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SYRIA | Remaining Druze Hostages Released

CSW welcomed reports that Islamic State (IS, Daesh) released the 17 remaining Druze hostages abducted from Suwayda in southern Syria in July. The hostages, most of whom were women and children, were released Nov. 8 after over three months in captivity. IS also released the bodies of two children who had died while being held.

The prisoners' release comes a little over a month after IS released footage of the execution of Thuraya Abou Ammar, 25. Survivors also report that the terrorists executed another woman, Marwa Issam Abaza, a few days later.

Thirty-seven people were initially abducted during an attack on Al-Shabki village in Suwayda on July 25. CSW sources estimate that over 300 people were killed in the attack, and a number of videos were released depicting the executions of abductees over the following weeks.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "While we welcome the release of the remaining 17 Druze hostages, we extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of those who did not survive this ordeal and the people who died in the IS attack."

The Suwayda region is mainly occupied by the Druze ethnoreligious group. The Druze are believed to constitute around 3.2% of the Syrian population. Originating from the Near East, the Druze self-identify as "Unitarians" or "People of Monotheism." They are deemed by hardline Islamists to be heretics, and in the past their communities in Idlib Governorate in north-western Syria suffered several attacks.

Thomas said, "We continue to urge the Syrian and Russian authorities to prioritize the protection of vulnerable communities like the Druze, and call on the international community to assist with containing and countering sectarian violence and narratives. It is also vital that the international community works with relevant authorities to formulate a sustainable solution for the ongoing conflict in Syria."