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The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in December and for All of 2020

The Continuing Gross Violations and Failure of Political Transition Devastate What Remains of Syria and Prevent Refugees from Returning

Monday 4 January 2021

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:

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria in 2020, in addition to the violations documented by SNHR for December 2020 alone, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces during this period, as well as providing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights indiscriminate attacks, as well as the use of outlawed weapons (cluster munitions, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, incendiary weapons), and attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during these two periods. To find out more about our working [methodology](#) in documenting and archiving data, please visit the following link that explains this in detail.

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.

II. Summary of the Most Notable Events in December 2020:

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

Syrian Regime forces and militias continued carrying out artillery and missile bombardment on the cities and towns in the southern suburbs of Idlib and the western suburbs of Aleppo during December, but at a lower rate than the previous three months. We monitored Syrian Regime forces using anti-armor weapons, targeting many civilian cars, even at distances from the front lines of up to approximately 5 km, in the western suburbs of Hama and the western suburbs of Aleppo, with one of these incidents resulting in a [massacre](#) in the suburbs of Hama on December 26, in which five civilians were killed.

The pace of Russian airstrikes decreased in December compared to the previous two months, as we recorded no airstrikes on Idlib governorate, although we recorded several airstrikes on al Kbaina area in Latakia suburbs in the second half of the month.

This month, the Badiya [desert area] of the southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour witnessed battles between Syrian Regime forces and Russian forces against ISIS cells.

In December, battles continued between Syrian Democratic Forces and Syrian National Army forces in Ein Eisa district in the northern suburbs of Raqqa, in an attempt by the latter to advance and control the area.

Explosions (using improvised explosive devices (IEDs), motorcycle and car bombs) continued in most areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, particularly in the areas of al Bab and Afrin in the suburbs of Aleppo, with these explosions causing civilian casualties.

Landmines continue to claim civilian lives, with most of these incidents occurring in agricultural areas close to the front lines between Syrian Regime forces and factions of the Armed Opposition; in December, landmines caused the deaths of a number of civilians, most of whom were farmers, mainly in the western suburbs of Aleppo. The situation was not better in the areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces, where we recorded several incidents of landmine explosions, specifically in the northern suburbs of Hama, which resulted in casualties.

Also in December, we recorded continuing assassinations in the northwest and eastern areas of Aleppo governorate, as well as in the east and north of Deir Ez-Zour governorate and in Daraa governorate; these operations targeted civilians, policemen, and former leaders of Armed Opposition factions. Most of the assassinations in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, which were carried out by gunmen on motorcycles, targeted members of Syrian

Democratic Forces; on December 27, SDF issued a decision, broadcasting it to residents through loudspeakers, banning motorcycles in a number of villages and towns, specifically in the area linking Jdeed Ekidat village to Theyban town, confiscating and burning a number of motorcycles due to their owners' failure to comply with the ban.

The Turkish forces conducted one non-joint patrol with the Russian forces on the 'M4' International Road on December 24, and continued to withdraw their observation posts from al Sarman area in the eastern suburbs of Idlib and from the western suburbs of Aleppo.

On December 7, Sergey Chemezov, CEO of the Russian Rostec Corporation, [announced](#) that Kalashnikov attack drones had been tested during Russia's combat missions in Syria.

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian Regime forces in December continued to persecute and arbitrarily arrest a number of civilians detained while trying to travel towards areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces, who were arrested while they were passing through regime checkpoints. We have documented multiple arrests and acts of persecution against citizens in connection with making phone calls to their family members and friends in areas outside the control of the Syrian regime.

Syrian Regime forces in December continued to persecute and arrest individuals who have concluded settlements of their security status with the Syrian regime in areas that previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Daraa and Damascus Suburbs governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests.

We recorded arrests of a number of civilians [in connection with their kinship with activists in the popular uprising or opponents of the Syrian regime](#). We also documented citizens being arrested simply for criticizing the deteriorating living conditions in regime-controlled areas.

Meanwhile, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance throughout the month of December, targeting civilians for their kinship relationships with individuals in the Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army. Syrian Democratic Forces also carried out campaigns of mass raids and arrests, targeting many civilians, including children, on the pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters.

In December, we also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces carrying out abductions of children with the aim of taking them to its training and recruitment camps and forcibly conscripting them. Syrian Democratic Forces have prevented the children's families from communicating with them, and did not disclose their fate.

December also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham carrying out detentions of civilians, with arrests concentrated in Idlib city, including activists working with civil society groups and media workers; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS's management of areas under its control.

The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in December, targeting civilians under various pretexts, such as having kinship with Syrian Democratic Forces; we also recorded mass arrests targeting those coming from areas under the control of the Syrian regime. In addition, we recorded detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext.

As for the COVID-19 pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage all regions of Syrians, with dozens of deaths being recorded daily due to it, amid an almost complete absence of precautionary measures and massive negligence by the controlling authorities, along with the public's failure to follow these measures due to dire economic and social conditions. December was no better than previous months this year, and through our monitoring of reports of infections and deaths among citizens, we at the SNHR become more certain of the widening gap between the actual numbers of coronavirus cases and fatalities and those announced by the ruling authorities.

In areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces, the Ministry of Health in December officially announced 3,547 cases of infection and 294 deaths, which is the highest admitted monthly record to date, bringing the official total to [11,434 cases of infection with 711 deaths, as of December 31](#).

In northwestern Syria, more infections and deaths due to coronavirus were recorded in December, with the Early Warning Alert and Response Network (EWARN) announcing 4,268 infections and 143 deaths documented for the month; the total number of infections and deaths for the year, announced by the EWARN [as of December 31](#), reached 20,270 cases of infection and 385 deaths.

In northeastern Syria, [as of December 30](#), a total of 8,024 coronavirus infection cases, including 271 deaths, had been announced by the Health Authority in the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria. We note that 993 cases of infection and 76 deaths were recorded in December.

On the living situation level:

The general economic collapse continues with its repercussions felt worst by ordinary Syrian citizens, who are unable to secure adequate food for themselves and their families. We have noticed an increasing spread of beggary and homelessness phenomena in most areas, especially in those areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces.

Due to the exorbitant prices of heating materials, citizens are forced to use inadequate heating materials, whose use causes fires due to the explosion of heaters, with some of these incidents resulting in casualties, especially in areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces; we recorded the deaths of two children in al Tayyana village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, due to a heater explosion on December 28.

With the repercussions of the economic crisis, the medicine market in the areas under the control of Syrian Regime forces is suffering from a scarcity of medicine and an unprecedented increase in medicine prices, making it difficult for low-income citizens to acquire them; with the loss of some medicine for chronic diseases, there are fears among patients that their health conditions will deteriorate and the death rate will increase among them.

The Syrian regime continued to impose brutal restrictions on citizens despite the economic crisis afflicting Syria, with many municipalities removing and demolishing structures for their failure to meet building regulations, despite numerous families living in them; most of the families who had been living in these buildings had already been displaced from their homes in other regions.

