



Iraq: Civilian Toll of Government Airstrikes

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Iraq's security forces have killed at least 75 civilians and wounded hundreds of others in indiscriminate air strikes on five cities since June 6, 2014. Human Rights Watch documented 17 airstrikes, the majority in the first half of July. Barrel bombs were used in six of them.

Government forces launched the attacks, which because of their indiscriminate nature violate international law, while trying to retake areas controlled by Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) fighters and other Sunni armed groups. Despite repeated government denials, government forces have resumed the use of the deadly barrel bombs in populated areas of Fallujah, Human Rights Watch found.

"The Iraqi government may be fighting a vicious insurgency, but that's no license to kill civilians anywhere they think ISIS might be lurking," said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The government's airstrikes are wreaking an awful toll on ordinary residents."

Human Rights Watch interviewed 30 witnesses, victims, medical staff, and family members of those killed by airstrikes in Fallujah, Beiji, Mosul, Tikrit and al-Sherqat. Of the 75 deaths in the attacks Human Rights Watch investigated, 17, including 7 women and 2 children, were a result of barrel bombs.

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