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Monthly Report

Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in March 2024

Violations Recorded Across All Areas of Control, A Further Proof that Syria in its Entirety is **Unsafe for the Return of Refugees**

Monday 08 April 2024

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

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I. Introduction and Methodology

This report summarizes the state of human rights in Syria in March 2024. To this end, the report provides details of the most notable developments on the ground documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) during the last month, as well as of the context in which these violations occurred, while also providing only the essential details of some violations in order to ensure that the report is of a manageable length. The report also summarizes the civilian deaths we have documented in this period at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces, as well as providing details of the numbers of arrests, enforced disappearances, indiscriminate attacks and attacks on civilian objects documented by SNHR's team during the past month. Lastly, the report outlines the most notable developments regarding Syria at the international level during this period.

It should be noted that, in assessing the situation in Syria, we are guided by the criteria of international humanitarian law and international customary law, in parallel with international human rights law, while, in a few cases, we draw attention to the Syrian regime's violations of the Syrian Constitution and of the domestic laws the regime itself promulgated. For a detailed explanation of our [methodology](#), please visit the following link.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications of these events.



II. State of Human Rights in Syria in March 2024

A. Brief summary of the most notable incidents documented by SNHR on the ground, and the context in which these incidents occurred:

1. Northwestern Syria¹

March saw more ground attack by Syrian regime forces which targeted the villages and towns of southern and eastern rural Idlib, western rural Aleppo, and Sahl al-Ghab in western rural Hama, all of which are areas close to the dividing lines with armed opposition factions. The attacks also targeted villages and towns in southern and eastern rural Idlib governorate and western rural Aleppo, as well as areas under the control of the Syrian National Army (SNA) in northern rural Aleppo, which are all located far from the dividing lines. Some of these attacks resulted in civilian casualties, as well as material losses and property damage. On March 9, Syrian regime artillery forces stationed in al-Sheikh Aqeel Mount in rural Aleppo fired shells at Kbashin village, administratively a part of the Sherawa Subdistrict in northwestern Aleppo. One of the shells struck a microbus that was transporting civilians outside the village, [killing one woman](#), and injuring another six from the same family, three of them children. [Another regime attack on March 10 killed one child and injured three other civilians](#), two of them children, when regime forces fired an anti-armor rocket at the car the victims were travelling in on the eastern outskirts of Darat Ezza city in western Aleppo. Moreover, the frontlines between regime forces and armed opposition factions/Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Idlib and rural Latakia have seen intensified clashes and offensives, along with resulting casualties on both sides. Neither side has been able to achieve any military breakthrough or advancement into the other's territory, however.



↑ Damage to a microbus that was transporting civilians caused by an attack on Kbashin village in rural Aleppo by regime ground forces, which resulted in casualties - March 9, 2024

1. Northwestern Syria encompasses the Idlib area and parts of the governorates of Hama, Aleppo, and Latakia. Unless stated otherwise, all of these areas are under the control of armed opposition factions/SNA and HTS

Regime ground forces' attacks in March also [caused damage to a number of vital civilian facilities](#). Most prominently, [on March 19](#), regime forces used a rocket launcher to bomb the Murshed Mohammad Ayyan Elementary School in [Katyan village in eastern Idlib](#), [partially destroying the school building and slightly damaging its interior furnishing](#). [On March 26](#), regime artillery forces fired a shell at the Othman bin Affan Mosque in al-Bara village in Jabal al-Zawiya in southern Idlib, which landed in the mosque's yard, [partially destroying the mosque building and moderately damaging its interior furnishings](#).



↑👁 Destruction caused by a ground regime attack Murshed Mohammad Ayyan Elementary School in Katyan village in Idlib - March 19, 2024

Meanwhile, regime forces also continued their increasingly heavy use of kamikaze unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as kamikaze drones, in March for the second month in a row. Drones were used to carry out several attacks on areas in Sahl al-Ghab in western rural Hama, as well as eastern rural Idlib and western rural Aleppo, targeting areas both close to and far from the dividing lines. Some of these attacks resulted in [civilian deaths](#) and [injuries](#). On March 7, for instance, regime forces used a kamikaze drone to carry out an attack on the outskirts of Darat Ezza city in western Aleppo, which hit a motorbike, killing the driver. [On March 11](#), another civilian was killed by a kamikaze drone used by regime forces to target a tractor working on agricultural lands in northern Kafr Nouran village in western Aleppo.



↑👁 A vehicle damaged and sheep killed by a regime drone attack on the outskirts of Bdama town in Idlib - March 17, 2024

On the last day of February and throughout the early days of March, we documented multiple airstrikes by Russian forces on areas controlled by armed opposition factions/HTS in Idlib governorate and eastern rural Aleppo that resulted in civilian casualties and material damage. Most prominently, [on February 29](#), two fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian carried out four consecutive airstrikes on agricultural land on the western outskirts of Idlib city. [The airstrikes hit a furniture workshop](#), which was previously a chicken farm, killing one civilian, injuring five others, including a child, and completely destroying the workshop.



↑ 👁 Destruction caused by a Russian aerial attack on a furniture workshop in western Idlib city, which resulted in casualties - February 29, 2024

We also documented a number of ground attacks targeting areas of Aleppo governorate under the control of the SNA that originated from areas jointly controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and regime forces. These attacks resulted in civilian deaths and injuries, [with the victims including a child](#). The most prominent of these attacks took place on March 6, when houses in al-Sayyid Ali village, located to the southeast of Marea city in eastern Aleppo, were targeted by so-far unidentified forces using a number of artillery shells, with the perpetrators suspected to be either regime forces or the SDF since the shells originated from the direction of areas under their control. [One woman was killed and another injured in the attack](#), which also damaged a number of houses.

Also in March, we documented [multiple civilian deaths](#) and injuries and one attack on a civilian facility [by SNA personnel](#) in their areas of control in Aleppo governorate. [The most prominent of these incidents took place on March 7](#), when a child was killed and two others were injured in an attack involving the use of artillery and heavy machine guns by SNA personnel who targeted the dividing line between the SDF-controlled and SNA-controlled areas on the axis of Mar'anaz village in northern Aleppo, while the children were trying to irregularly cross from an SNA-held area to an area controlled by the SDF. The SNA personnel detected their movements using surveillance cameras and then targeted them, evidently without distinguishing that they were children. [On March 14](#), two brothers, both civilians, were shot dead by members of Ahrar al-Sharqiya, part of the Haraket al-Tahrir and Binaa or 'Movement for Liberation and Construction' which in turn is affiliated with the SNA's Failaq Awwal 'First Legion', near Shbeiran Camp in Tarhin area in eastern Aleppo, as the result of a dispute between one of the victims and members of the faction who were stationed at a checkpoint erected near the camp. Members of the same group opened fire using heavy machine guns, as well as firing rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), at the Shbeiran and Tarhin camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) after some residents gathered to protest at the killing of the two men, which ultimately injured eight civilians, in addition to slightly damaging the mud-made IDPs housing units.



↑ 👁 Woman killed in a ground attack on al-Sayyid Ali village in Aleppo that originated from areas under the control of Syrian regime forces and the SDF - March 6, 2024

Moreover, we documented several incidents in March in which medical, media, and service workers were subjected to verbal and physical assaults at the hands of members of armed opposition factions, SNA factions, and HTS factions in the areas under the control of those groups in northern and western Syria. On March 9, for instance, an armed group affiliated with the Liwa Aasifat al-Shamal 'The Storm of the North Brigade', which is a component of the SNA's al-Jabha al-Shamiya 'The Levant Front', heavily beat and severely wounded a traffic policeman affiliated with the Directorate of Security Forces and Civilian Police while he was on duty at the al-Sa'a Roundabout located at the northern entrance to Izaz city in northern Aleppo. A few hours later, al-Jabha al-Shamiya announced that the personnel involved in the beating had been transferred to the Military Police for prosecution.