December also witnessed a number of demonstrations in the villages and towns of al Sh'aitat and al Sh-heil in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, with protesters demanding improvement in the services and living conditions in the SDF-controlled region and the provision of job opportunities for the unemployed. The SDF's response was to carry out raids on a number of civilians' homes, arresting some civilians and taking them to undisclosed locations.

Meanwhile, Nazir Dubyan, Director of the Syrian regime's 'Foreign Trade of Syrian Grains Foundation', revealed in [a statement](#) published by al Ba'ath newspaper on December 1, 2020 that Russian companies have withdrawn from six contracts signed with the foundation, for reasons related to the delay in opening credit lines and rising prices on global wheat markets. The total value of the various contracts from which the Russian companies have withdrawn is estimated at 450,000 tons of wheat at \$224 per ton. If the Syrian regime is unable to secure alternative wheat sources, it is feared that Syrian citizens will suffer a more severe crisis in terms of obtaining bread.

On December 19, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection [raised the price](#) of one ton of cement for the second time in 2020, by 80% of the previous price, with the price per ton now reaching 125,000 Syrian pounds.

On December 23, the Syrian regime's President issued Legislative [Decree No. 34](#) for the year 2020, which provides for disbursing a one-time grant of 50.000 Syrian pounds (about 17 dollars) for civil and military workers, and 40.000 Syrian pounds (about 14 dollars) for civilian and military pensioners.

On the level of displacement and forced displacement:

Ein Eisa district, in the suburbs of Raqqa, witnessed a displacement movement of hundreds of civilians fleeing their homes due to the bombing of the area by the Syrian National Army, with most of them moving towards Raqqa city.

With the arrival of winter, the already abysmal humanitarian conditions in the camps in northern Syria have worsened, amid fears of flooding causing tents to collapse, sweeping them away or creating an impassible muddy morass into which the tents sink, as happened in previous years, especially [in the rainstorm in the region on December 14, 2020](#); this is coupled with an increased risk of fires due to the use of unsuitable heaters.

On December 16, the Syrian regime forced the people displaced from three villages in the Wadi Barada area, namely Bassima, Ein al Fijah and Ein al Khadra, to gather at one of the regime's checkpoints and [forced them to chant](#) praise for the president of the Syrian regime, Bashar al Assad, [before allowing them](#) to reenter their home villages for only a few hours, which they were only allowed to do on the condition that they had obtained security clearance. We note that the people of Wadi Barada have been subject to a forced displacement agreement that was reached between the Syrian regime and factions of the Armed Opposition in January 2017 following a fierce regime military campaign against the region.

In December, Syrian Democratic Forces allowed two groups of residents of al Hawl Camp in the suburbs of Hasaka to leave, with the first group which left the camp on December 10, consisting of approximately 350 people from Raqqa governorate, and the second which left on December 28, consisting of approximately 67 people from Deir Ez-Zour governorate. Meanwhile, a number of European countries repatriated a number of their nationals - families allegedly linked to ISIS - from al Hawl camp in December, with [Uzbekistan](#) repatriating 98 people on December 8, [Finland and Germany](#) repatriating 8 and 15 people respectively on the 20th of the month, while [Russia](#) repatriated 19 people from al Hawl and al Rouj camps on the 26th of December.

On December 16, Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, [said](#) that more than 80 percent of displaced families across Syria now say that their income does not cover their needs. "Families in which women are the primary breadwinner are even worse off – they make 30 percent less, on average, in terms of income than other displaced families."

On December 26, Lebanese citizens [set fire](#) to the '009 Dinah' Camp in al Meniyeh area in north of Lebanon over an earlier dispute with Syrian workers living in the camp. The Lebanese fired gunshots and started a fire in the camp which spread to all the tents there, resulting in the displacement of the camp's residents who were already suffering as a result of dire living conditions, particularly the children, amid the severe cold and the spread of COVID-19. This was not the first such incident that refugees have faced in Lebanon, with attackers largely acting with impunity, particularly in light of the absence of investigations and accountability to protect refugees and deter any party from perpetrating violations against them.

On the political and human rights level:

On December 1, Salwa Abdullah, the Syrian regime's Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, [stated](#) that some of those in charge of associations had made their fortunes in the war, but claimed that her ministry is currently unable to control this issue.

On December 2, the Syrian regime's President issued [Decree No. 325](#) relieving Eng. Alaa Munir Ibrahim from his duties as Governor of the Damascus Countryside Governorate. The next day, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Finance carried out a precautionary seizure of the movable and immovable funds belonging to him, his wife and three of his children [under Decree No. 2941](#).

On December 3, Joel Rayburn, the US Special Envoy for Syria, [stated](#) during a virtual press conference in Istanbul, Turkey, that any elections held by the Assad regime in 2021 outside the framework of Security Council Resolution 2245 will not enjoy legitimacy, as the elections must be sponsored and guaranteed by the United Nations. Rayburn also accused the Syrian regime of slowing down and continuously obstructing the work of the Constitutional Committee, and indicated that Russia is required to pressure the regime to play a constructive and purposeful role.

The Syrian regime continued to promote its supposedly tireless work to rehabilitate buildings and facilities in the areas that were subjected to military operations in order to encourage the return of their residents; on December 3, we monitored the opening of an [automatic bakery in Helfaya city](#) in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, which had witnessed a large massacre in 2012 known as the 'Bread Massacre', when the Syrian regime targeted civilians as they were buying bread.

On December 4, the fourth round of meetings of the Constitutional Committee concluded in Geneva. Although the issue of the constitution was not addressed during the meetings, Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, [indicated](#) in the final statement that it was agreed that the constitutional principles would be on the agenda of the next round of talks scheduled to be held at the end of January 2021.

On December 4, in his speech to the international conference 'Rome MED - Mediterranean Dialogues', Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [drew attention](#) to the new US and European sanctions imposed on Syria and to what he called the baseless and evidence-free allegations against Damascus regarding the use of chemical weapons and its commission of war crimes.

On December 9, the Sudanese Ministry of Interior [announced](#) in a statement that it had canceled its decision to exempt Syrians from entry visas upon entering Sudan.

On December 11, Fernando Arias, head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), [confirmed](#) during a Security Council videoconference meeting that Syria's initial declaration of chemical weapons on its territory cannot be considered accurate and complete, while Syria and its allies insisted that those stockpiles had been confirmed all destroyed by 2014.

On December 15, the Syrian regime's Council of Ministers [approved](#) the resumption of services at Aleppo and Latakia airports, as well as the resumption of services at al Qameshli International Airport for a temporary period.

On December 17, the Syria Trust for Development, which is supervised by Asmaa al Assad, the wife of the Syrian regime's President, [won](#) the rank of international arbitrator in the elections of the International Evaluation Commission for a group of non-governmental organizations in the Arab region, during the fifteenth session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) commission for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, held in Paris. We at the SNHR urge UNESCO to reverse this decision that legitimizes institutions affiliated with the Syrian regime, which has destroyed cultural heritage in Syria, in the eyes of the international community.

