daily habits, it was found that 26% re-started taking care of their family and children, 25% reengaged in house chores with family, and 21% took the roles of a father and a mother at the same time, it is to be considered that the latter 21% were the same ones who had a spousal split up.

It was also found that 14% were supported by their social surroundings, 12% were working much more efficiently than they were before their detention, and 2% faced difficulties in getting back for writing (Refer to Table 50).

Resumption of daily life	Count	%
Taking care of family and children	15	26
Doing my house chores	14	25
Became both a mother and a father	12	21
Everybody helps me and treats me with love	8	14
Work more efficiently	7	12



Difficulty in returning for writing	1	2
Total	57	100

Table (50) showing the forms of daily habits at post-release period

The social situation, momentum of daily life, with collaboration of some families, have all contributed in the resumption of many daily habits of survivors in the latter's life, e.g. taking care of family and children, engaging in house chores, and etc., such activities are imposed by daily life on all individuals generally, and women especially (in particular the issue of house burdens). This may have a positive role in overcoming the experience of detention, or to forget—or pretend to forget—its psychological and social drawbacks, especially when there are no clear incidents of psychological disorders. In one degree or the other, all of this supports the efforts for reintegration of a detainee inside her local community. We should press here the individual differences between the survivors in accommodating the experience and facing the circumstances of post detention period. For example, women who had a spousal split up were forced to face a new social situation with new responsibilities imposing new habits on their already existing daily ones.

As for the reasons behind not resuming daily habits (for those who couldn't go back to daily life), 28% said the reason was fear and hate for everybody, 21% leaving house, with the same percentage saying they weren't the source of joy in family as they were before, 14% for not caring for house related issues, with the same percentage for working without motivation (Refer to Table 51).

Return to daily life	Count	%
Fear and hate for everybody	12	28
I left home and my whole life have changed	9	21
I'm not the source of joy in my family anymore	9	21
I don't care about house chores	6	14
Work without motivation	6	14
Repugnance in doing any activity	1	2
Total	43	100

Table (51) showing the reasons for not engaging in daily habits

Such reasons seem also comprehensible, since security concerns stay with the survivor as a complex even after her release, and play a major role in inciting behaviours that lead to isolation and repugnance (not willing to do house chores, repugnance in doing any activity, and hatred towards everybody), and here the psychological structure peculiar to

each survivor plays its own considerable role in overcoming the experience and consequently, achieving integration.

Yet we must draw attention to that having a supportive social and familial environment for the survivor decreases the incidents of nervousness, isolation, repugnance, hatred, and other feelings and negative conduct. This is what we are emphasizing in this study in regards to the interconnectedness of different variables in the process of social integration.

### 3- Changed habits in post-detention period

The results have showed that 28% witnessed changes in some habit in comparison to 72% who didn't. (Refer to Table 52).

Change in habits	Count	%
Yes	28	28
No	72	72
Total	100	100

Table (52) showing changes in habits after release

As for the forms that manifested these new habits, 79% became edgier, and maintained a habit of smoking and staying up night for late hours, 64% have lost desire to communicate with people, 32% developed anxiety towards their husbands, and 11% became fearful of everything, 11% became more daring, 11% developed a desire for death, and 4% became lazier, and more patient and silent (Refer to Table 53).

Reasons behind changes in habits	Count	%
I became too edgy, I smoke a lot, and I stay up night for long hours	22	79
I don't want to see anybody anymore, and I became moody	18	64
Anxiety from husband	9	32
Fear of everything, and I hate everyone	3	11
Stoutness and dare	3	11
Edgy, and I want to die	3	11
I became lazier, and more patient and silent.	1	4
Foggy memory	1	4
Early sleeping, and staying away from noise and familial contact	1	4
Staying up a night, and addicting on social networking	1	4

Total (28)		
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Table (53) showing the reasons behind the changes in some habits after release from detention

In spite of that, the percentage of those who had changes in their personal habits after their detention was low in comparison to those who hadn't such changes, yet these new habits were very negative (edginess, smoking, staying up for late hours at night, laziness, unwillingness to communicate, etc.). At this point, we think that what reinforces these new habits is the absence of a supportive social environment, in addition to the clear absence of institutions and committees that are supposed to provide psychological and social support for the survivors and their families.

## **e. Assessing detention experience**

### **1- Characteristics of detention experience**

The results have shown that 63% of the sample have evaluated the detention experience as a negative one, while 30% have evaluated it as a positive one, and 7% didn't think that detention have any characteristics (Refer to Table 54).