↑ 👁 A traffic policeman severely wounded in a beating by SNA personnel in Izaz city in Aleppo - March 9, 2024

On March 15, meanwhile, a number of HTS security personnel physically and verbally assaulted four reporters and media workers working for various local and regional TV channels and agencies during a demonstration held in Idlib city to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for freedom, even though the four reporters in question were standing on a platform specifically designated for media coverage. The HTS personnel tried to forcibly drag the four media workers off the platform, with two of the four reporters sustaining wounds as a result of the beatings they received. In a separate incident in the city on the same day a reporter working with an international agency in Idlib governorate was verbally assaulted and abused by pro-HTS individuals in the city's Sabaa Bahrat or 'Seven Lakes' Square. [SNHR released a statement](#) the next day condemning the assaults. On March 21, SNA Military Police patrolmen physically and verbally assaulted Dr. Abdullah al-Ibrahim while he was at work at his clinic in Tal Abyad city in northern Raqqa, after the doctor had asked the brother of the head of the Military Police to wait his turn in the waiting room, prompting the latter to call members of the Military Police who came to the clinic and savagely beat and arrested the doctor who was released three hours later. [According to a statement released by the head of the Military Police branch in Tal Abyad](#), the incident was investigated, and the personnel involved were summoned and held accountable.

March saw more bombings by unidentified parties in areas under the control of armed opposition factions/SNA in northern and western Syria. Most prominently, on March 20 an improvised explosive device (IED) of as yet unidentified source, which was planted inside a cargo vehicle, exploded at an SNA civilian police checkpoint erected at the entrance to al-Ra'ie city in northern rural Aleppo governorate. [Four civilians - a civilian man and three civilian policemen - sustained varied injuries in the blast](#). [On March 5, four children sustained severe wounds and burn injuries from the explosion](#) of an unidentified object suspected to be a war remnant left over from a previous attack by Syrian-Russian alliance forces attack, while they were playing in the vocational high school building in the Ma'mal al-Sukkar area on the southeastern outskirts of Jisr al-Shoghour city in western Idlib.



↑👁 One of the children injured by the explosion of an unidentified object on the outskirts of Jisr al-Shogohur city in Idlib - March 5, 2024

The residents of the IDP camps densely spread across northwestern Syria are still living in dire conditions in every way. [On March 6, the People in Need \(PIN\)² organization noted in a report](#) that IDPs in Syria are living through a harsh winter. The report also outlined some of the challenges faced by IDPs in regard to securing their daily livelihoods. On March 28, [the Doctors Without Borders \(MSF\) team in Syria revealed in a Facebook post](#) that rates of scabies have been rapidly increasing in an IDPs camp in al-Bal'a area in southwestern Idlib, with over 70 percent of the camp residents contracting the debilitating skin condition.

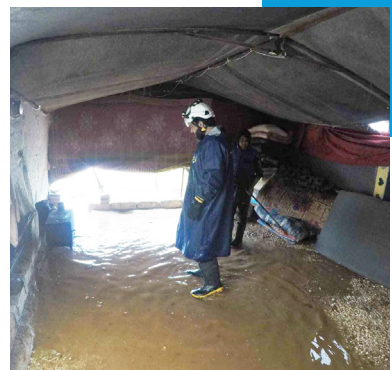
In March, we recorded nine fires in camps housing IDPs and those affected by the February 6 Earthquakes,³ which are scattered across rural areas of Idlib and Aleppo governorates (two caused by the misuse of heating tools, [two by electrical faults](#), [one by the misuse of cooking tools](#), [one by the explosion of a lighting battery](#), and [three by unidentified causes](#)). Many IDPs tents and housing units were destroyed in those fires, while others were damaged.



↑👁 A tent burnt in a fire caused by an electrical fault in an irregular camp near Ma'aret Misreen town in Idlib - March 2, 2024

2. "People in Need was established in 1992 by a group of Czech war correspondents who were no longer satisfied with merely relaying information about ongoing conflicts and began sending out aid. It gradually became established as a professional humanitarian organization striving to provide aid in troubled regions and support adherence to human rights around the world." PIN is currently one of the major NGOs in Central Europe. See: People in Need. About Us. <https://www.peopleinneed.net/who-we-are/about-us#our-profile>
3. A devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake (epicenter in Kahramanmaraş province in southern Türkiye) that struck northwestern Syria on February 6, 2023. The earthquake, which razed thousands of homes, led to the displacement of tens of thousands more families in northwestern Syria who moved to camps that were built to shelter them.

Meanwhile, [the poor and harsh weather conditions](#) in March damaged at least [five camps housing IDPs and earthquake victims](#) that are spread across rural areas in Idlib and [Aleppo](#) governorates. In these camps, floodwaters formed torrential streams and pools of muddy water, which cut off roads. In total, this flooding completely destroyed seven tents and temporary housing units, and partially destroyed 90 others. On March 22, [the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\) noted](#) that flooding had hit many IDPs camps in Aleppo and Idlib in the previous two days, affecting over 15,700 people. On March 24, [a number of mud-made housings in al-Rukban IDPs Camp on the Syrian-Jordanian borders](#), which is under the control of armed opposition factions and located within the area known as the 55 km area in eastern Homs governorate, were also adversely affected by a rainstorm that hit the area.



Rainwater permeates a tent in al-Maghsla Camp in Ram Hamdan village in Idlib, due to heavy rainfall - March 21, 2024

As for the living and service conditions in northwestern Syria, civilians are still grappling with worsening economic and living standards due to rising prices of foodstuff and supplies. Residents in these areas are already suffering from greatly reduced purchasing power due to widespread unemployment and rising poverty rates, as well as low wages, especially in the areas housing IDPs camps, with all these challenges exacerbated by the plummeting value of the Turkish Lira (TRY), the currency used in northwestern Syria, with one USD currently equaling over 32 TRY. In terms of services, many areas are also suffering from severely limited water access due to the weak water grid and frequent power outages. On March 14, [Islamic Relief⁴ noted in a report](#) released on the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria that approximately 90 percent of all residents in northwestern Syria are unemployed, “leaving families trapped in poverty and unable to afford food. More than 80% of people now need food aid and almost 1 million children under five years old need nutrition services. Pregnant and breastfeeding women are increasingly suffering from anemia, with many struggling to breastfeed because of poor nutrition.”

On March 8, the OCHA, outlining its cross-border operations from Türkiye to northwestern Syria, noted that 41 trucks carrying UN relief aid had crossed into northwestern Syria via the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salama crossings [between February 1-29](#). On March 15, [the OCHA released a situation report on northwestern Syria](#), stressing that after 13 years of conflict in Syria the humanitarian situation in the region has reached its worst levels to date, with the number of IDPs rising to 3.4 million from last year’s 2.9 million. The number of people in need now stands at 4.2 million, with over half of this number being children, and many living in overcrowded camps. Relatedly, 89 percent of all children in northwestern Syria require protection assistance.

4. Established in 1984, Islamic Relief Worldwide operates in over 48 states and provides aid in emergency cases, as well as implementing long-term development programs and awareness and advocacy campaigns. See: Islamic Relief Worldwide. About us. <https://islamic-relief.org/about-us/>

In March, we recorded popular protests in HTS-controlled areas in Idlib governorate and western rural Aleppo. The protestors called for the release of detainees held in HTS detention centers, as well as calling on the group to change its policies regarding its treatment of civilians. The group broke up some of those protests by firing guns in the air.



