# Fadel Abdulghany

Founder & Executive Director, Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR).



**Fadel Abdulghany is a legal researcher and the founder and Executive Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), an organization he has led for more than fifteen years.**

- Since establishing the independent, non-governmental monitoring organization in June 2011, he has directed its operational mandate, field methodology, and strategic advocacy documenting violations by all principal parties to the Syrian conflict.

- Abdulghany has overseen the daily cataloging of abuses and the compilation of structured verification databases tracking civilian casualties, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, forced displacement, property rights violations, and the use of chemical weapons and cluster munitions, along with open-source evidence.

- He directed the release of more than **1,800 institutional reports and statements** through December 2024, serving as lead editor of hundreds of publications and taking part in dozens of field investigations and legal analyses, and he has spearheaded SNHR's institutional pivot, following the fall of Assad in December 2024, toward transitional justice, trial monitoring, missing persons registries, judicial and security sector reform, and the independent scrutiny of successor authorities under international human rights and fair-trial standards.

www.fadelabdulghany.net
@FADELABDULGHANY
fadel.abdulghany

Abdulghany's work focuses on bridging field-level documentation and legal accountability through rigorous, victim-centered standards. Under his leadership, SNHR codified "do no harm" protocols incorporating informed consent, separation of source identities from substantive case files, strict corroboration requirements, chain-of-custody tracking, digital hashing, metadata preservation, graded source confidence, and trauma-sensitive interviewing, so that records withstand judicial scrutiny.

- Consequently, **SNHR's documentation** has informed proceedings before international bodies and has been relied on by States since 2011: **the UN OHCHR,** which has drawn on it for casualty estimates since 2012, identified it in 2022 as one of eight sources reconciled and de-duplicated to estimate conflict-related civilian deaths over the conflict's first decade, and it has been cited by the U.S. State Department since 2012, referenced by the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Denmark and by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), and cited by Canada and the Netherlands in their June 2023 torture application against Syria before the International Court of Justice.

- **In Syria,** this work acquired a judicial dimension in August 2026, when the Fourth Criminal Court in Damascus issued rulings in three cases to which years of accumulated documentation had contributed.

- **Abdulghany** has also maintained sustained institutional cooperation with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria (IIIM) since 2017.

- **More broadly,** SNHR's reporting is used as a reference by UN entities including OHCHR, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, the Independent Institution on Missing Persons (IIMP), UNICEF, and the OPCW.

- **As a legal researcher and policy analyst, Abdulghany** contributes to international discourse on transitional justice, humanitarian law, and institutional reform, writing regularly for Arabic and English-language platforms.

- **He is the author** of two 2026 volumes published by Dar al-Fikr addressing chemical weapons use under international law and the structural reform of the Syrian judiciary (the former revised from his LL.M. dissertation), alongside co-authored legal commentaries with scholars such as Kenneth Roth and Ruti Teitel in Just Security and Opinio Juris, a book chapter on governance and institution-building in post-war Syria, and policy papers for the Arab Center for the Study of Contemporary Syria, the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (Doha Institute), Rowaq Arabi at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Völkerrechtsblog, and Digital War.

- **He has further written** several hundred articles, legal analyses, and opinion pieces for Arabic and English outlets, including Al Jazeera, The New Arab (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed), Syria TV, and the national Thawra Newspaper, and he has contributed to the Encyclopedia Arabica of the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

- **His policy frameworks** advance a comprehensive approach to post-conflict justice that pairs criminal accountability and mixed Syrian-international tribunals with the preservation of mass grave evidence, the creation of a unified national missing-persons registry under the "Athar" program, and system-wide vetting.

**Abdulghany has delivered statements and briefings at international forums including the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, and spoke on chemical weapons documentation at a side event titled "Reviewing the Facts:** Documenting Syria's Expansive Chemical Weapons Use," to which the U.S. Permanent Mission to the OPCW invited SNHR in October 2022.

- **Between 2014 and 2024** he took part each year in high-level side events on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, organized or co-organized by SNHR with the sponsorship of States including the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Qatar, the Netherlands, and Canada, on accountability, torture, enforced disappearances, and refugee return.

- **In July 2026** he represented SNHR in a Syrian civil society delegation that met UN Secretary-General António Guterres, addressing the rule of law, institutional transition challenges, and the protection of civilians.

- He appears regularly as an expert legal commentator on transitional justice, international jurisdiction, and human rights, with commentary in outlets including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, The Guardian, Reuters, The Independent, CNN, DW, CBC, ABC (Australia), Voice of America, Al Jazeera, Middle East Eye, and The National.

- Alongside this advocacy he trains graduate researchers, human rights defenders, and media professionals in evidence-based reporting and field documentation, having served as lead trainer for the Fadaat Media Academy program on journalism that adheres to human rights standards in September 2024 and delivered international humanitarian law training for the political offices of armed opposition factions between 2015 and 2016. He also teaches students at the Higher Judicial Institute in Damascus and postgraduate students at the Doha Institute.

A recipient of the **2023 Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law,** awarded by the French and German ministries of foreign affairs in recognition of his human rights advocacy and documentation leadership, Abdulghany also serves as a consultant and trainer for the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** in North Africa, advising on governance, international law, documentation standards, human rights reporting, and strategic advocacy, and designing and delivering specialized training modules on evidence-based documentation and human rights monitoring.

He holds **a Master of Laws (LL.M.) in International Law** from De Montfort University in Leicester, awarded in 2020, and is currently **a doctoral researcher in international criminal law and transitional justice at the University of Glasgow**, having originally completed a bachelor's degree in civil engineering with a project-management focus at Damascus University in 2006.