

# How Assad chases, tortures and kills the best of Syria's young pacifist leftists - For Syria's disappeared. For Syria's future

Sunday 6 May 2018, by [WESSELS Joshka](#) (Date first published: 3 May 2018).

Last week Rami Hennawi's family received the news from Syrian authorities that their son and partner died in prison and they can collect his body. Rami was a pacifist leftist young activist who was detained in 2012. Five years he spent in the most inhumane conditions in one of Assad's torture houses. Rami came from Sweida, a majority Druze city under regime control and considered in general pro-Assad. But in fact, the underground resistance against Assad in Sweida is strong. If anything, local people in Sweida remembered the anti-colonial hero Sultan Basha al-Atrash, leader of the 1925 Great Syrian Revolt, and took the opportunity several time to congregate in front of his statue to voice their opposition against Assad. This is why the Syrian regime is very wary of the underground opposition from Sweida.

According to one of my sources from the area, at the moment, Sweida inhabitants are under repression by many different factions of pro-Assad *shabiha*, who kill to steal motorbikes, teenagers get killed because of fights at the schoolground and Assadist shabiha rape at random, terrorizing the local girls and women. There is a sense of lawlessness, and those who are supportive of the regime benefit from this situation. Those who now legally carry weapons in Sweida, have a history of violence and can do all illegal activities they aspire because no one is stopping them.



*Ghiath Matar*

Rami Hennawi was a pacifist from the beginning. In 2012, he joined the pro-democracy demonstrations against the Assad regime. Moreover, he was a convinced intellectual leftist pacifist, a life-loving open Syrian young man who wanted nothing else but a bright future for his country. Where people feel safe and can express their opinion. Because of this opinion, he was arrested by the secret police (*mukhabarat*) and put in jail. Precisely in branch 248, the military intelligence.

He was tortured daily during all these years, until he succumbed before last Christmas. The

authorities did not bother to tell his family until last week. This is how Assad chases, tortures and kills the best of Syria's young and bright leftist pacifists. They are unarmed and pose no threat to Syria, yet are the first that are killed off. Rami is not the only one. So many went before him. In the same way.



*Rami Hennawi*

One of the first bright Syrian pacifists who was arrested was Ghiath Matar, also called Little Ghandi, famous for his initiative distribute red roses and water to the security forces during demonstrations in the town of Daraya. His advocacy to keep demonstrations peaceful and support non-violent activism, soon formed his iconic stature. He became a symbol of the peaceful Syrian Revolution.

In September 2011, he was arrested by the Syrian security forces, to be returned as a dead body only four days later. His funeral was attended by many different ambassadors from Japan, Germany, France, Denmark and the US, who were still in the country. His wife was pregnant with their first baby. A film was made of his life called Little Ghandi.



*Bassel Khartabil (Safadi)*

Another bright and iconic figure of the non-violent Syrian Revolution is the Palestinian-Syrian genius Bassel Khartabil Safadi. Born in 1981, he was one of the brightest young programmers in Syria, very wellknown among the global Creative Commons community. He co-founded the Damascus-based Aiki Lab, a collaborative online community and he was active in advocating the open source availability of creative content on-line. In 2012, *Foreign Policy magazine* named him one of top 100 thinkers for "fostering an open-source community in a country long on the margins of the internet's youth culture". Single-handedly, he digitised the tourist site of Palmyra and its artifacts, which continued in the amazing on-line project called New Palmyra.

In 2012, he was detained. In September 2015 his records disappeared and he was moved from Adra

prison to an unknown location. He had given his wedding ring to a cellmate. Only in August 2017, his wife received confirmation that Bassel had died. Chased, tortured and killed by Assad. In his name the a Free Culture Fellowship continues his legacy by supporting bright young people.

These are just three of some of the brightest, leftist, intelligent young pacifist Syrians whom Assad is adamant to kill and let disappear. Thanks to their brightness, their memory will never disappear though. Their lives and actions have made a great impact on many Syrians and non-Syrians. This is something that Assad will never be able to kill.

Many others are still in detention and being tortured to death as I write this. Those few who survived the atrocities in the Syrian dungeons, live to tell. Luckily for them, they can tell their stories now. Just recently a new documentary called "Assad's Slaughterhouses" came out, documenting their harrowing stories.

If anything, thanks to those who survived, we will not forget and one day we all hope there will be justice. For Syria's disappeared. For Syria's future.

**Joshka Wessels**

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\* MENA MEANINGS. Posted on May 3, 2018:

[https://sapiensproductions.wordpress.com/2018/05/03/how-assad-chases-tortures-and-kills-the-best-of-syrias-young-pacifist-leftists/?fb\\_action\\_ids=10155551948028927&fb\\_action\\_types=news.publishes](https://sapiensproductions.wordpress.com/2018/05/03/how-assad-chases-tortures-and-kills-the-best-of-syrias-young-pacifist-leftists/?fb_action_ids=10155551948028927&fb_action_types=news.publishes)