A women's protest calling for the release of Tahrir Party member from HTS prisons held by mothers and wives of Tahrir Party members in Idlib city - March 10, 2024

2. Regime-held areas and southern Syria

In March, Syrian regime forces continued their restrictive policies against civilians in areas under regime control, with civilians still being persecuted and targeted over their political dissidence and expression of dissenting views, a freedom that should be protected according to both the Syrian Constitution and international law. One prominent case recorded in March was that of the teacher Lamis Ryad Melhem⁵ [who was wrongfully dismissed from her job as a computer secretary at the Technology Institute in Suwayda](#), which is affiliated with the Education Directorate in the Syrian regime's government. Lamis was dismissed on the grounds of absence of work even though she was on paid sick leave at the time (from February 21 to March 21, 2024). The female teacher suspects that the actual reason behind the dismissal was her involvement in the anti-regime demonstrations that have been going on in Suwayda city for several months now. In fact, she has been indirectly threatened with dismissal on multiple occasions by the head of the Institute over her participation in the protests. [Syrian regime forces have also carried out arrests](#) and other acts leading to enforced disappearances throughout the areas under their control. The governorates of Rural Damascus, followed by Damascus 'Rif Dimshaq', and then Homs saw the highest number of such incidents in the month of March. Meanwhile, torture continues to be widespread in regime detention centers, with SNHR documenting new deaths due to torture and medical negligence in regime detention centers during this period. On the same subject, it is worth noting that, through these arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances carried out in March, the Syrian regime violated the order of the Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued on November 16, 2023,⁶ requesting provisional measures in the case brought by Canada and the Netherlands against the Syrian regime on the application of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The entire process of unlawful detention/arbitrary arrest by the regime is an interconnected series of actions which constitute multiple forms of torture. In these arrests, which are

5. [Lamis](#), from Bard village in southern rural Suwayda governorate, taught English between 1997 and 2018 before being appointed as the secretary of the Institute.
6. According to the ICJ's court order issued on November 16, 2023, in the case, the Syrian Arab Republic, as part of its obligations under the Convention against Torture, was to "take all measures within its power to prevent acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and ensure that its officials, as well as any organizations or persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts of torture or other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." In addition, the document continued, the Syrian Arab Republic "shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of any evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment."

more akin to abductions than to legitimate arrest procedures, the Syrian regime does not adhere to the arrest conditions specified in the Syrian Constitutions and Syrian laws. We can confirm that the Syrian regime has enacted no tangible changes with respect to its oppressive policies and draconian security machine, or even shown any initiative to repeal the laws legalizing torture and impunity. We have not seen any indicators that torture will stop. On the contrary, the Syrian regime has been committing more acts of torture. The arrests we have recorded are in themselves a form of torture,⁷ including enforced disappearance, with some even reaching the level of killing under torture. [In March, we documented new deaths due to torture and medical negligence in regime detention centers.](#) Despite all the amnesty decrees issued by the regime since 2011, which number 23 as of this writing, there are still about 135,000 detainees/forcibly disappeared persons in regime detention centers who have been arrested at different times since March 2011.

The regime also continues to confiscate properties, a practice legitimized through a system of laws and articles of legislation that we detailed in an extensive report released on May 25, 2023: [‘The Laws Employed by the Syrian Regime to Control Real Estate Ownership and Lands Before and After the Beginning of the Popular Uprising in March 2011’.](#)⁸ Syrian regime forces are also still enforcing practices that may restrict the return of refugees and IDPs to their original areas.

Moreover, the Syrian regime is still misappropriating aid funds and using them in service of its goals, as well as to control the fates of the intended recipients of said funds. The regime has been enforcing these practices through its control over the NGOs receiving and managing those funds. On December 28, 2023, SNHR released a report entitled, [‘How The Syrian Regime Uses the Humanitarian Organizations SARC and STD to Steal Humanitarian Aid’](#), which provides a case study on the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the Syria Trust for Development (STD) as the two primary fronts used by the regime to receive aid funds.

[Below are the most notable developments on the ground that took place in regime-held areas in March 2024](#)

In March, the SDF’s artillery attacks against areas in Deir Ez-Zour where regime troops and pro-regime Iranian militias are stationed continued, with regime forces retaliating by bombing SDF-held areas. On February 28, for instance, [SDF artillery forces fired a shell that landed in a popular market](#) in al-Mayadeen city in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate, killing one 18-year-old civilian and injuring three others. The market facilities were also slightly damaged.

7. The entire process of unlawful detention/arbitrary arrest by the regime is an interconnected series of actions which constitute multiple forms of torture. In these arrests, which are more akin to abductions than to legitimate arrest procedures, the Syrian regime does not adhere to the arrest conditions specified in the Syrian Constitutions and Syrian laws (we outlined the parameters of arrests in the Syrian law in our periodic reports on arrests and detention in Syria). <https://snhr.org/blog/category/report/monthly-reports/detainees-and-enforced-disappearances-monthly-reports/>.

These arrests also involve the use of excessive violence and beating in various forms and levels of severity, which usually start from the very first moment of the arrests, and continue throughout the duration of the detention, during which detainees are subjected to inhumane and cruel conditions, as well as being referred to exceptional security courts whose proceedings resemble interrogation in security branches rather than any legitimate trial process.

8. While the laws passed by the regime can theoretically affect every single Syrian citizen, these laws in particular were primarily directly aimed at three main groups, namely: first, the forcibly displaced (both IDPs and refugees), estimated today at 12.3 million Syrian citizens according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); second: the forcibly disappeared, estimated to number at least 112,000 Syrian citizens according to SNHR’s database (it is important to note that the Syrian regime is directly responsible for the disappearance of over 85 percent of this total at least); and third: victims (civilians and fighters alike), who are estimated today to number at least half a million Syrians, the overwhelming majority of whom have not been recorded as dead in the civil registry. Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of the victims were dissidents opposed to the Syrian regime’s autocratic rule, who were killed by the regime which has been continuously committing violation since March 2011. It is clear, therefore, that these laws pose a direct threat to at least half of the Syrian population.

On March 26, [we recorded the death of engineer Emad Adnan Shehab,⁹ a World Health Organization \(WHO\) employee in an attack by an unidentified party's fixed-wing warplanes](#). The warplanes targeted a house being used by the Iranian militias as a hideout, located next door to Emad's home in al-Qosour neighborhood in Deir Ez-Zour city. Emad was hit by flying shrapnel from the attack while he was near the targeted home. On the same day, March 26, [Times of Israel](#) reported that Israeli air force carried out attacks targeting sites for Iranian militias in the two cities of Deir Ez-Zour and al-Boukamal in eastern Syria on the dawn of the same day.

Meanwhile, [more victims were killed](#) and injured [by the explosions of](#) landmines of unidentified source in regime-controlled areas in March. [Most of the victims in this category were killed while gathering or searching for desert truffles](#). On March 9, four civilians were killed, while others were injured, by the explosion of a landmine of as-yet unidentified source under the car that was transporting them in the 'badiya' desert area of al-Beshri in western Deir Ez-Zour while they were on their way to gather desert truffles. On March 16, another landmine, again of as-yet unidentified source, killed 12 civilians, 11 of them women, when it exploded under the car transporting them between the villages of al-Shreida and al-Sabkha in eastern rural Raqqa governorate while they were on their way to gather desert truffles.