Characteristics of detention	Count	%
Negative	63	63
Positive	30	30
No characteristic	7	7
Total	100	100

Table (54) shows the evaluation of detention as experienced by our sample's participants

This seems a rather very natural result, since any experience of detention or imprisonment is definitely negative, as it is in odds to the basic right of human freedom. Therefore, even if the surviving women have reported some benefit from their experience, they still conceive detention as a negative experience, hence the large percentage as we saw. Many survivors mention the reasons behind their negativity when talking about their new conduct (edginess, isolation, addiction on smoking, staying up night for late hours, feeling social ostracization, and reliving memories unforgettable).

As for those who viewed the experience with a positive eye, they are the ones who (mostly) overcame that experience, and benefited from it in changing their general life outlook. With evoking the educational level, and consequently cognitive and political maturity, we find that the percentage of those with high education (under- or

postgraduates) have found the experience of detention experience a positive one (Refer to Table 55).

Characteristic of detention	Illiterate	Familiar	Primary school	Middle school	Secondary school	Under-graduate	Post-graduate	Total
Negative	3	-	9	15	21	15	-	63
Positive	-	-	-	-	7	21	2	30
No characteristic	3	-	-	-	1	2	-	3

Table (55) showing the relationship between education levels and detention characteristics

Of the positive characteristics reported by lots of the survivors, we mention: (feeling power, stoutness, self-esteem, and reinforcement of the conceptualization of others as equal peers, of endurance skills, of fresh outlook to the world, of the deep feeling of freedom and life, and of rebellion, it allowed for more reliance on one's self, and fostered empathy to the state of those remained in detention).

#### **f. Female survivors and determinants of social integration**

The questionnaire has asked an open ended question about the differences a detainees sees in the attitude of her local community in viewing males' detention, in comparison to that of females'. The question was:

How would you describe the local community's view of female's experience of detention, in comparison to a male detainee?

This question was asked to support the research results related to social, economic, and psychological determinants for the reintegration process of survivors during their post-release phase. This allows us to adjust our results according to the relationship between integration and the values, conceptions, and reaction patterns of a local community towards its constituent individuals.

Most of the answers corresponded to our analysis. Since in a society wherein traditional roles are assigned to its individuals, and has a set of values—values based on a hierarchy of relationships—that are very similar in all of its constituent local communities, and in spite of all modernization attempts, it seems natural for a local community's views on behaviour to stem from its social conceptualization of roles and statuses given to individuals by virtue of its customs and traditions.

It was possible for the structure of Syrian social organization to advance in its manifestations and forms of social relationships, as well as in adjusting its set of values and make it more accommodating for modern development, had it continued to follow the social change project that was crystalizing in the 1950s before the Bat'ath party took

over, when its absolutist dictatorship had penetrated Syrians' lives, and worked for thwarting development plans and corrupting Syrian life and state institutions. The system of norms and customs in the Syrian society was systematically supported in fear from another historical moment when Syrian social organization strips authority from its legitimacy and calls for its replacement, which indeed happened with the rise of Syrian revolution in 2011. Under the tyrannical repressive regime, all impartial laws that regulate relations of members of society were absent, and just like social justice and equal opportunity, civil and political lives were disabled, which made it natural for the local social constituents to stay the same, along with their set of values and role assignments.

Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a relationship between female survivors and their local communities in isolation from the aforementioned situation, for it is precisely this the Syrian regime built upon during its rule before the revolution, and indeed proved to be efficient politically and socially for the regime during the different phases of the upheaval. By so, women were exploited in the worst possible ways by the regime and its security authorities, this is in order to repel women from any effort for political mobilization, or to use them to threaten male activists. In our study, surviving women have stayed captivated by preconceived perceptions of their surrounding communities, and this was what our sample's participants have generally expressed in their views, that male detention begets the detainee heroism and honour, opposite to what begets females.

We can talk about many patterns in the reactions of local communities (family, relatives, neighbours, etc.) towards each of the male and female survivors, through examining the answers of our female survivors to this question.<sup>8</sup>

### **1- Stigma and shame:**

This reaction may have been formed due to the many stories about what women experience in detention, with everybody knowing the violence and cruelty of the regime and the blatant violations against all detainees.

A female survivor from Dara'a says:

“Questions sometimes shy, some other times timid were directed for me, with the questioner presumption that the answer is already (yes): have you been raped or harassed?. This stereotype about women before any rape or violation is present, yet it is reinforced in the case of female detention.”

