



FORMER SYRIAN OFFICIAL SAMIR ALSHEIKH SENTENCED TO 60 YEARS FOR TORTURE

Los Angeles, California, USA, September 17, 2026 - Today, a federal judge sentenced Samir Alsheikh to 60 years in prison for torture committed in Syria from 2005 to about 2008.

During today's sentencing hearing, Judge Herán D. Vera, who presided over Mr. Alsheikh's trial in March, heard from victims about the impact of the torture they experienced at the hands and direction of Mr. Alsheikh while he headed Adra Prison in Syria.

Nidal Shikhani, who was arbitrarily arrested and tortured for writing a letter of support to a political opposition figure, told the Court *"For survivors like me, being heard in a Court of law is not only about the past, it is about dignity. It is about affirming that even after many years, the truth still matters and the suffering of victims cannot be ignored."* The Center for Justice and Accountability represented nine victims and witnesses in the Alsheikh case, seven of whom presented victim impact statements at sentencing.

Mr. Alsheikh was initially arrested in July 2024 for immigration fraud. In December 2024, just four days after the fall of the Assad regime, the Department of Justice filed a superseding indictment which added four torture-relates charges against Alsheikh. On March 16, 2026, following a nine-day trial Mr. Alsheikh was found guilty on all charges. At the trial, victims and witnesses testified that while Mr. Alsheikh was the head of Adra Prison in Syria he ordered and participated torture including by using the "magic" or "flying carpet", beating and whipping them, and shackling them to ceiling pipes.

"Prosecutions like this are only possible with the courage of victims and survivors, who come forward and share their experienced with the Court" said Ahmad Soliman, CJA Staff Attorney. *"They also require the sustained commitment of prosecutors and war crimes units willing to dedicate resources to hold perpetrators to account."*

Mr. Alsheikh was convicted under the extraterritorial Torture Act, which allow the U.S. government to arrest and prosecute individuals found within the United States for acts of torture committed abroad. Alsheikh is only the fifth person tried since this law was enacted in 1994. At a time when the international legal order is under threat, this case shows how important accountability in U.S. courts is to survivors. Khaled Abdul Malek who was detained and tortured by Alsheikh at Adra told the Court *"I am deeply grateful to the U.S. Department of Justice and the federal justice system for ensuring that international human rights violators are held to account."*



This trial drew significant attention from human rights advocates, legal experts and Syrian civil society organizations as Mr. Alsheikh, a retired Brigadier General, was the highest-ranking Assad regime official to be tried in person anywhere in the world, at a moment when Syria is beginning to grapple with the legacy of the Assad regime. *“There is no justice without accountability and [this verdict] carries powerful lessons: so that the tragedies suffered by the Syrian people are not repeated, and so that we may build a new Syria free from oppression and tyranny,”* Mahmoud Eisa, CJA client and former Adra detainee told the Court.

About the Center for Justice & Accountability

[The Center for Justice and Accountability](#) (CJA) is a United States-based international human rights organization dedicated to working with communities impacted by torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious human rights abuses to seek truth, justice, and redress using innovative litigation and transitional justice strategies.

More Information

To learn more about CJA’s work on accountability for crimes in Syria, please see [here](#).

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding the Alsheikh trial can be found [here](#).

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