A car destroyed after it was blown up by a landmine as it was transporting civilians through eastern Raqqa governorate. The explosion resulted in a massacre - March 16, 2024

More victims were also killed by unidentified gunmen in regime-controlled areas, with March seeing more of these killings compared to February. This month's killings were concentrated in the governorates of Homs, Deir Ez-Zour, and [Daraa](#). One prominent such killing took place on March 3 when unidentified gunmen raided the pharmacy of [pharmacist Mohammad al-Izzou and shot him dead](#) while he was working in al-Blan area, administratively a part of al-Rastan city, in northern Homs. On March 6, four civilians were killed and seven others wounded by unidentified gunmen who opened fire with machine guns at cars and trucks transporting civilians who were on their way to gather desert truffles in the badiya or desert area near Kbajeb in southern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. On March 22, four civilians were shot dead in a house in al-Sanamayn city in northern Daraa by unidentified gunmen. We [also documented cases of missing civilians' bodies being found bearing gunshot wounds](#), with some of the bodies also bearing signs of torture.

On March 17, [the Syrian regime's Syrian Arab News Agency \(SANA\) reported](#) that Israeli air force planes had carried out an attack on multiple sites in the south of the country, injuring a military serviceman and causing material damage. [The same agency also reported that on March 19](#) that Israeli air force planes carried out an attack on military sites in Rural Damascus governorate. SANA also reported a third Israeli Air Force attack [on March 28](#) which targeted a residential building in Rural Damascus governorate, injuring two civilians. [On March 29](#), the agency reported, the Israeli air force carried out another attack on multiple sites in Athraya area in southeastern Aleppo, which resulted in multiple deaths and injuries, in addition to inflicting material damage. [Lastly, on March 31](#), the pro-regime al-Watan Newspaper and SANA reported that the Israeli air force had carried out an attack on multiple sites in the vicinity of Damascus city, injuring two people and causing material damage.

9. Emad Shehab, a 42-year-old architect who received his diploma from Aleppo University's Architecture Department, had worked as a coordinator for water affairs, sewage, and hygiene with the WHO in Deir Ez-Zour city since 2022. He had previously worked with several other international organizations including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the UNICEF.

On March 13, the [Jordan News Agency \(Petra\) reported](#) that Jordanian Border Guards had thwarted an attempt to smuggle quantities of narcotics from Syria in the Northern Military Zone. The agency reported that a number of the smugglers were injured in the operation when a shootout ensued between the smugglers and Jordanian Border Guard who confiscated large quantities of narcotics from them.

Meanwhile, economic and living conditions continued to deteriorate, along with the service and security situation, across all sectors in regime-controlled areas of Syria. [The value of the Syrian Pound \(SYP\) has continued to plunge against the US Dollar](#). Naturally, this leads to price increases for all goods and services, including food supplies, adversely affecting citizens' already limited purchasing power. [Prices](#) for red meats and [vegetables](#) saw another rise in the month of March. On the subject of fuel, [the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection announced the latest increase in prices for gas and diesel on March 20, while the electricity rationing policy is still in effect](#). Furthermore, regime-controlled areas have been grappling for months with [frequent robberies of public institutions and facilities](#) amid rampant insecurity. [The transportation crisis also resurfaced once again in Damascus city in the month March](#), with domestic transport routes being overcrowded and people queuing for many hours to wait for public transport vehicles. The crisis was revived by the reduction of number of minibuses operating, caused by the owners of these minibuses not receiving their designated allocations of fuel. On March 21, [the OCHA released a report](#) on the humanitarian situation in the governorates of Suwayda, Daraa, and Quneitra in southern Syria, which shed light on the demographic composition of the three governorates and how this has been affected by the conflict.

Civilian demonstrations continued throughout March in the regime-controlled governorate of Suwayda for the eighth consecutive month. The protestors continued to condemn Bashar Assad for the dire state of the country, and to call for the regime's downfall. These protests are continuing at a time of multiple, unprecedented and increasingly dire economic, living, and human rights crises in Syria.



↑ 👁 Anti-regime civilian protests continue for the eighth consecutive month in Suwayda governorate - scenes from a demonstration in Suwayda city on March 18, 2024

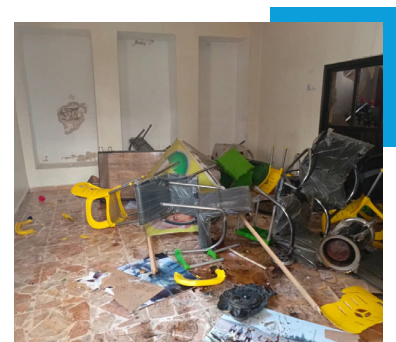
3. Northeastern Syria¹⁰

In late February and throughout March, SDF-controlled areas in Aleppo governorate were targeted in a number of ground attacks originating from areas where SNA troops and Turkish military forces are based. While most of those attacks targeted SDF military sites, some civilian sites were hit, resulting in civilian deaths and injuries and damage to properties and vital civilian facilities. Most prominently, on February 29, artillery forces believed to be Turkish targeted a chicken farm in the SDF-held village of al-Ta'ana in al-Shahba area of northern Aleppo, killing an adult civilian and injuring a young boy, [while the farm itself was partially destroyed and a number of chickens were killed](#). On March 24, one civilian was killed and another injured in an attack by an artillery detachment stationed in SNA-held areas which fired shells that hit agricultural land near Baylouniya village in al-Shahba area while agricultural workers were working there.

In March, we also recorded multiple civilian deaths and injuries, including of children, who were shot dead by SDF personnel in SDF-controlled areas of northeastern Syria. [On March 2, for instance, a 27-year-old IDP was killed](#) in the village of Jazrat al-Melaj in western Deir Ez-Zour by a stray bullet fired by an SDF patrolman pursuing another individual in the town. [On March 26, two children were shot dead](#) by SDF patrolmen during a raid on al-Latwa neighborhood in Theyban town in eastern Deir Ez-Zour.

Also in March, [SDF personnel arbitrarily arrested a number of civilians](#) in areas under the group's control, in addition to [continuing to abduct children for the purpose of conscription](#). The most prominent of these arrests came [on March 2](#), when SDF personnel detained a 22-year-old man identified as Ammar Izzdin at a checkpoint on the western entrance of Manbij city in northern Aleppo. Ammar was then taken to a conscription camp in the Sad Tishreen area in the city. On March 4, Stefan Schneck, Germany's Special Envoy for Syria, expressed concern over Ammar's case [in an X \(formerly Twitter\) post](#), in which he also called on the SDF to demonstrate more transparency and immediately release Ammar. [On March 18](#), SDF personnel arrested nine civilians from the same family, including two children, in a raid on al-Latwa neighborhood in Theyban town in eastern Deir Ez-Zour. On March 26, SDF personnel carried out a second raid and arrest campaign on al-Sour town in northern Deir Ez-Zour, [in which seven civilians were arrested and taken to an undisclosed location](#) over their participation in an anti-SDF demonstration held in the town the previous day, March 25.

SDF personnel also carried out attacks on a number of other Kurdish parties' headquarters and cracked down on civilian celebrations, [as well as carrying out assaults on media workers](#), in areas under the group's control in northwestern and eastern Syria. On March 1, for instance, armed personnel from the SDF's al-Shabib al-Thawriya 'Revolutionary Youth' attacked a gathering of civilians in the office of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (PKK-S) in Ein al-Arab city 'Koubani' in eastern Aleppo, during a ceremony held to mark the 45th anniversary of the spiritual father of the Kurdish nation, Mela Mustafa Barzani. In the assault, the SDF personnel brutally beat the civilians attending the event using sticks and batons, leaving two of the victims with multiple fractures and wounds.



↑ The PDK-S' headquarters office in Ein al-Arab city in Aleppo after it was trashed by SDF personnel - March 1, 2024

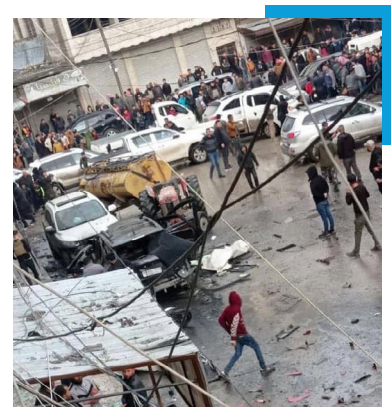
10. The term northeastern Syria refers to all SDF-controlled areas in northern and northeastern Syria, unless stated otherwise.