We reemphasize that the Syrian regime has done horrendous—the least we can say—atrocities against both male and female detainees. We are talking about sexual violence practiced on male detainees as much as on females. Yet on the social environment level

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<sup>8</sup>The answers were put as they were remarked by the survivor without modification

the idea of a raped male is far from the dominant preconceptions in contrast to violence and physical torture.

A female survivor from Aleppo says:

“Besides pity and reproof, society looks to women like me with an ill will due to the possibility of ‘incurring’ rape or sexual harassment, while boys are looked at with honour and dignity, knowing that both sexes are equally liable for rape and all kinds of violence during detention.”

Another from Al-Muhasan/Deir Al-Zour says:

“My tribal community looks at me as a bitch who broke off from norms and traditions and brought shame for the family and the tribe.”

2- Pity and blame: In most cases, male survivors don’t get pitied nor blamed by their surroundings, unlike female survivors, who didn’t go to detention willingly. Only because of standards and rules of common values a she-detainee gets pitied and blamed at most cases. Pitying her because her life choices after her release will be limited within her local community, and blaming her too maybe because of her bad luck that made her a detainee.

A female survivor from Rif Dimashq (Damascus Countryside governorate) says:

“The common stereotypical view is one of pity and sometimes compassion, in addition to mixing this with blame and de-victimization of the detainee while guiltifying her ‘you are a woman, why did you participate in the revolution?/ you are a girl and you shouldn’t get involved in these stuff’ “

Another says:

“The way female detainees are viewed is very bad, unlike the view to male detainees, it is one of pity. Such women become ostracized from society because of what they have experienced in detention”

A female survivor from Al-Qusur district of Hama says:

“My brothers severed their relations with me after I was set free, while my nephew was celebrated as a newlywed when he was set free”

### **3- Shyness and acceptance of available options:**

In their effort to fend off the previously established charge against their daughters and whatever the latters have experienced in detention, parents tend to ignore rumours and nuisances spreading inside the local community. Hence, parents try to marry the girl at first chance to whoever the proposer is, convenient or not.

A Homsian survivor says, and we preferred to put her whole answer here:

“From the first enquiries, I felt reducing the severity of my detention to the question of rape, even if I answered with a no. My responses were either doubted or underestimated, indeed I sustained lots of bad comments from the wider society as friends and family, some accusing me with fornication, and others call me ‘the unclean one’ merely because I was a detainee, namely (a raped woman who became the gratifier of officers in detention centres), at other incidences, old men proposed to me with the pretext of (Sutra\*), and when I had to run away outside Syria alone, I was approached by some revolutionary men in attempts of sexually exploiting me for their preconception that detained women are used to have sex, even so forcibly, or that they are easy to get since they are raped and deflowered.

I have always been indignant towards a society that thinks marriage proposals as care, and money as compensation to months of pain and torture, a society that reduces everything to rape, and strips non-raped women from the right for compassion.

On the other hand, it assigns to males the nicest qualities, NGOs and gazettes celebrate them in reporting the least details of their torture, while they don’t see in detained women but their rape”

In this context, we also mention the refusal of one of the detainees to many Sutra marriages after her release, as she thought this would increase and reinforce the stigma that befell her by her local community.

#### **4- Familial support:**

Local milieus differ from each other in different degrees, and concordantly, families differ in their interaction with the surviving woman. In spite of all negative conduct we mentioned in our study, yet we found some cases that made an exception, which may be explained by the educational level of the family, its political orientation, or its peculiar way of upbringing its children.

A female survivor from Homs recounts in this matter:

“I can’t generalize the reaction of my small surrounding community to all of society as the rule, for unfortunately, I faced many attitudes that made me sometimes think that my family’s attitude is the exception.”

Another survivor from Homs also recounts:

“From my daily life perspective after my release, my personal experience, and some of my work colleagues’ experiences as well, I would say that nothing have changed, the people we interact with in our daily lives are open minded, except some people who spread rumours and have some negative yet limited influence”

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\* Sutra, roughly translated from Arabic as “covering” and “protecting”. Sutra marriages are related to the idea of marriage of conservation, which is known for its “Widow conservation” variant.

## **Conclusions of the research**

### **I- General characteristics of the sample**

1- In terms of age, the sample has covered most age cohorts, young and old, which is an indicator of Syrian regime's policy of inflicting violence and arrestment to all women from all ages.