On December 17, Syria [ranked](#) last in the Freedom Index published by the Fraser Research Institute¹ and the Cato Institute² for the year 2020.

¹ The Fraser Institute is an independent, non-partisan research and educational organization based in Canada

² Founded in 1977, the Cato Institute is a public policy research organization headquartered in the USA, dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace. Its scholars and analysts conduct independent, nonpartisan research on a wide range of policy issues

On December 18, Maria Zakharova, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman, [said](#) in a statement that Moscow is ready to cooperate on Syria with all interested countries, including the United States, and claimed that Russia had played a key role in delivering a crushing blow to international terrorism in Syria.

Faysal Miqdad, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Syrian regime's government, [stated](#) in a press interview broadcast on Russian RT channel on December 19 that the unilateral US sanctions against the Syrian regime aim to affect the upcoming presidential elections.

On December 20, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [welcomed](#) the recent decision by the Government of Jordan to consider Asylum Seeker and Refugee Certificates issued by UNHCR to refugees in Jordan, valid until June 30th, 2021, regardless of the date of expiry.

On December 30, the OCHA [issued](#) the '2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)', which sets out the framework according to which the humanitarian community will respond to the large-scale humanitarian and protection needs in Syria throughout 2020, which it prepared in consultation with the Syrian regime's government, with the document's proclaimed primary objective for both parties remaining the timely and adequate delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need in accordance with international law and the United Nations Charter. We at the SNHR found it distinctly odd that this plan was issued only hours before the end of the year, and we also call for creating a platform for relief organizations to coordinate their work and negotiate with the Syrian regime in a more centralized manner.

On the course of the pursuit of accountability:

On December 10, Congressman [Joe Wilson introduced](#) the "Stop the Killing in Syria Act" on behalf of the House Republican Study Committee, which aims to prohibit recognition of the Assad regime as a legitimate government, or recognition of Bashar al Assad's right to run for any future elections in Syria. It also includes proposals to increase pressure on the Assad regime in order to protect civilians, including intensified sanctions that affect al Assad and his officers in charge of detention centers, and government officials in countries that help or normalize relations with Syria, in addition to institutions and bodies linked to Bashar al Assad's financial network.

On December 11, seven European countries, namely the UK, Germany, Belgium, Estonia, France, Ireland and Norway, [demanded](#) in an open session at the UN Security Council on the Syria chemical program, that arrangements be put in place to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, stressing that any party involved in using them will not be tolerated.

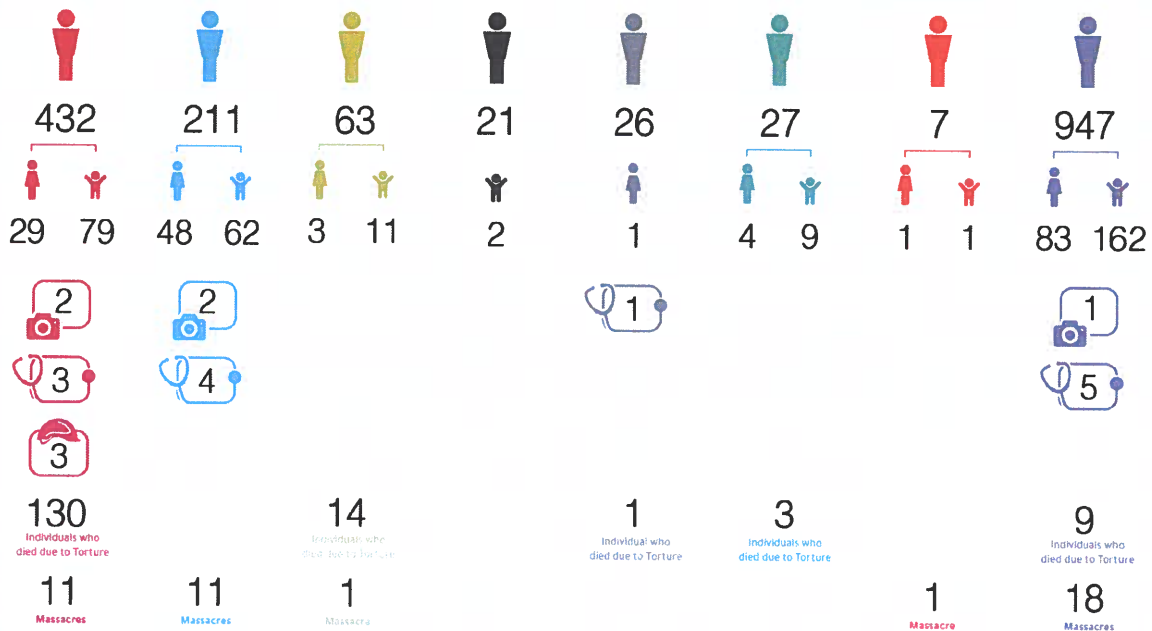
On December 16, the German Federal Prosecutor's Office [issued](#) an extended arrest warrant for a Syrian doctor, Alaa al Mousa, in the German state of Hesse, on the grounds of charges against him for committing crimes against humanity while practicing his work in the Homs Military Hospital before he obtained asylum in Germany. He was arrested on June 22, 2020.

On December 22, a new US sanctions list [was issued](#) on Syria, with the most prominent of the sanctions included being against members of Asmaa al Assad's family and against the Central Bank of Syria, with the list including seven individuals and 10 entities.

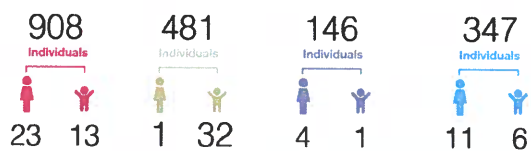
III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2020:

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in 2020 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

Extrajudicial Killing



Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detention



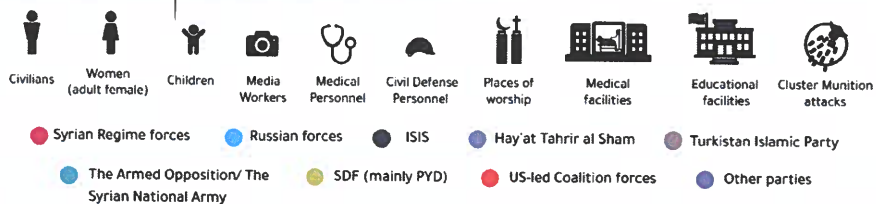
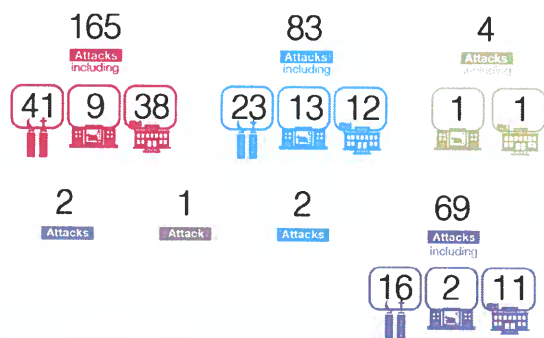
Record of Indiscriminate Attacks and Attacks Using Outlawed Weapons



