



## - Press Statement

### **Adraa Women's Prison is turning into Just another Security Branch**

The [Violation Documentation Center in Syria \(VDC\)](#) has been informed that [Adraa Women's prison](#) has become similar to syrian security branches in many aspects, especially regarding the way female detainees are treated, the poor health conditions and the lack of nutrition.

This prison is located in Adraa City in Damascus suburbs, just next to the men's prison in the south-eastern side. It has recently witnessed accelerated events, the most recent of which has been an open hunger strike carried out by women detainees few weeks ago, to demand better conditions of detention and to accelerate their standing before courts.

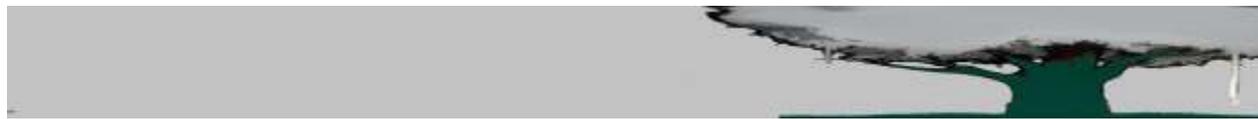
Adraa Women's Prison is divided into two sections:

- **Criminal Section:** specialized in various Criminal charges
- **Political Section:** divided into two lockups:
  1. **Commitment lockup:** includes all detainees transferred from various security branches. At the present time, the number of detainees there is about **140** <sup>(1)</sup> women, and this number is subject to changes according to the number of detainees that are being transferred daily from other security branches, or those who are being moved to:
  2. **Arrest lockup:** currently includes more than **40** detainees who have appeared before the court. This number continues to increase as a result of the large number of detainees that has been transferred to the judiciary from various security branches.

The **Criminal Section** also includes a number of political detainees. This was confirmed by a lawyer who encountered more than ten cases of detainees that got arrested by security branches, either because of their participation in revolutionary activities or due to their political backgrounds, and was consequently admitted to the criminal section, to be sent, later on, to criminal trials facing purely criminal charges such as prostitution, theft and drug abuse.

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(1) The number of detainees "140" was acquired by VDC in early august 2013.



One of the former female detainees told **VDC** that after she had been detained by the Raid Detachment Branch **215**, the subsidiary of Military Intelligence Department, she was surprisingly transferred to the "Criminal Section" with dozens of women prisoners who had been facing criminal charges, on top of which was prostitution, although she had been arrested in **March 2013** for her revolutionary media and field activism.

Most of the former women detainees whom **VDC** interviewed agreed that Adraa Women's Prison does not differ much from any other security branch. Many detainees even confirmed that it turned into a mere security branch, especially the "Commitment Section", after the officer in charge of the prison, General "Faisal Oqla" from Deir ez-Zor, banned all the privileges that central prisons usually have. He prohibited TVs, radios, refrigerators, buying any vegetable or meat, and handmade crafts such as "beads and wool". He also prohibited the detainees from making any phone calls, and prohibited the parents from bringing books or any kind of food for the detainees. Moreover, prisoners from the "Prostitution Section" were brought to inspect the other detainees' personal items in a provocative way without any justifiable reasons. All of those mentioned actions began in August 2012.

In Adraa Prison, female detainees are exposed to several kinds of punishments by the prison guards; such as leaving detainees in the individual cell for long periods, beating them with truncheons, pull their hair, or beat them on the feet 'Falaqah'.

One of the female detainees told **VDC**:

**"Once, a few security guards entered the prison dormitory, and started beating more than 20 of the detainees with truncheons. Then, they took one of them-after taking off her 'Hijab' (veil) and pulling her hair-to the 'torturing room', where she was brutally beaten on her feet. She couldn't walk properly for three days after that. This happened, specifically, last May 2013.**

**On another time, during an inspection, they found one of the detainees reading the Holy Quran. She had a quarrel with them and then they hit her and stepped on the Holy Quran. This happened, specifically, in July 2013, a few days before Holy Ramadan.**

**"Slow death"** is how one of the former female detainees described the condition of some sick women there. Despite the fact that there were pregnant women, babies, elderly women, and women with malignant diseases, there were no specialized doctors in Adraa Prison. The Administration of the Prison justified the lack of medical care by saying that the road to the hospital is so dangerous due to the clashes, and that sending a detainee to the hospital requires the 'approval of some authority' which they didn't name. Many deaths have happened in the prison, the last of which was the death of a detainee, who was very sick and had some kind of stroke or shortness of breath and died immediately. One of the detainees who witnessed the incident stated to **VDC** that:



**"The other detainees did not know the nature of the disease of (Huda 39 years old, Homs), as she suffered some kind of “stroke” or “shortness of breath”. Despite the fact that other detainees asked the guards to take her to the medical clinic, but they refused, which caused her immediate death. This was in the first week of February 2013.**

According to another former detainee testimony, one of her cellmates tried to commit suicide by cutting her ‘artery’ because they did not provide milk for her 10-month-old baby, to whom she gave birth during her detention period in Homs’ Central Prison before being transferred to Adraa prison. Also, in another incidence recorded few weeks ago, an 8-days-old baby died in the same prison, due to the lack of nutrition and the absence of newborn incubators.

**The VDC in Syria appeals to all humanitarian and human rights international organizations to intervene immediately in order to release all female detainees from the prisons of the Syrian regime, and to stop the heinous practices against Adraa Women’s Prison detainees.**

#### **Violation Documentation Center in Syria September 2013**