2- In terms of the original residence of the survivors, the participants came from all Syrian cities and regions, with the highest concentration being from Homs and its countryside, since Homs was one of the first cities to join the revolution.

3- As for marital status, it was found that married detainees were higher than others, and this is because of the tyrannical nature of the regime, wherein it arrests wives and mothers of political and revolutionary activists in order to pressure them to surrender, or to hold them accountable for the arrests in front of the social public opinion in their local communities.

4- Regarding educational level, the results have shown a relatively high level of education in the sample. This suggests the maturity of the detainees on the educational and cultural level, and therefore their role in the revolution on the social and cultural levels.

5- As for the educational level of the participants' parents, it was found to be relatively low, this stems from, on the one hand, the fact that most fathers and mothers come from a generation that didn't achieve high levels of education, and on the other hand for coming from rural areas known to be neglected in the state educational policy and development plans in general.

6- Regarding the standards of living of the detainees' families from their own assessment, it was found to be medium to high. This indicates how Syrian women—and people—participated in the revolution because of their aspirations for freedom and democracy, not because of poverty and scarcity, this is why the Syrian revolution was named The Revolution of Dignity not The Revolution of Hunger, or Bread, as happened in other societies.

7- As for the political orientation of detainees' families, it was found that most families were anti-regime, which suggests the presence of a political awareness for the parents, especially that their generation was contemporary to the period of regime's consolidation of power through choking different and opposing voices that may stand against the smallest excesses of internal policy against citizens.



8- As for the place of residence during time of arrestment, the results have showed that all survivors were living with their families, which are considered socially established families that are rooted in the Syrian system of customs and mores that emphasize the necessity for single women to live with their families of orientation, and married women with their families of procreation or sometimes with the families of orientation. This explains the reason behind arresting some of them as to pressure wanted male revolutionaries or Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters—also generally males.

## **II. Data about detention period**

### **1- Period of detention**

It was noted that females' periods of detention were less than what male detainees are given, since the FSA and other factions insist on releasing female detainees in prisoners exchange negotiations with the tyrannical regime.

### **2- Accusations and charges against survivors**

Most charges were related to protests calling for freedom and dignity, and for giving food and medical aid to families besieged by the pro-regime army and its allies.

### **3- The party implementing the arrest**

A variety of parties have arrested our sample's participants (security agencies affiliated to the Ministry of Defence, Syrian Arab Army (the Assad army) which is supposed to protect them and other Syrians in principle, and local militias (Shabiha) who usually abduct people for ransom).

### **4- The how and the where behind arrests**

Most of the survivors were arrested in (a military or security checkpoint, house raids, abductions, and ambushes). These results confirm the dependence of the regime on forced arrests, without minding the legalities of implementing detention.

Regarding where our participants were arrested, the place of arrestment varied with the Syrian geography, yet most arrests occurred at one of the thousands of military or security checkpoints dispersed on roads or within Syrian cities and towns.

### **5- Psychological violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

Forms and manifestation of violence practiced by security agencies varied considerably. Cursing and insulting using words unutterable by socially and psychologically decent individuals, threatening with rape, threatening with murder, torturing friends in front of the arrestee, threatening with arresting a family member, sleep deprivation, putting one in a cell that has dead bodies killed under torture,

continuous hearing of a water tap, long periods of interrogation, arresting son in front of the arrestee, threatening with arresting daughter, and forcing the arrestee to attend a torturing session of anti-regime youths.

## **6- Physical violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

All of the detainees were subjected to the ugliest types of physical violence, they were slapped and beaten with feet and hands (punched, knocked, and kicked), thrashed with cables or a whips, hanged from their hands and electrified, thrashed using sticks and thrown with hot water(Yerba maté water), nail ripping, head beating, back breaking, tying up on wall with a tube, German chair, choking, hitting with metal screws, ribs breaking, hitting with a rubber rod, and forcing to sleep beside males in aisle have all been reported.

## **7- Sexual Violence experienced by our participants during their detention:**

Most of the participants in the research have suffered from sexual violence, some were raped, harassed, threatened with impalement, gang raped, and raped in checkpoints.

We must note that many female detainees don't report their rape in an attempt to forget and overcome the psychological consequences of rape, or because of the social stigma stuck onto the detained woman and her whole family.

## **8- Communication with family during detention:**

In regards to the possibility of communication with family during the detention period, communication was enabled via paying bribes to security agencies' officials and personnel, bribing an influential figure in A'adra prison, which reached in one of the cases to 8 million Syrian Liras, and via other released detainees who were given the necessary telephone numbers before release.