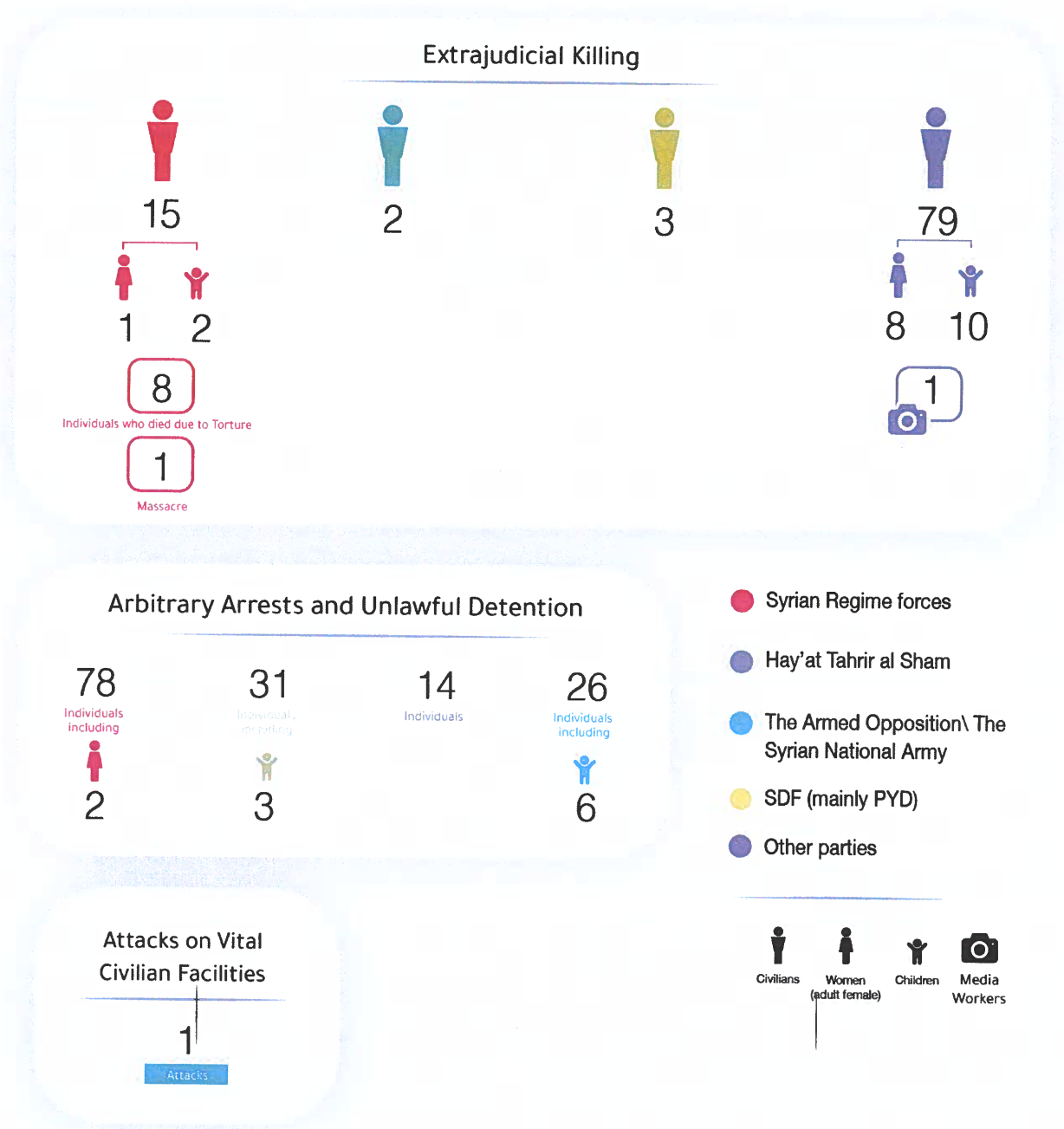
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At least 474 barrel bombs were dropped by the Syrian Regime air force, resulting in the deaths of 13 civilians, including 4 children and 2 women (adult female)

Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities



The report also outlines what was documented in December 2020.



A. Extrajudicial killing:**1. In 2020:**

In 2020, SNHR documented the deaths of 1,734 civilians, including 326 children and 169 women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom killed by other parties; among the victims were 13 medical personnel, five media workers, and three Civil Defense personnel. We also documented the deaths of 157 individuals due to torture, and recorded at least 42 massacres. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the death toll of civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias³): 432 civilians, including 79 children and 29 women.

Russian forces: 211 civilians, including 62 children and 48 women.

ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'): 21 civilians, including two children.

Hay'at Tahrir al Sham⁴: 26 civilians, including one woman.

The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army: 27 civilians, including nine children and four women.

Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party): 63 civilians, including 11 children and three women.

US-led coalition forces: Seven civilians, including one child and one woman.

B. Other parties:

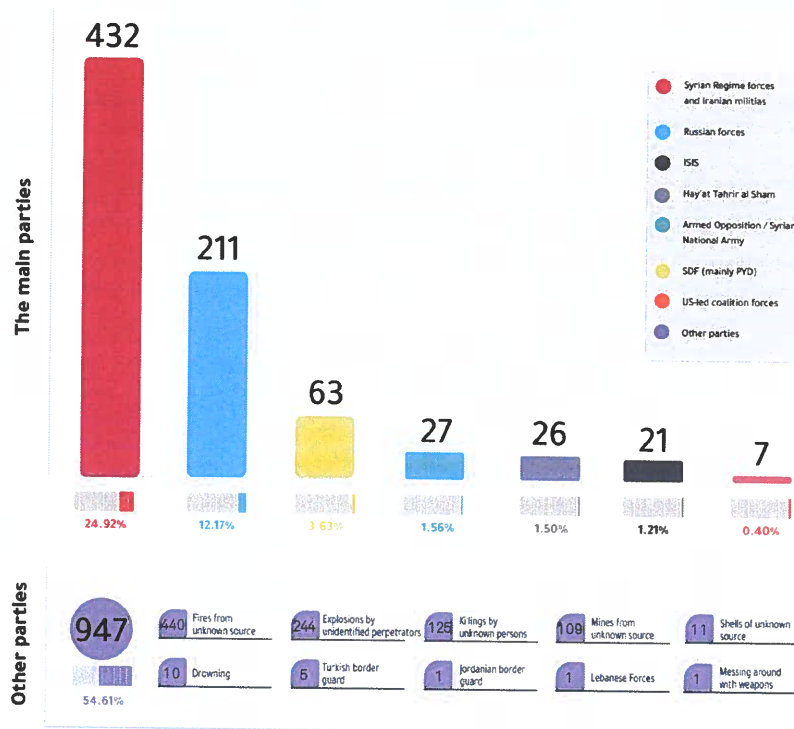
We documented the deaths of 947 civilians, including 162 children and 83 women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown origin: 109 civilians, including 23 children and 10 women.
- Shelling from unknown source: 11 civilians, including four children and two women.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 440 civilians, including 35 children and 24 women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 125 civilians, including 15 children and 21 women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 244 civilians, including 73 children and 25 women.
- Turkish border guards: Five civilians, including two children and one woman.
- Jordanian forces: One civilian.
- Lebanese border guards: One child.
- Drowning: 10 civilians, including eight children.
- Messing around with weapons: One child.