The attackers also trashed the contents of the office. On March 9, personnel from the al-Shabiba al-Thawriya raided the PDK-S's headquarter in al-Malkiya village in rural Hasaka and burnt and trashed its contents. Another PDK-S headquarters office was attacked the next day, March 10, in Ma'bda village in rural Hasaka, with its contents also being burnt and trashed. On March 15, SDF personnel assaulted two media workers and demonstrators at al-Na'im Roundabout in Raqqqa city during a rally celebrating the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular for uprising in Syria, with the SDF personnel verbally assaulting the participants and media workers and confiscating some of their equipment. One of these media worker was Marwa Nasif, a reporter for SY+, who sustained mild bruises when her hand became jammed in the window of a car being used by two of the SDF attackers as she tried to catch up to them to retrieve her equipment.

Also in March, we documented two incidents of insurgency inside two SDF prisons in Raqqqa city, which resulted in deaths and injuries among the prisoners taking part who were directly shot. The first incident took place on March 24, with five prisoners being killed in a prison run by the SDF's internal security (Asayesh forces) in Raqqqa, which is designated for those convicted of drug-related crimes. During this incident, SDF security personnel directly opened fire at the prisoners who had risen up against the staff in an attempt to escape. The second incident, on March 28, took place in the al-Ahdath 'Juvenile' Prison, which is designated for criminal cases, when prisoners also tried to start a riot to break out. However, the security personnel opened fire at the prisoners following conflict between the prisoners and the security guards, which resulted in the killing of two prisoners and multiple injuries. The incident is still under investigation as of this writing.

More civilian deaths and [injuries](#) due to landmines were also recorded in SDF-controlled areas across northern and eastern Syria in March. In one case, on March 2, [a 10-year-old boy was killed](#) by the explosion of a landmine of unidentified source in the vicinity of al-Sharka village in northern Raqqqa. On March 12, [a 30-year-old man was killed](#) by the explosion of a landmine of unidentified source while herding sheep in the vicinity of Janna al-Jerkes village, administratively a part of Manbij city, in eastern Aleppo. On March 18, [one child was killed and another injured](#) by a landmine of unidentified source while herding sheep in Bab al-Faraj village in rural Hasaka.

Similarly, March saw a number of bombings in the areas under the control of the SDF in northern and eastern Syria. On March 20, for instance, [two children were killed and 11 other civilians, including three children and two women, were injured](#) by the explosion of an improvised explosive device (IED) of unidentified source in the densely crowded Abu Helal Street in al-Serb neighborhood in northern Manbij city in eastern Aleppo governorate. The IED had originally been planted inside an SDF intelligence commander's vehicle. On March 10, [an eight-year-old boy was killed](#) and five other civilians, including three children, were injured by an unidentified object that exploded while they were playing with it after finding it in agricultural land near al-Jee'a village in western rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate.



↑ Damage following the explosion of an IED of unidentified source in Manbin city in Aleppo - March 20, 2024

Also in March, we recorded more killings by unidentified gunmen in SDF-held areas, which were concentrated in Deir Ez-Zour governorate. Most prominently, on March 8, [one man was killed and his father was injured](#) by unidentified gunmen who shot the men, both civilians, inside a pharmacy in Abu Hardoub village in eastern Deir Ez-Zour. We also recorded cases of missing civilians' bodies being found. One such case was documented on March 20, [when residents found a civilian's body bearing deep cuts to his throat](#) in al-Boubadran village in eastern Deir Ez-Zour.

Meanwhile, the clashes in Deir Ez-Zour which began on August 27, 2023, between the SDF and Arab tribes backed by the Deir Ez-Zour Military Council, continued in March, albeit more sporadically, and were limited to areas of eastern Deir Ez-Zour, where Arab tribes have been targeting and engaging in clashes with SDF troops by carrying out focused attacks in the areas where they are stationed.

IDPs' suffering also continued in March in many of the IDPs camps spread across northern and eastern Syria, particularly the irregular IDP camps located in western rural Deir Ez-Zour, where IDPs are still grappling with inadequate access to basic services, and lack of water and power, all further exacerbated by the harsh winter weather conditions. In al-Hawl Camp,¹¹ we recorded that about 150 Iraqi families, comprising about 625 individuals in all, returned to their homeland of Iraq on March 9 in an operation carried out [in coordination with the Iraqi government](#). On March 22, [Save the Children noted in a report](#) that rates of repatriating foreign women and children held in the al-Hawl and Rawj Camps in eastern Syria have fallen by 50 percent in 2024 compared to the same period last year. The report also revealed that "Five years after the fall of Al-Baghouz - the last Syrian village controlled by ISIS - at least 6,160 children of foreign nationality are still trapped in Al Hol and Roj camps."

Meanwhile, the living and security situation in northeastern Syria is increasingly worsening. Prices of food, including vegetables and meat, as well as fuel and other essential commodities in the region, continue to rise. For instance, on March 17, [the Self-Administration authority in SDF-held northeastern Syria issued a circular](#) announcing the doubling of the price of one 1.1 kilogram pack of bread, which contains nine rounds of bread, from 500 to 1,000 Syrian Pounds (SYP). In addition, the ongoing clashes and an escalation in fighting among the various parties in the region are adversely affecting civilians' ability to secure water, fuel, and day-to-day needs such as food and medicine. On the subject of services, several areas have had to grapple with poor access to water due to the poor central water network and frequent power outages. Also in March, the city of Hasaka saw a complete power outage in all the city's neighborhoods, with the cause of the power cut not yet confirmed. The outage, which lasted for 10 days was probably caused by the low levels of water in the al-Tabaqa Dam in Raqqqa governorate. On March 26, [the OCHA released a report](#) on the humanitarian situation in the governorates of Hasaka, Raqqqa, and Deir Ez-Zour in northeastern Syria, in which it noted that humanitarian needs in these three governorates are still high due to the continued hostilities and economic decline they're enduring. The report also noted that civilians are enduring severe water, fuel, and power shortages, and that rates of malnutrition have greatly increased in northeastern Syria, especially among children aged under five, and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