## **9- Manner of releasing the detainees:**

Some were let out normally, some others were released via prisoners exchange (like the nuns prisoners exchange, and another case in exchange of a Shabiha fighter), mediations and paying large sums of money—that reached 8 million Syrian Liras as a bribe to influential figures in authority, via mediators through interrogating officers, bribing court judges, or in exchange with collaborating with the government, and one case was released in the Iranian prisoners exchange deal.

### **III. Social determinants of integration**

#### **1. Social and familial fears and concerns**

There were a variety of fears and concerns felt by the surviving detainees, fears of divorce, of stigmatization, of family boycott, of family's fate, fears for their children, fears in implicating their family and revolutionary colleagues in their case, and social phobias.

##### **1-1- Social concerns and fears, and the marital status of the detainee**

Social concerns have differed between our participants. Married women will tend to think more about the future of their marital relationships and their children. As for singles, their concerns will be more complicated, since they are in contact with their families—males and females, in apprehension towards the future of their marriages, and concerned about the views of local community towards the detained single woman, keeping in mind all the stories telling what is happening from rape to harassment inside the detention centres and security branches of the Syrian regime.

##### **1-2- Social concerns and fears, and the educational level of detainee**

There was a natural propinquity in the percentages of the relationship between social fears and concerns, and educational level, since educational level doesn't have a big role in fending off blame and negative looks towards the detainee, and, according to the ongoing experiences, it doesn't protect her from violence or discrimination during detention, on the contrary, she may be dealt with more fiercely since her decision in participating in the revolution stems from strong conviction. In all cases, individual differences between detainees still play a role in attuning the levels and the manifestations of fears and concerns.

##### **1-3- Social concerns and fears, and political orientation of the detainee's parents**

It seems that parents' convictions and their attitude towards the revolution have a role in forming the detainee's perception about her surroundings' reactions in post release period. This is clarified by noticing the decrease in stigmatization concerns for detainees coming from anti-regime families, in contrast to its significant increase for detainees coming from mixed or neutral families.

##### **1-4- Social concerns and fears, and the occurrence of sexual violence**

The concerns of the highest percentage of those who suffered from sexual violence were concentrated in stigmatization concerns, divorce, family's boycott, and fear for children, which all were higher than those who didn't suffer from sexual violence.

#### **2- Manner of reception after release from detention**

The results have showed a significant difference in the manner of detainees' reception within their social and familial milieus. Keeping in mind the various complications many

have suffered in their effort to be freed, whether by paying sums of money, or in exchange to pro-regime troops imprisoned for the FSA or other factions.

### **3- Post-detention support of detainees**

Survivors were supported by their close circle(Family primarily), followed by their friends, this is because of the fact that families are still in the social custom the main custodian of the girls, even married ones. As for friends support, its considerable presence was understandable especially by those who participated in the revolution, since all of them were fighting for the same cause.

### **4- New social status at post-detention**

#### **4-1- Losing relationships at post-detention period:**

Many of our participants have lost some social relationship after their release. As for the reasons behind this, merely being detained is enough reason, yet other reasons include the following: losing a husband was caused by the pressure imposed by his pro-regime family on him, losing friends was caused by their fear from the potential security danger that the survivor may bring on them, losing parents was caused by their belief that the survivor brought disgrace to them because of her detention.

#### **4-2- Change of marital status after detention:**

All the changes in the marital statuses of our survivors seem linked to the role of local communities in assessing the detention experience of women. In spite of this, there was no other way in front of lots of families except to provide the survivor with different forms of support, maybe after a phase of recuperating the shock of detention for both her and them.

#### **4-3- Impediments on movement after release from detention**

We found that most of the survivors have changed their place of residence after their release. As for the reasons of changing residence, they included, security surveillance, fear of a new arrest, and fear of pro-regime checkpoints, which are all security fears and phobias that stem from the severe experience of detention. There is also mistrust of parents, sickness, and revulsion from others. These are comprehensible impediments at post-detention phase in light of the recurrence of arrests against many men and women.

### **5- Work status before and after detention**

#### **5-1- Work status before detention**

The results have shown that a high percentage of survivors were working prior to their detention in different occupations ( teachers, employees in private companies, in clothes shop, at beauty salons, as domestic workers, relief work, media activists, one university teacher, one doctor(MD), nursing and first aid, as a pharmacist assistant, and as a volunteer in a field hospital).