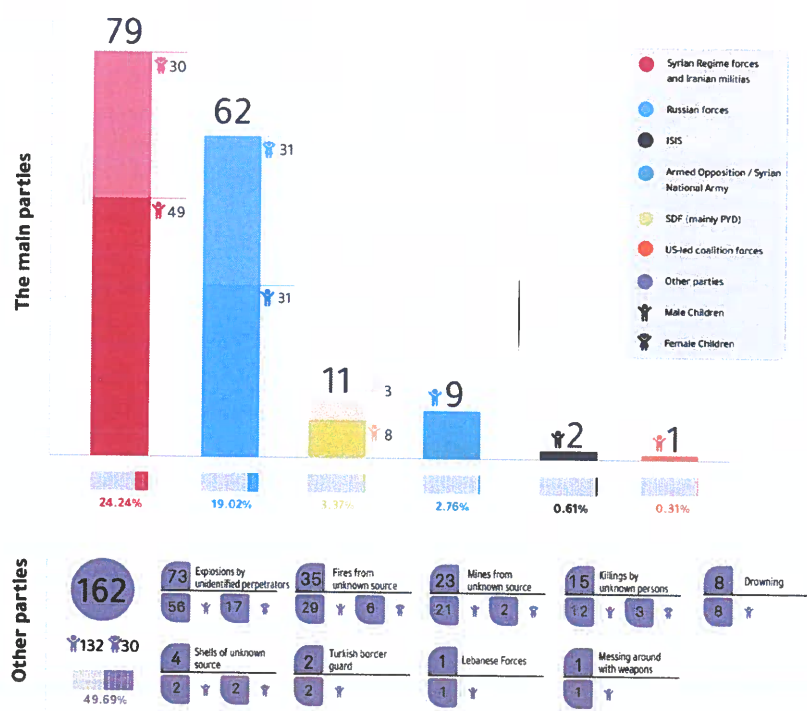
³ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while 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, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria. Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

⁴ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

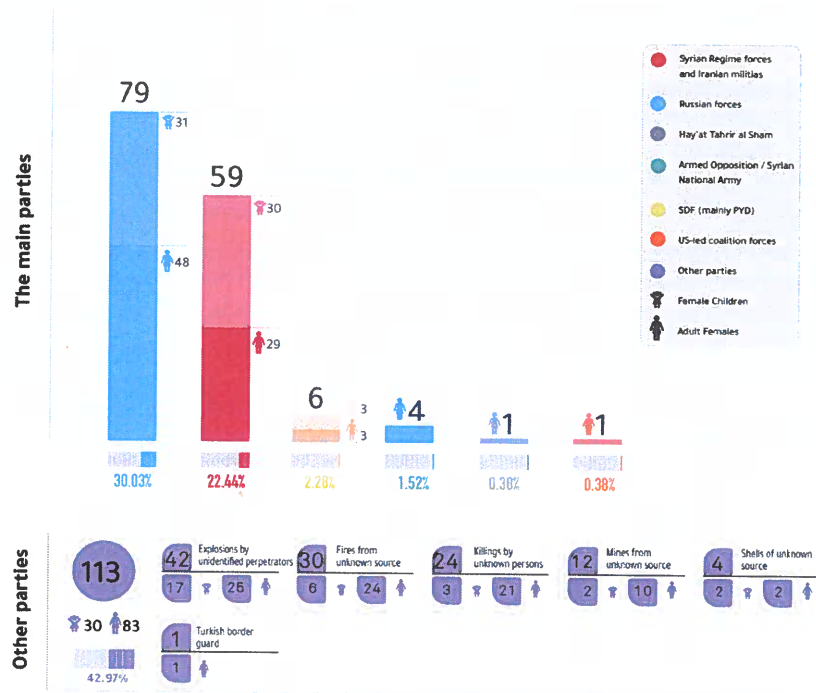
The death toll of civilian victims whose death we documented in 2020, which reached 1,734 civilians, was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



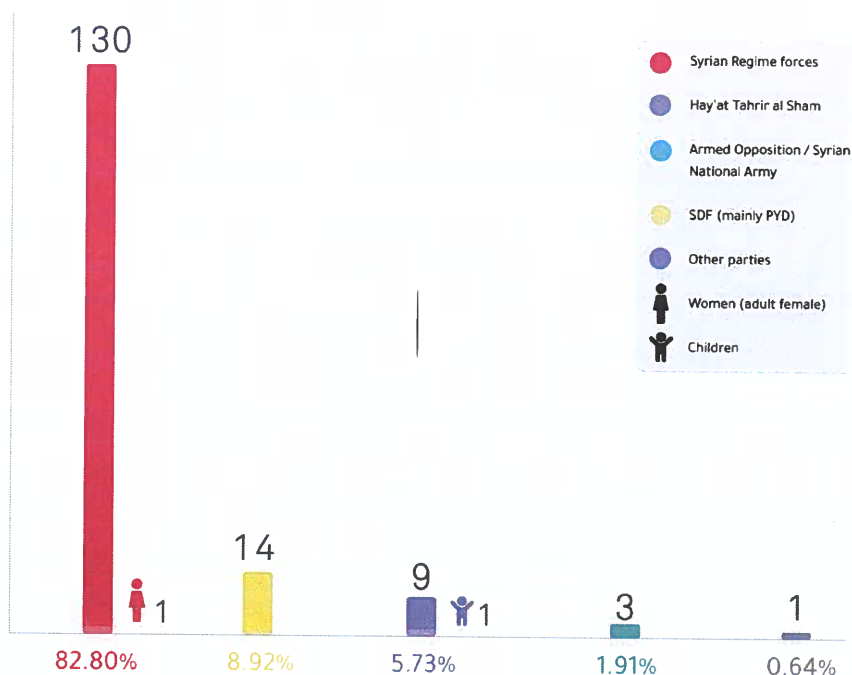
The death toll of children whose death we documented in 2020, which reached 326 children, was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



The death toll of females whose death we documented in 2020, which reached 263 females, was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