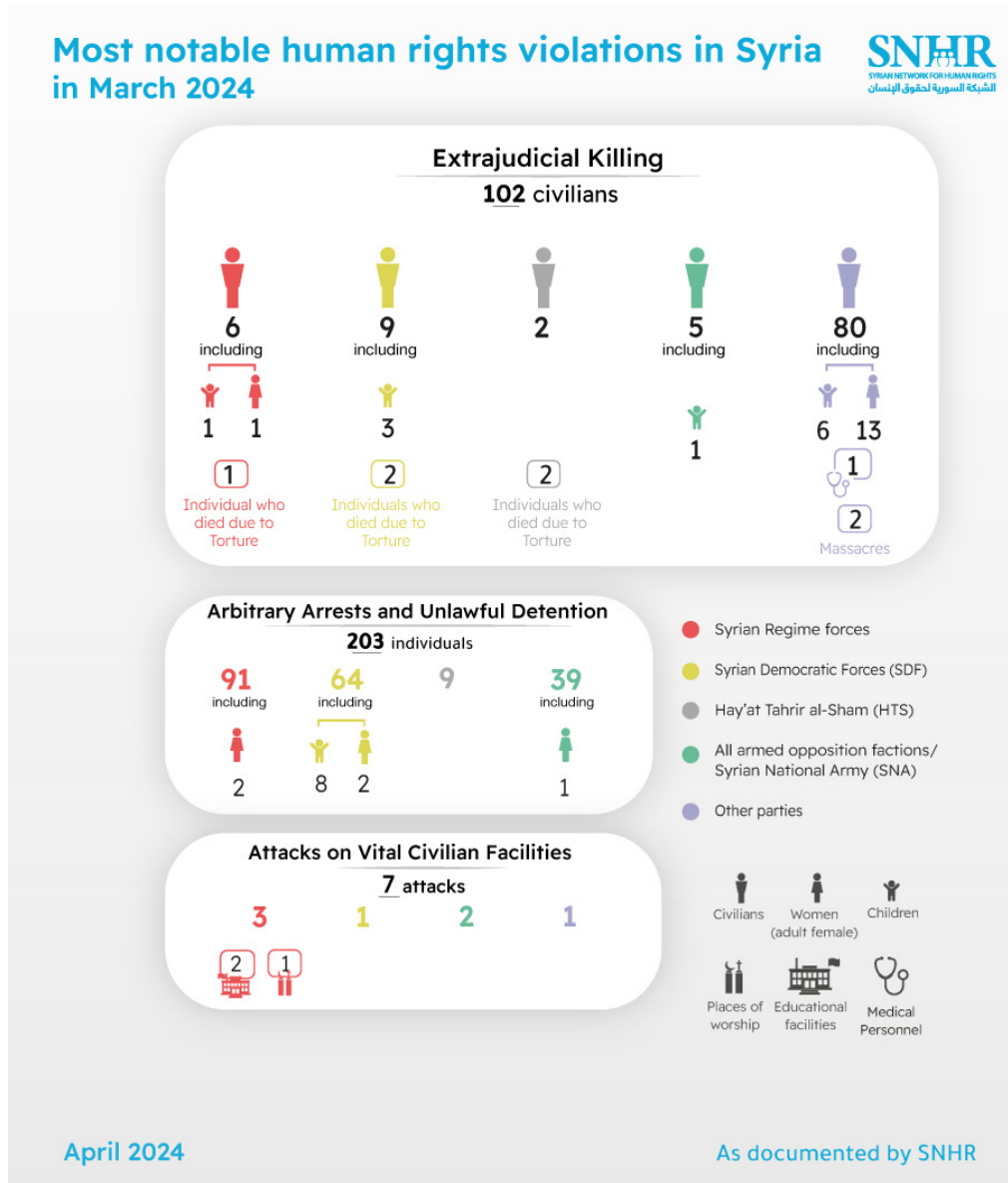
4. Syrian refugees

On March 19, [a large fire of unidentified case broke out](#) in the Ramadan Camp for Syrian Refugees in the Wadi al-Arnab area of Lebanon's Aarsal region. [The fire](#), which burnt for two hours before it was extinguished, [completely destroyed about 29 tents and their contents in the camp](#), which houses about 45 families, while other camps were partially destroyed. Aside from a few cases of suffocation, no casualties were recorded.

11. Located near al-Hawl town in eastern rural Hasaka governorate, al-Hawl IDPs Camp is under the control of the SDF.

Most notable human rights violations in Syria in March 2024 as documented on SNHR's database

This report summarizes the most notable human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria that were documented by SNHR in March 2024. The infographic below outlines March's most notable violations



1. Extrajudicial killing

In March 2024, SNHR documented the killing of **102** civilians, including 11 children and 14 women (adult female). The largest proportion of the 102 victims were killed by other parties. These deaths include one medical worker and five individuals who died due to torture, while we also documented at least two massacres this month. On April 1, we released [a report](#) detailing the civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in March 2024.

Civilian deaths recorded in March 2024 were distributed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. Main parties:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):¹² Six civilians, including one child and one woman.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):¹³ Two civilians.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): Five civilians, including one child.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): Nine civilians, including three children.

B. Other parties:

We documented the killing of 80 civilians in March, including six children and 13 women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unidentified source: 28 civilians, including two children and 11 women.
- Gunfire of unidentified source: 35 civilians, including one child and one woman.
- Bombings by unidentified parties: Three civilians, including two children.
- Killings by unidentified parties: 11 civilians, including one woman.
- Israeli forces: One civilian.
- Iraqi Border Guard: One child.
- Drowning: One civilian.

2. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance

In March 2024, SNHR documented at least 203 arbitrary arrests/detentions carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, with those detained including eight children and five women (adult female). Most of these arrests were carried out by Syrian regime forces. We [released a report](#) on April 2 detailing the arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in March 2024 by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

12. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the regime's security apparatus. As a result, the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic, hereditary rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade merely for show. The Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides. The Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security office, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the president assisted by the heads of the security branches.

While we are aware that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government', we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

13. Designated as a terror group by the UN.

Cases of arbitrary arrests were distributed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- Syrian regime forces: 91 individuals, including two women.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): Nine individuals.
- All Armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 39 individuals, including one woman.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 64 individuals, including eight children and two women.

3. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

SNHR documented at least seven attacks on vital civilian facilities during March 2024, three of them by Syrian regime forces, which were concentrated in Idlib governorate.

Of these seven attacks, we documented two attacks targeting an educational facility (a school), and one on a place of worship.

The attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in March 2024 were distributed by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria as follows:

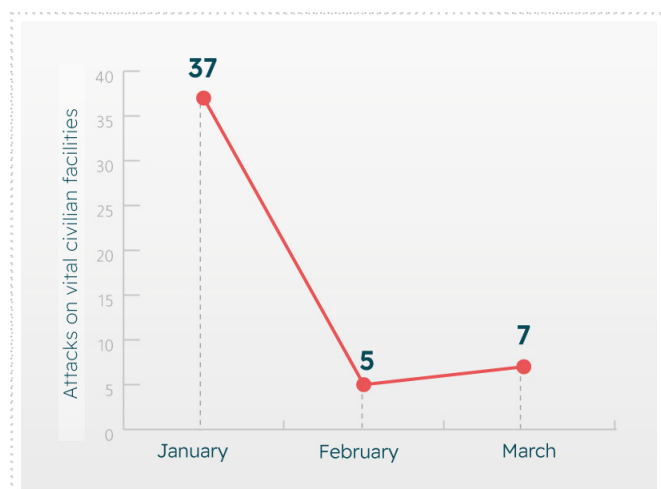
A. Main parties

- Syrian regime forces: Three attacks.
- All armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): Two attacks.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): One attack.

B. Other parties

- Turkish forces: One attack.

Since the start of 2024 up until April, 49 attacks on vital civilian facilities by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria have been documented. These are distributed by month as follows:



As shown on the graph, January saw the highest monthly number of attacks on vital civilian facilities seen so far in 2024, accounting for about 76 percent of all attacks documented to date this year. As SNHR's database shows, Syrian regime forces have been responsible for 35 of the 49 attacks on vital civilian facilities carried out so far this year by the various parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria.

III. Brief on March's Most Notable Developments Related to Syria at the International Level

On February 28, [the European Parliament voted on, and passed a set of recommendations on the situation in Syria](#) in order to promote efforts to attain democracy and support the aspirations of the Syrian people. The recommendations passed by a large majority, with 428 members voting in favor, 35 voting against, and 45 abstaining. The recommendations touch upon a number of matters, including the political process, securing protection, combating impunity, humanitarian assistance, and refugees. A notable item was the opposition to any normalization of relations with the Syrian regime without first achieving profound, verifiable developments on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2254, including releasing political prisoners, and informing the families of missing persons, victims, and forcibly disappeared persons of their loved ones' fate. The recommendations also stated that Syria cannot be considered, either wholly or partially, safe for the return of Syrian citizens who are living as refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and around the world, having fled the crimes of the Syrian regime against them, and who face the risk of torture, coercion, and disappearance should they return to Syria in its current state.