### **5-2- Detainees' return to work**

Expulsion or termination from work was the fate of the greater majority of all detainees (males and females) who were employees at different private and public institutions. The prevention of parents for allowing the survivor to work stems from the apprehension that she may get interactive again with environments that may not accept her and may even influence her life negatively, keeping in mind that work would have contributed positively in the process of social integration of the survivor, especially that she would see herself practicing her previous economic role again, which unfortunately didn't happen.

### **5-3- Acquiring a job after release from detention**

The reasons of not having a job were because of parents preventing their daughters from appearing and working, and the scarcity of jobs in the Syrian market, and even if jobs existed, employers don't prefer detained women for reasons related to general views on detainees by the local community and of course for security reasons.

### **6- Engaging in social activity after release from detention**

The survivors have faced many difficulties in resuming social activities as they were before their detention, because of the effects of the immediate experience of post detention on the general mood of the detainee; frustration, edginess, difficulty in communication, and reticence. All of which are factors caused by detention experience itself, multiplied by the difficulties of accepting her experience by the local community.

## **IV. Psycho-personal determinants of integration**

### **1- Daily conduct of survivors after their release from detention:**

We noted the emergence of many aspects of negative conduct (social withdrawal, fear for the future, depression episodes, and etc.), either because of the impact of detention regardless of its duration, or because of the pressure of her familial and social surroundings on her.

All of that didn't prevent positive conduct from emerging for some (seeing others as equal peers, stoutness in putting forward opinions, and etc.). Such emergence is caused as we think, by the interdependence of more than one factor, like personal peculiarities in accommodating the experience of detention, the role of the detainee's surrounding community, and her general outlook towards life.

### **1-1- Daily conduct of survivors and the variable of sexual violence:**

A propinquity between the two categories (sexually assaulted and not sexually assaulted women) was noted, which suggests that detention is an all-encompassing experience whether the survivor has suffered from any kind of violence or hasn't, such case is definitely closely linked to the social side of the issue in hands.

### **1-2- Daily conduct of survivors and families' political orientation**

It was found that the political orientation of families has a great impact on a detainee's conduct, indeed there was a positive correlation between anti-regime familial attitude and the absence of negative conduct of the survivor.

### **1-3 Daily conduct of survivors and their educational level**

A positive correlation between educational level and daily conduct was found, the higher the educational level of the detainee, the less adverse daily conduct is.

## **2- Detainees resumption for everyday life**

The social situation, momentum of daily life, with collaboration of some families, have all contributed in the resumption of many daily habits of survivors in the latter's life, e.g. taking care of family and children, engaging in house chores, and etc., such activities are imposed by daily life on all individuals generally, and women especially (in particular the issue of house burdens). This may have a positive role in overcoming the experience of detention, or to forget—or pretend to forget—its psychological and social drawbacks, especially when there are no clear incidents of psychological disorders. In one degree or the other, this all supports the efforts for reintegration of a detainee inside her local community. We should press here the individual differences between the survivors in accommodating the experience and facing the circumstances of post detention period. For example, women who had a spousal split up, were forced to face a new social situation with new responsibilities imposing new habits on their already existing daily ones.

## **3- Changed habits in post-detention period**

It was found that there was a low percentage of those who had changes in their personal habits after their release in comparison to those who hadn't such changes, yet these new habits were very negative (edginess, smoking, staying up for late hours at night, laziness, unwillingness to communicate, etc.). At this point, we think that what reinforces these new habits is the absence of a supportive social environment, in addition to the clear absence of institutions and committees that are supposed to provide psychological and social support for the survivors and their families.

## **V. Assessing detention experience**

### **1- Characteristics of detention experience**

The results have shown that a high percentage of the sample have assessed their detention experience as a negative one, while a low percentage have assessed it as a positive one, and even weaker percentage didn't assessed it with anything. This seems a rather very natural result, since any experience of detention or imprisonment is definitely negative, as it is in odds to the basic right of human freedom. Therefore, even if the surviving women have reported some benefit from their experience, they still conceive

detention as a negative experience, hence the large percentage as we saw in this research. Many survivors mention the reasons behind the negativity of this experience when talking about their new conduct (edginess, isolation, addiction on smoking, staying up night for late hours, feeling social ostracization, and reliving memories unforgettable).

