

Syrian Prisoner Speaks of Torture Regime

Author: [Syrian activist](#)

He tells of months of suffering at the hands of the secret police.

When I was arrested, I was told my crime was tarnishing the reputation of the Syrian regime. In truth, all I was doing was trying to raise awareness of what was happening in Syria - it is important people know what is going on and that they take action.

I was transferred to the political security branch of the secret police and placed in solitary confinement. There are hundreds of these prisons all around Syria, overflowing with political prisoners. I spent the first four or five days there, where I was interrogated and tortured by the secret police. Then they demanded to know names. Straightaway, the officers beat me and started torturing me in order to scare me into giving information. There would always be one who would act politely, encouraging me to cooperate, while the other would beat and violently whip me. The torture methods would worsen, but the interrogation persisted.

Then I was transferred to another state security facility. The ordinary guards working for the secret police there are young guys drawn from some of the poorest slums of Syria. The only kind of education they had completed was primary school, if that. Their incentive for working in a secret police detention centre for a pitiful salary of approximately 300 US dollars a month was the prospect of progression - in ten years' time, they could hope for promotion. Then they could make their fortune by accepting big bribes for the release of detainees.

There were some guards who were the basest criminals. They would impose rules of their own, such as not allowing prisoners to go to the bathroom. There were others, however, who you could tell were battling to hide their own humanity. One guard asked me, "What do you think of me?" When I replied telling him that I believed he was, in essence, a kind person, he responded, "Oh shit! I need to get rid of that. It's driving me crazy." For them, their job is also complicated - once you're in the system, which you enter in your teens, you have to stay. You know too much, so you can't quit and you can't even leave the country, unless, of course, you have good connections.

The torture took place every day for three weeks. After whipping and beating me, the guards used waterboarding, which was done at midnight with ice cold water. Most people lost consciousness after several minutes, because they could not breathe. The guards' objective was to get an answer out of me - so I gave it to them, but providing at least seven different versions to each question asked. Angry, they tied my arms above my head, hung me in the air and made me stay like that for eight days without sleep and limited food and water.

Guards were appointed to watch me - each one staring at me in pain, for two hour intervals. After several days, my feet were swollen with blood and I was screaming in agony. I made as much noise as possible, even though the guards tried to silence me. I woke up the chief guard who, after 48 hours, took me down, then ordered that I stand with my hands 'cuffed behind my back. I stood like that for six more days.

My cell was right next to the yard where other prisoners would be taken out and abused. We were never allowed to see the others, but just heard their screams and shouts, which were constant. When I asked why they were being tortured, the guards replied, "Tortured? We don't torture anyone here."

Denial and removal of evidence is a key strategy of the Syrian secret police. After the hanging and standing torture, a doctor employed by the secret police was called in. He made sure all signs of torture disappeared - the regime is scared of the media finding out about their "interrogation" practices.

After the state security facility, I was transferred to my last destination, a prison where I was simply placed in a cell with 50-80 people and left to it. Here there was no torture, no interrogation - it was dark, hot and smelly, but the people there were remarkable. The conversations we had kept our spirits up, and although there were fights almost daily, people stuck together for the most part. After a court hearing, I was released.

Location: [Syria](#)

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