On March 4, [Adedeji Ebo](#), the Director and Deputy to the High-Representative for Disarmament Affairs, gave a briefing during the [UN Security Council's 9,562nd meeting](#), in which he stressed that the Syrian regime's declarations about its chemical weapons stockpile cannot be considered accurate and complete to this day, considering the still-unresolved discrepancies and gaps which were identified in the assessment of the Technical Secretary of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), while also stressing that the full cooperation of the Syrian regime is essential to close this matter. Mr. Ebo also went over the findings of the two most recent reports by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Syria, which were released on February 22. Also during the meeting, the United States representative noted that the Syrian regime continues to obfuscate, obstructing the OPCW's work and that of its various technical teams. The US diplomat also noted that the most recent findings by the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team only fuel concerns over the Syrian regime's residual capacity to use chemical weapons.

On March 9, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, [issued a special statement on the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), noting that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is higher than ever after 13 years of conflict, with three out of every four people in Syria needing assistance, while "More than half the population suffers from hunger... Roughly half the pre-war population remains displaced inside or outside Syria. Arbitrary detention, mass incarceration, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, sexual and gender-based violence, torture, and other ill-treatment, continue and are an obstacle to sustainable peace in Syria."

On March 11, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) [submitted its report to the 55th regular session of the Human Rights Council](#) (held from February 26 to April 5, 2024). The report, which covers the period between July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, noted that a ceasefire is now an urgent demand in Syria, as the country is seeing the worst wave of violence since 2020, with the parties to the conflict carrying out attacks against civilians and primary facilities in a way that could constitute war crimes. Meanwhile, the report noted, the unprecedented humanitarian crisis is exacerbating the sense of hopelessness for Syrians. Relatedly, [on March 18, Paulo S. Pinheiro, Chair of the COI, issued a statement to the Human Rights Council stressing that](#), "Since we last reported to you six months ago, Syria has become a yet more dangerous place to live and we have seen the largest escalation in violence in four years, with active hostilities on multiple fronts." Elsewhere in the statement, Mr. Pinheiro shed light on the Syrian regime's use of internationally prohibited cluster munitions in attacks on densely populated areas, as part of its offensive on Idlib that was launched on October 5 of last year. Furthermore, he outlined the violations by all the parties to the conflict in Syria, including the continued killing, arrest, enforced disappearance, and indiscriminate attacks. "I call on [Human Rights] Council members to not lose sight of the Syrian crisis," he said, stressing that "Syrians face unprecedented hardship." Also during the 55th Human Rights Council session, the COI submitted another report entitled, ['Punishing the innocent: ending violations against children in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic'](#) which tackled the issue of violations against children in SDF-held areas, especially children detained in SDF military camps or camps housing non-Syrian families and individuals who were associated with ISIS.

On March 11, [the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland \(OAG\) referred Rifaat Assad](#), the brother of Syria's former dictator Hafez Assad and uncle of its current dictator Bashar Assad, to the Federal Criminal Court of Switzerland for trial over charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Rifaat Assad is charged with issuing orders for committing crimes of murder, torture, cruel mistreatment, and unlawful arrest in February 1982 as the commander of 'Saraya al-Difaa' (Defense Companies) and chief commander of the military operation in Hama in the context of the armed conflict and systematic, wide-scale attack on the residents of Hama city. With the list of charges officially issued, Rifaat Assad's trial in absentia will officially commence. This marks a landmark development, with Rifaat Assad being the most senior Syrian regime official to be referred to trial under the universal jurisdiction principle to date. SNHR has assisted in the case through its partnership with the Trial International team by providing data and details on the violations that took place in the course of the attack on Hama city in February 1982. SNHR also supplied the OAG with a list of eyewitnesses and survivors who, with immense bravery and a spirit of hope, gave their accounts in pursuit of long-overdue justice. [On March 20, we issued a statement](#) welcoming this step by the OAG, and calling for expediting the trial proceedings.

On March 11, [Germany's Federal Public Prosecution arrested two Syrian citizens living in Germany](#), referred to as Khalil A. and Faiz Al S. who were captured by police officers in the Esslingen area, in connection with both being strongly suspected of having been members of ISIS in Deir Ez-Zour governorate in 2014. Khalil was allegedly the head of an ISIS military unit through which he was involved in spreading the extremist ideology and views of the terror group, as well as being involved in arresting two fighters from the then-Free Syrian Army (armed opposition faction), who were then taken and delivered in handcuffs to ISIS' so-called al-Hesba 'Accountability Apparatus'. The other suspect, Faiz, was a member of this unit who was involved in the same arrest incident.

On March 13, [the EU Delegation to Syria issued a statement observing the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#) in which the EU reiterated its calls for “a sustainable and comprehensive political solution for Syria in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 as the only viable way forward”.

On March 14, [the International Rescue Committee \(IRC\) issued a press release observing the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), in which it noted that the worsening economic crisis is only exacerbating the “conflict misery”. As the Syrian conflict enters its 14th year, with humanitarian needs reaching unprecedented levels, new complications may arise, the IRC warned.

On March 15, [Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria issued a statement observing the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), in which he called on all parties to the conflict to release all arbitrarily arrested detainees immediately and unconditionally. He added that “addressing the plight of detainees, abductees, and missing persons comprehensively and at a scale commensurate with the scale of the tragedy is essential. Doing so is vital for rebuilding shattered lives, reuniting families separated for far too long, relieving other families from living in the limbo of the unknown, and for ensuring the credibility of any political path to a lasting peace.”

On March 15, [UNICEF issued a press release observing the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), in which it noted that the number of children in need of assistance in Syria is higher than ever in light of the 13-year conflict. The statement reveals that “Almost 7.5 million children in the country are in need of humanitarian assistance” while “more than 650,000 children under the age of five are chronically malnourished - an increase of around 150,000 in the four years since 2019.”

On March 15, [the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the US issued a joint statement observing the 13th anniversary of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), noting that there are growing concerns over the threats posed by the Captagon trade, which yields vast profits for the Syrian regime with the support of Iranian regime-affiliated militias, with these profits going to fund the regime’s oppression of the Syrian people. The statement also stressed that “[The four countries] see no possibility of normalization with the Assad regime, no funding of reconstruction and no lifting of sanctions until there is authentic, meaningful, and enduring progress towards a political solution... The conditions for safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees to Syria, supported by the international community, are not yet met.”

On March 15, [SNHR held an event entitled, ‘Thirteen Years of Death, Torture, and Disappearance: Examining Human Rights Abuses and Accountability Opportunities in Syria’](#) under the sponsorship of the US, Germany, UK, the Netherlands, and France. The participating states all reiterated their position of no lifting of sanctions, no reconstruction, and no normalization with the Assad regime. [On March 18, we released a statement on the event.](#)

On March 16, [the WHO issued a statement observing the 13th anniversary of the start of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria](#), in which the organization revealed that the number of people in need of health assistance in Syria had reached 15 million, or 65 percent of the population, after 13 years of conflict.

On March 21, [the UN Security Council held a meeting on the situation in Syria](#), during which the participants all agreed that the situation in Syria is “grave” and a cause of concern, and stressed the need for unrestricted and sustainable humanitarian assistance. [In his briefing](#), Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, stressed that “the tragic reality is that developments are going in the wrong direction” on all fronts, outlining the worsening security and humanitarian situation in the country, as well as the deteriorating human rights, economic, and political situation. In another briefing, Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, revealed that rates of malnutrition among children under the age of five have tripled in the last five years, and as such over half a million child will need a live-saving treatment for acute malnutrition this year. Meanwhile, the US representative stressed that the sanctions imposed on the Syrian regime will persist until tangible and measurable progress to a political resolution is made. For his part, the French representative, noted that “today, France and the European Union see no reason to lift sanctions or finance the rebuilding of a country that is, in large part, destroyed by its own government and its allies. But those decisions are reversible based on real progress in the political process and, meanwhile, France and the bloc will continue to support Syrians through humanitarian assistance.” In the same meeting, [the OPCW gave a briefing on the Director-General's periodic report on the progress made in the elimination of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons programme](#).