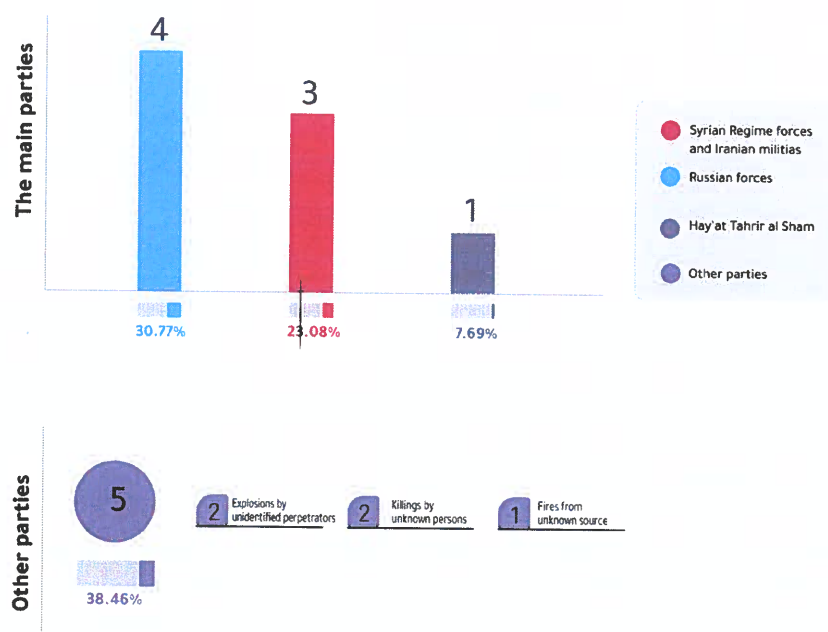
The death toll of victims whose death due to torture we documented in 2020, which reached 157 individuals, was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



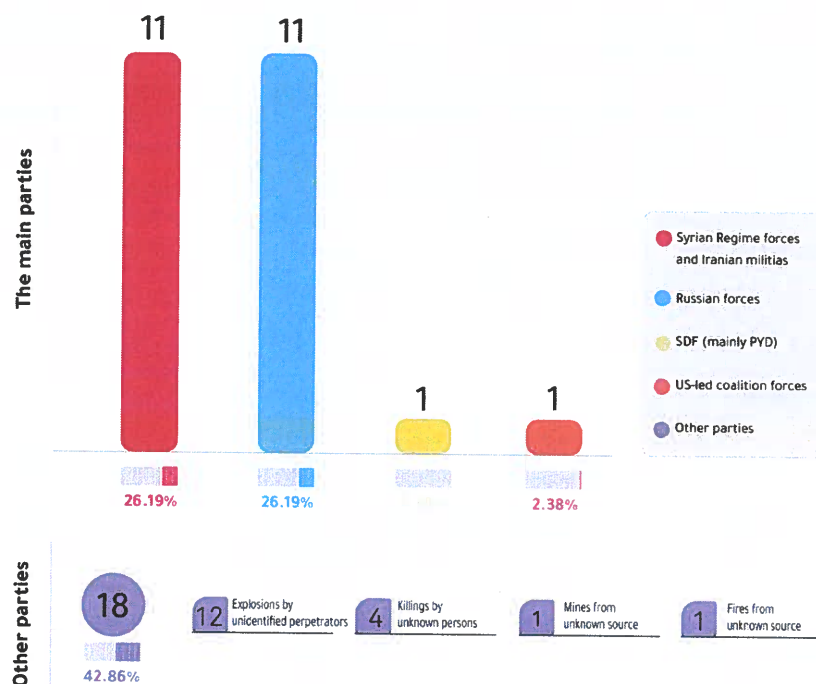
We documented the deaths of five media workers in 2020, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



We documented the deaths of 13 medical personnel in 2020, distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



The record of massacres we documented in 2020, which reached 42 massacres, was distributed according to the perpetrator parties among the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



2. In December 2020:

In December 2020, SNHR documented the deaths of 99 civilians, including 12 children and nine women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties; among the victims was one media worker and eight individuals who died due to torture. We also recorded at least one massacre.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 15 civilians, including two children and one woman.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** Two civilians.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Three civilians.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 79 civilians, including 10 children and eight women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

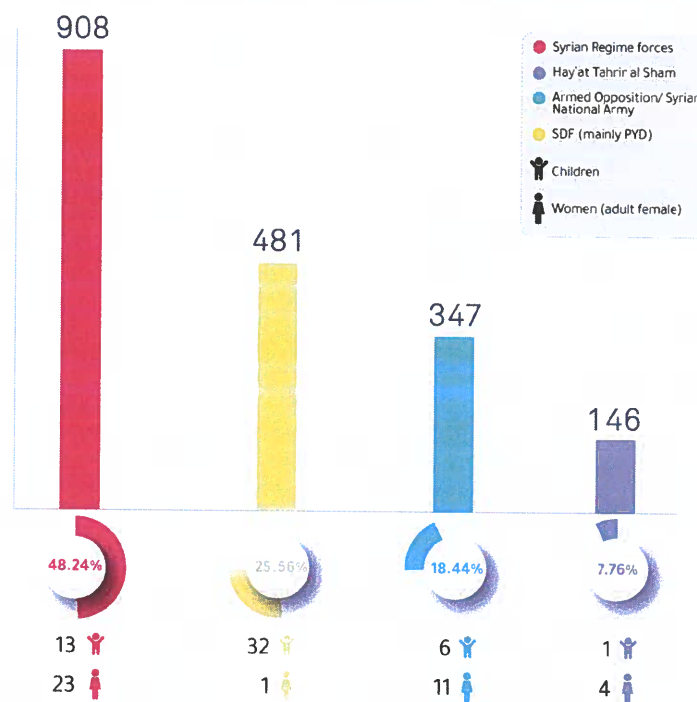
- Landmines of unknown origin: Five civilians, including two children.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 47 civilians, including five children and six women.
- Killings by unknown persons: 21 civilians, including two children and two women.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Six civilians, including one child.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

1. In 2020:

In 2020, SNHR documented at least 1,882 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 52 children and 39 women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the governorates of Daraa, Damascus Suburbs, then Aleppo. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The record of cases of arbitrary arrest in 2020, which reached 1,882 cases, was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:



- **Syrian Regime forces:** 908, including 13 children and 23 women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 146, including one child and four women.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** 347, including six children and 11 women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 481, including 32 children and one woman.

2. In December 2020:

In December 2020, SNHR documented at least 149 cases of arbitrary arrests, including nine children and two women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian Regime forces in the governorates of Daraa, Damascus Suburbs, then Damascus.

