



TWO SYRIAN OFFICERS OF THE REGIME FACE TRIAL IN GERMANY: "A HISTORIC STEP TOWARDS JUSTICE"

The trial against Anwar Raslan and Eyad al-Gharib, two former officers of the Syrian government's security apparatus opened on 23 April 2020 at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany. The two men stand accused of crimes against humanity. This is the first trial in the world to judge state torture in Syria.

TRIAL International and Amnesty International welcome the opening of the trial of two former officers of the Syrian General Intelligence Services. "An important step towards justice", according to the two organisations. Anwar Raslan is on trial on charges of torture, rape and aggravated sexual violence. Eyad al-Gharib is accused of complicity in some 30 cases of torture.

"This trial is a historic step in the struggle for justice for the tens of thousands of people unlawfully detained, tortured and killed in Syrian government's prisons and detention centers", said Alain Bovard, lawyer and spokesperson for Amnesty International's Swiss section. *"This would not have been possible without the bravery and sacrifices of Syrian survivors, families of victims, and scores of other individuals and organizations who have relentlessly pursued justice and truth, often putting their own lives at risk in doing so".* The organisations would like to pay special tribute to the work of the [German organisation ECCHR](#), and the Syrian organisations [SCLSR](#) and [SCM](#).

CROSS-BORDER TRIAL

Based on the legal principle of [universal jurisdiction](#), this trial places Germany among the pioneers in the fight against impunity. Indeed, the investigation carried out by the German authorities is not limited to the two defendants alone, but on the [serious violations committed by Bashar Al-Assad's regime](#) as a whole. In other words, the evidence gathered by the German investigators may also serve as a database for future prosecutions against other leaders of the Syrian regime. It cannot be excluded that this evidence will also be shared with the prosecuting authorities of other countries upon request.

"We hope that this precedent will inspire other jurisdictions to use universal jurisdiction," said [Philip Grant](#), executive director of TRIAL International. The organization that fights against impunity publishes an [annual report on universal jurisdiction](#), in which the crimes committed by the two defendants figure prominently. *"This trial is the embodiment of a principle that is undeniably gaining momentum, and may continue to do so. Universal jurisdiction is a concrete and tangible tool that could be used much more to bring justice to the victims of the worst atrocities"*.


A BENCHMARK TO BE FOLLOWED, ALSO IN SWITZERLAND

The two organizations also call on States to follow the example set by Germany in initiating similar proceedings against individuals suspected of international crimes, including by providing their specialized units with sufficient resources, both human and financial.

Switzerland too, has an important role to play in the fight against impunity. The Office of the Public Prosecutor of the Confederation has a unique opportunity to make progress in another pending Syrian case, filed by TRIAL International in 2013. It has been more than six years since proceedings against Rifaat al-Assad, the uncle of the Syrian President, have been underway. *"Only a few witnesses have been heard in these proceedings, which should be conducted expeditiously and efficiently given the age of the defendant, his role and the importance of the case,"* said [Jennifer Triscone](#), legal advisor at TRIAL International. One of the reasons for this is the understaffing of the authorities in charge of prosecuting international crimes. And undoubtedly a lack of political will. |

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