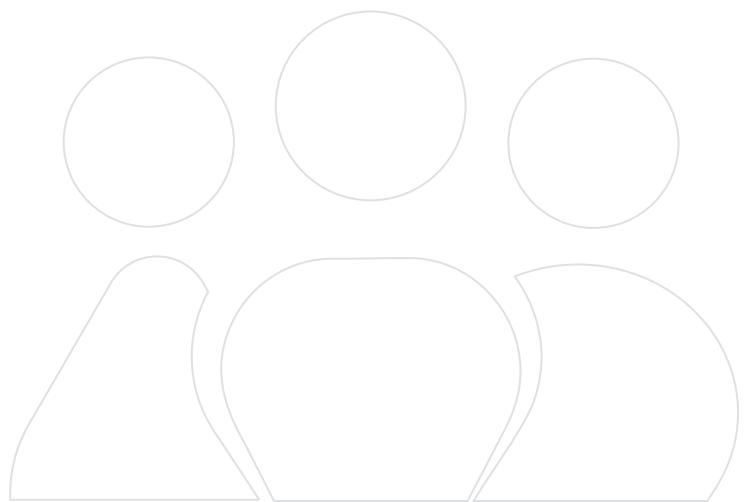
On March 25, [the Koblenz Higher Regional Court, of the Rhineland-Palatinate state in Germany, revealed in a statement](#) that the trial of 44-year-old Syrian national Moustafa M. had commenced. Moustafa was indicted of being a member of ISIS in Syria in 2015, and was allegedly involved in executions. While on guard duty, Moustafa opened fire at an individual who was escaping an ISIS checkpoint. In early-June 2015, the accused was involved in transferring four Free Syrian Army (armed opposition factions) who were set to be executed. Along with a group of other ISIS fighters, he tied one of the captives to the back of a car using a rope and dragged the victim behind the vehicle at speeds of over 40 kilometers per hour until the man died. The statement revealed that Moustafa, who was captured in Mainz city on March 21, 2023, has been in custody ever since.

On March 26, [the UN's International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) issued a report documenting migrant deaths on migration routes while fleeing conflict](#). The report reveals that from 2014 until the end of 2023, about 1,270 Syrian citizens died on migration routes, with Syrians accounting for the fourth-highest number of victims in terms of country of origin.

On March 26, [the US Department of Treasury imposed new sanctions on entities and individuals supporting the Syrian regime](#). The new sanctions have been imposed on 11 entities and individuals who support the Syrian regime through the illicit drug trade and internal and external money transfers.

On March 26, SNHR, represented by its Executive Director Fadel Abdulghany, participated in two international events in the Netherlands. The first, organized by the UK Embassy in the Hague and entitled, 'Access to Truth and Justice for Victims', aimed to promote a better understanding of the primary importance of justice for victims of injustice and their families, while also tackling the current challenges surrounding the mechanisms supporting access to truth and how institutions can assist in ensuring access to truth and justice. In the second event, which was organized by the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition and the US-based Arms Control Association (ACA), which was entitled, 'Addressing Current Chemical Weapons Convention Compliance Challenges', SNHR called on nations worldwide to file a case against the Syrian regime before the International Court of Justice over its violations of the CWC. On March 28, [SNHR released a statement detailing our participation in the two events.](#)

On March 29, [the US Department of State announced new visa restrictions on 10 officials in the Syrian regime's governments and their families.](#) which are believed to have been responsible for, or involved in oppressing Syrians, especially through acts of violence and grave human rights violations. Back in December 2023, the US Secretary of State announced visa restrictions on 11 officials in the regime's government and on their direct relatives.



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- SNHR notes that for more than 13 years to date, the Syrian regime has perpetrated the most horrific types of violations against the Syrian people, some of which amount to crimes against humanity. Since the regime continues to commit such violations up to the present day, as exhaustively documented in the numerous reports we have released, it is clear that any normalization of relations with the regime or efforts to rehabilitate it are acts of support for a criminal entity engaged in crimes against humanity, each of which constitutes a violation of international law.
- The evidence we have gathered confirms that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian regime has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could not find any record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian regime or Russian forces prior to any attack as required under international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks lead to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the SDF is a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with such indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- HTS has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- All armed opposition factions/SNA have violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, have caused massive collateral damage involving loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive munitions to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva IV Convention (Articles 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations

UN Security Council

- The UN Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that «all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.»
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using its veto, since it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states' veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians' lives and to save the Syrian people's homes, heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, pillaging and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions and landmines in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and should include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other UNSC permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, as well as medical and humanitarian assistance, in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced person camps, and to follow-up with those states that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the UN Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those involved in perpetrating them.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. Through failing to take these essential steps, the UN Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work to ensure justice and achieve accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the UN Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

Syrian regime

- End all indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all those wounded by it.
- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and must apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.

The Coalition (US-led International Coalition and the SDF)

- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas, towns and villages under their control.
- The SDF must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the personnel involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

All Armed Opposition factions/SNA

- The Armed Opposition/SNA must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian Organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

Acknowledgment

We extend our most sincere gratitude to the victims' families and friends, and to eyewitnesses and local activists for their invaluable contributions to this report.



Annex

This annex features some of the reports and investigative reports released by UN and international organizations on Syria in the month of March 2024:

- [This annex features some of the reports and investigative reports released](#) by UN and international organizations on Syria in the month of March 2024
- United Nations (UN). (2024, March). [Monthly Digest of the UN in Syria - February 2024.](#)
- Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024, March 6). [We are failing Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them, warns the latest United Nations-led Regional Response Plan](#)
- Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). (2024, March 7). [13 Years of Violence Against Health Workers and Facilities in Syria Demonstrates Need for Accountability: PHR](#)
- UN World Food Programme (WFP). (2024, March 7). [WFP Syria Situation Report - January 2024.](#)
- Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2024, March 8). [On International Women's Day, Growing Protests and Worsening Access to Basic Rights for Women in Syria.](#)
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024, March 15). [Joint Statement by UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria](#), Adam Abdelmoula, and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Muhannad Hadi, on the 13 years' Anniversary of the Syria Crisis.
- International Rescue Committee (IRC). (2024, March 14). [Syria Multi-Sector Needs Assessment - March 2024.](#)
- Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2024, March 18). [On the 13th Anniversary of the Start of the Popular Uprising, 231,278 Syrian Civilians Have Been Documented Killed, Including 15,334 due to Torture, 156,757 Have Been Arrested and/or Forcibly Disappeared, While 14 Million Remain Forcibly Displaced](#)
- Action Against Hunger. (2024, March 15). [After 13 Years of War in Syria, More than Half the Population Faces Hunger.](#)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2024, March 17). Jordan: [Ensure Accountability, Compensation for Syria Strikes](#)
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2024, March 22). Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Adam Abdelmoula Press Briefing [on the humanitarian situation in Syria 22 March 2024, 09:45-10:15 \(CET\) Geneva / Damascus](#)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). (2024, March 25). [North-west Syria Operational Update \(January - February 2024\)](#)
- UNICEF. (2024, March 25). [UNICEF Syria Crisis Humanitarian Situation Report \(Refugees\), January - December 2023.](#)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2024, March 28). [Syrians Face Dire Conditions in Turkish-Occupied 'Safe Zone'](#)



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No justice without accountability

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