As for those who viewed the experience with a positive eye, they are the ones who (mostly) overcame that experience, and benefited from it in changing their general life outlook. With evoking the educational level, and consequently cognitive and political maturity, we find that the percentage of those with high education (under- or postgraduates) have found the experience of detention experience a positive one. Of the positive characteristics reported by lots of the survivors, we mention: (feeling power, stoutness, and self-esteem, and reinforcement of the conception of others as equal peers, of endurance skills, of fresh outlook to the world, of the deep feeling of freedom and life, and of rebellion, it allowed for more reliance on one's self, and fostered empathy to the state of detainees).

### **Recommendations and Suggestions:**

According to the results reached in this study, we find it important to deliver some recommendations and suggestions for NGOs concerned with the detention file, as well as for organizations and institutions affiliated with oppositionary political factions:

1- Collaboration of NGOs concerned with Syrian detainees generally and raped women particularly on the international level to raise the file of rape in Syrian prisons and detention centres to the ICC, considering that in the latter's statute it puts rape and other kinds of sexual violence in both the list of war crimes, and the list of acts that constitute crimes against humanity when committed in large scale or as systematic assault against civilians, which is what happened in Syria.

2- Preparation of NGOs concerned with Syrian female detainees and Syrian detainees in general to form a committee of legal specialists that aims to legislate a law about detainees in general, and raped female detainees in particular—after the ousting of the regime—which includes health, psychological and social care for them and all of their families, in addition to including in the law the ability for legal tracking for the perpetrators, and put effort to bring them to justice whatever their occupational rank is inside the tyrannical hierarchy, since holding perpetrators accountable helps the raped women in recovering from psychological traumas.

3- Conducting accurate and credible statistical analyses by NGOs concerned with rape and detention of Syrian female detainees who were raped during both Assads rules, especially during the 1980s period, particularly city of Hama, where thousands of women were raped under orders coming directly from the head of the regime, Hafez Al-Assad himself.

4- Providing health, psychological and social care for raped women, their husbands, children, and all of their families, aiming to eliminate the social and psychological drawbacks generated by the rape incidences, and consequently helping them to recover their normal lives.

5- Give female detainees in general and raped ones in particular, an opportunity for vocational rehabilitation and training inside and outside Syria, as part of a therapy aiming to overcome the ordeal of rape and detention.

6- Establishing proper housings dedicated for raped women who were forsaken by their families as a result of experiencing detention and rape.

7- Concerning Syrian oppositionary media, to put effort in educating the family and social environment of the raped detainee to avoid neglecting her whether in therapy, education or work, or in other words, to embrace her on all levels and not throwing blame on her.

8- Also concerning media, especially social networking, to work for changing the common traditional social stereotype about the raped woman, and show an image of a detainee striving for a free and democratic society(for men and women). (Starting a hashtag about raped women).

9- Deceleration of the day of the female detainee in Syria to be commemorated each year to shed light on the issue of Syrian raped detainees from the beginning of Assad's rule in 1970 until now, by making use of seminars, stickers, and booklets distributed for free, and show strength points of raped women on all levels.



10- Finally, to conduct more studies and researches from a feminist perspective about the phenomenon of detention in Syria.

## **Appendix (Questionnaire)**

Questionnaire for the research:

Social integration

of females who survived Syrian regime detention during the revolution

1. General data

1	Age			
2	Original place of residence, city\ village			
3	Marital status before arrestment	1. Single (go to item 5) 2. Married 3. Divorced 4. Widowed 5. Other (please mention)		
4	Do you have children?	1. Yes 2. No		
5	Place of residence in time of arrestment			
6	With whom were you living before detention?	1. With family of procreation(husband and children) 2. With family of orientation(father, mother, and siblings) 3. With friends 4. Alone 5. Other (please mention)		
7	Educational level (you fulfilled)	1. Illiterate 2. Familiar 3. Primary school 4. Middle school 5. High school 6. Undergraduate 7. Postgraduate		
8	Parents' level of education	Father	Mother	
		1. Illiterate 2. Familiar 3. Primary school 4. Middle school 5. High school 6. Undergraduate 7. Postgraduate	1. Illiterate 2. Familiar 3. Primary school 4. Middle school 5. High school 6. Undergraduate 7. Postgraduate	
9	Family's standards of living	1. Low 2. Medium 3. High		
10	Political orientation of family	1. Pro-regime 2. Anti-regime 3. Mixed 4. No attitude 5. Other (please mention)		
11	How many times were you arrested?			
12	Period of detention(in case of several detentions, each period must be mentioned)	From.... To ....		

## 2. Data on detention period

101	What was the background of arrest?	
101	Who was the party implementing the arrest?	1. Security agencies 2. Army 3. Police 4. Local militia "Shabiha" 5. Other (please mention)
102	How was the arrestment implemented?	1. Raid 2. Abduction 3. On a checkpoint

		4. Other(please mention)	
103	Place of detention. More than one place can be mentioned		
104	Were you charged with specific accusations? Mention them		
105	Did you experience psychological violence during detention (curses, insults, mockery, etc.)	1. Yes 2. No	
106	If yes, describe		
107	Did you experience physical violence during detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
108	If yes, describe		
109	Did you experience sexual violence during detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
110	If yes, describe		
111	Was there any kind of contact with your family during this period?	1. Yes 2. No	
112	In case of contact, how was it done?	1. Mediation(acquaintance with a people in power) 2. Paying sums of money(how much?) 3. Applying via a formal request 4. Other(please mention)	
113	In case of no contact, why?	1. Refusal of parents 2. No mediations 3. Inability to pay money 4. Parents' fear 5. Other(please mention)	
114	How were you released?		

### 3. Social determinants of integration

201	What are the social and familial fears and concerns that you were thinking of during your detention? For the researcher: (more than one answer can be selected)	1. Family boycott 2. Spilt up(divorce) 3. Stigma 4. friends boycott 5. Other(please mention)				
202	How would you describe the manner of your reception by others?	Blame	Anger	Boycott	Other (please mention)	
	Parents:					
	Husband:					
	Brothers:					
	Sisters:					
	Friends:					
	Neighbours:					
	Work colleagues					
	Other (please mention)					
203	Who were the most supportive people after surviving your detention experience? For the researcher: ordered descendingly from the most important					
204	Did you experience any kind of violence from your surrounding community because of your detention?	1. Yes 2. No				

205	If yes, mention the perpetrator and details of violence (verbal, psychological or physical violence) please.		
206	Did you lose your relationship with anybody because of your detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
207	If yes, with who? And why?		
208	Did your marital status change after your release from detention?	1. Occurrence of divorce: 2. No one advancing for a marriage or engagement proposal 3. Other (please mention)	
209	Did you start facing hindrances that limit your ability to move as a result of your detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
210	If yes, what are these hindrances?		
211	Did you change your place of residence after your detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
212	What are the reasons of moving out?		
213	With whom do you live currently?		
214	Did you work before your detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
215	If yes, what was it?		
216	If you worked, did you go back to your previous job?	1. Yes 2. No	
217	What are the reasons for both cases?		
218	Did you look for a job after your detention (if you didn't go back to your previous job, or for those who didn't work originally)?	1. Yes 2. No	
219	In case you didn't get a job, why?		
220	Did you go back to your former social activity as it was before detention?	1. Yes 2. No	
221	Why in both cases?		
222	How would you describe the relationship of your family with you after your detention For the researcher: (describe in details please).	Father: Mother: Husband: Brothers: Sisters: Children: Other (please mention)	

#### 4. Psycho-personal determinants of integration

301	How would you describe your daily conduct after your release from detention (more than one answer)		
	Social withdrawal		
	Anxiety for the future		
	Stoutness in putting forward opinions		
	Self-reliance		
	Change in mood		
	Conceiving others as equal peers		
	Frustrated by others		
	Depression		
	Other (please mention)		

302	Did you return to practice your daily habits in your house after your detention?	Yes	
		No	
303	In both cases, please describe. For the researcher: please be detailed in explanation.		
304	Had some of your habits changed after your detention?		
305	If yes, please describe in details.		
306	Do you think that your detention experience gave you a negative or a positive characteristic that differentiates you from others?	Negative	
		Positive	
		Didn't give me any characteristics	
		Other (please mention)	
307	In both cases, describe the characteristics. For the researcher: please explain whatever the answer she gave.		

Open ended question:

- How would you describe the local community's view of female's experience of detention, in comparison to a male detainee?

A female survivor from Al-Qusur district of Hama says:

"My brothers severed their relations with me after I was set free, while my nephew was celebrated as a newlywed when he was set free"

Another from Aleppo says:

"Besides pity and reproof, society looks to women like me with an ill will due to the possibility of incurring rape or sexual harassment, while boys are looked at with honor and dignity, knowing that both sexes are equally liable for rape and all kinds of violence during detention".

A Homsian woman says:

"From the first enquiries, I felt reducing the severity of my detention to the question of rape, even if I answered with a no. My responses were either doubted or underestimated, indeed I sustained lots of bad comments from the wider society as friends and family."