The record of cases of arbitrary arrests was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

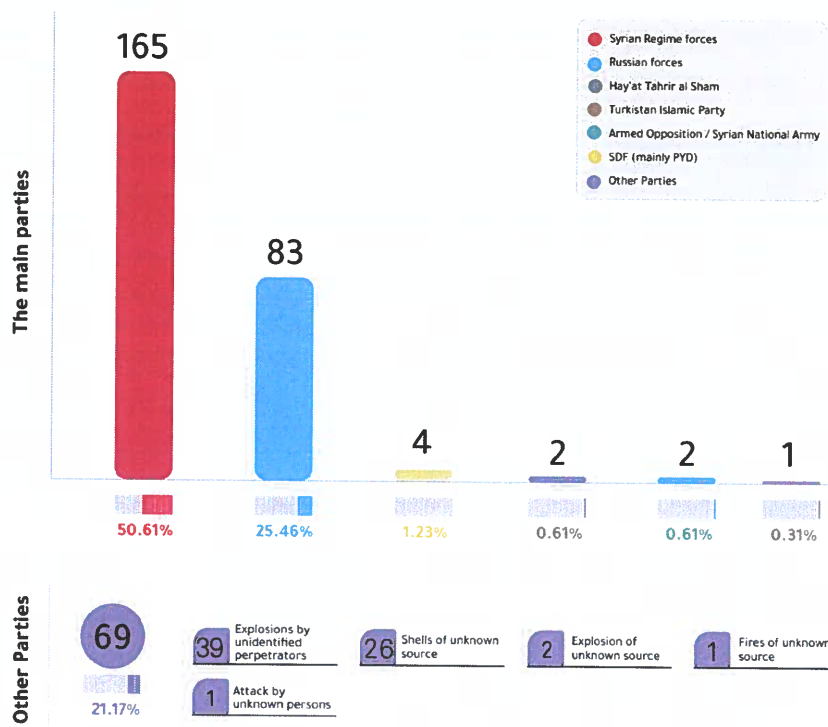
- **Syrian Regime forces:** 78, including two women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** 14.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** 26, including six children.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 31, including three children.

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

1. In 2020:

In 2020, SNHR documented at least 326 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 248 of which were carried out at the hands of Syria-Russian alliance forces, mostly in Idlib governorate. Among these attacks, we documented 62 on educational facilities (schools and kindergartens), 25 on medical facilities and 80 others were on places of worship.

These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:



A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 165.
- **Russian forces:** 83.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Two.
- **Turkistan Islamic Party:** One.
- **The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army:** Two.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Four.

B. Other parties:

Other parties committed 69 incidents, which were distributed as follows:

Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 39.

Shelling from unknown source: 26.

Attacks by unknown persons: One.

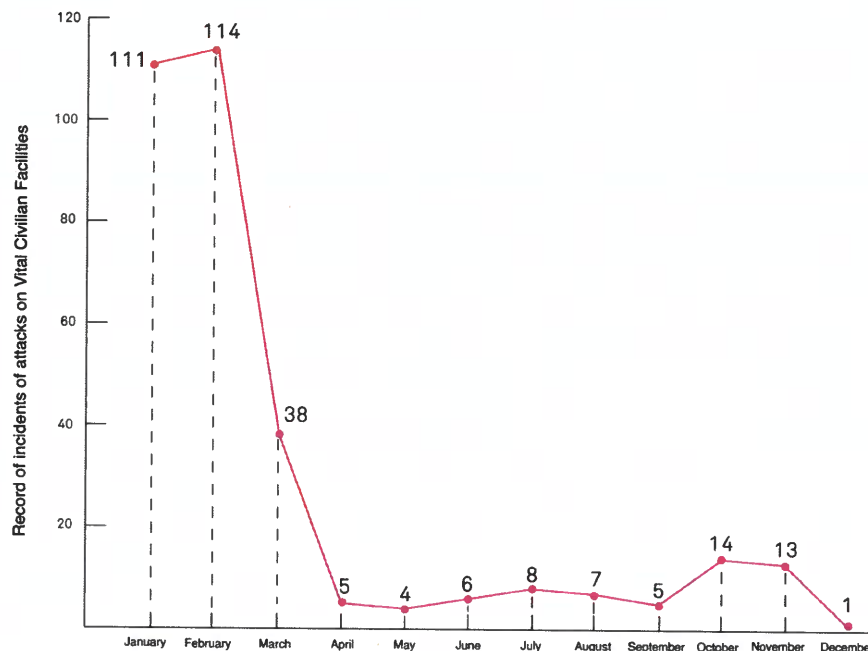
Gunfire of unknown source: One.

Explosion of unknown source: Two.

The record of attacks documented in 2020 on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

Attacked Facility	Perpetrator Party										
	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	Hay'at Tahrir al Sham	Turkistan Islamic Party	The Armed Opposition/ The Syrian National Army	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties				
							Bombings whose perpe- trators have not yet been identified	Shelling from unknown source	Attacks by unknown persons	Gunfire of unknown source	Explosion of unknown source
Places of Wor-ship											
Mosques	41	23	-	-	-	-	2	14	-	-	-
Vital Educa-tional Facilities											
Schools	35	11	-	-	-	1	3	7	1	-	-
Educational Institutions	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Universities	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Nurseries	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orphanages	1		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Vital Medical Facilities											
Medical Facilities	9	13	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-
Ambulances		2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Vital Cultural Facilities											
Museums	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Communal Facilities											
Gardens	1		-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Markets	21	2	-	-	-	1	18	1	-	-	-
Playgrounds and stadiums	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
International Humanitarian Insignia											
Red Crescent	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Infrastructure											
Power stations and energy facilities	-	-	-	1	1	-	4	-	-	-	-
Civil Defense Centers	13	12	-	-	-	-		1	-	-	1
Water facilities and related resources	3	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Official Head-quarters	10	5	-	-	1	-	2	2	-	-	-
Bakeries	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Means of transport	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-		1
Livestock farms	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
International headquarters and organizations' offices and other assets	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Industrial facilities	7	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Civil society organizations	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
IDP Camps											
IDP camps	9	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	165	83	2	1	2	4	39	26	1	1	2

The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities in 2020, which reached 326 incidents, was distributed monthly as follows:

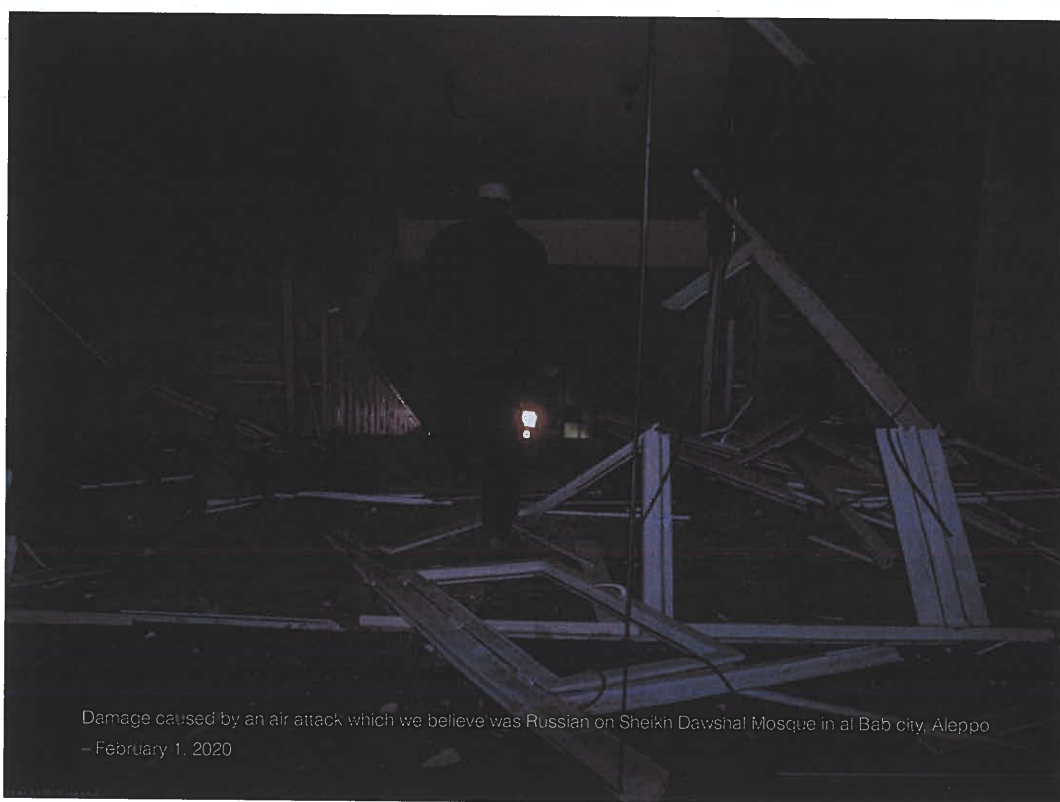


The chart above shows a clear decline in the number of attacks on vital civilian facilities in the last nine months compared to the first quarter of the year, with the ceasefire agreement that entered into force on March 6 having had an effect on this, along with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the capabilities of the Syrian regime's army and allies. Meanwhile, the bombings and executions by unknown persons have continued, with SNHR attributing the largest percentage of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in recent months to these causes.

The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities in 2020:

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at around 14:05, fixed-wing Syrian regime (MiG-23) warplanes fired two missiles at Idlib city, one of which targeted [al Hal Market](#) adjacent to the National Museum, in the area around al Mehrab roundabout in the east of the city, resulting in a massacre, in [addition](#) to [causing partial destruction](#) to a [number of shops](#), as well as causing [significant material damage](#) to the market facilities. Idlib city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. SNHR issued [a detailed report](#) on this attack.

On Saturday, February 1, 2020, at around 23:30, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired four missiles that landed in the middle of al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. One of the missiles fell on the dome of [Sheikh Dawshal Mosque](#) in the city, [partially destroying](#) the mosque [building](#) and causing [a fire that burnt its furniture](#), as well as causing significant material damage to its cladding. Another missile fell near [al Kabir Mosque](#), causing minor material damage to its building and furniture. We note that this was the first time al Bab city had been subjected to aerial bombardment by Syrian-Russian alliance forces since it came under the control of the Syrian National Army forces in February 2017. The city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

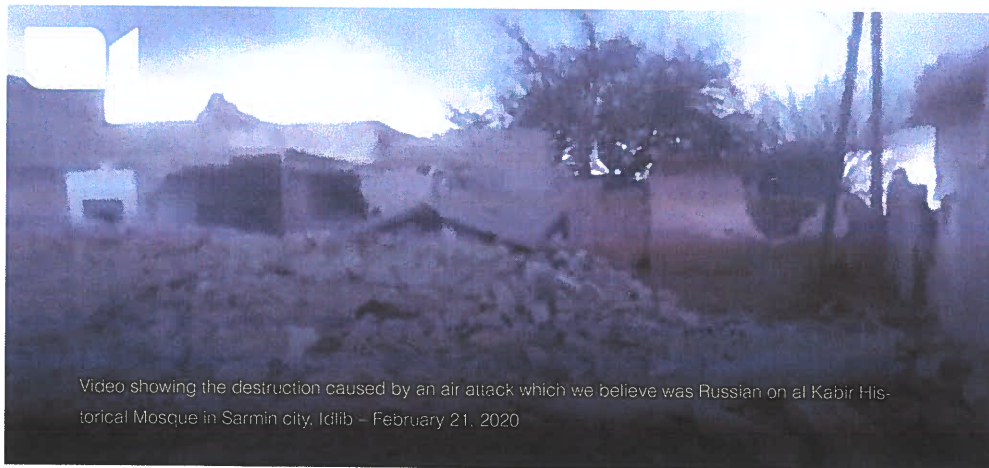


On Monday, February 3, 2020, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at Baraem al Mustaqbal Kindergarten in Jam'iyet al Arman area in the Bala area in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in casualties, and partially destroying the kindergarten building, as well as causing severe material damage to its furniture. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, February 4, 2020, Syrian Democratic Forces simultaneously used heavy artillery and missile launchers to shell the center of Afrin city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The shelling targeted al Ittihad al Araby School - while an educational course was underway inside the school - resulting in the death of one of the students participating in the course, and injuring eight others, in addition to [causing](#) the [partial destruction](#) of [the school building](#), and causing moderate [material damage](#) to its furniture. Afrin city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, February 11, 2020, at around 10:00, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes used heavy machine guns to strafe the Kafr Ta'al Dispensary in [Kafr Ta'al](#) village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, [partially destroying](#) the [dispensary building](#), and causing moderate [material damage](#) to its equipment and furniture. Kafr Ta'al village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Friday, February 21, 2020, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles on [al Kabir Historical Mosque](#) in Sarmin city in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, almost completely destroying the mosque building and furniture, putting it out of service. The city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Tuesday, February 25, 2020, fixed-wing Syrian regime warplanes fired a missile that landed in front of Idlib Central Hospital in Idlib city, known as al Muhafaza Hospital and supported by Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS). The bombardment injured four medical personnel, including a doctor, in addition to causing severe material damage to the hospital building, equipment, [and furniture](#). We note that [the hospital](#) is [headquartered](#) in [the building](#) in Idlib city that [formerly housed](#) the local Governorate [offices](#). Idlib city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. The Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) issued [a statement](#) on its official website condemning the attack.

On Thursday, March 5, 2020, at around 02:05, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, carried out a raid using at least two missiles, targeting a poultry farm where IDPs from Idlib and Aleppo suburbs were living. The poultry farm is located on the western outskirts of Ma'aret Misreen town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate - about 2 km as the crow flies - on the road between Ma'aret Misreen and Batenta. The poultry farm building consists of two hangars used for raising chickens, which are linked on the western side to a two-story residential building where the IDPs were living. At the entrance to the poultry farm there is a building for guards where IDPs also reside.

At around 02:27, after the recovery operations for the wounded and the injured had begun, the same warplanes again targeted the site with at least two missiles. No casualties were reported in this second attack among the paramedics and rescue workers, who were able to escape the scene prior to the bombardment. We note that we were unable to accurately verify the number of missiles and the impact site of each of them up until the time of preparing this report, because the attacks were carried out at night, and because we have been unable to visit the site of the incident so far. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

The two attacks resulted in [a massacre](#) of IDPs, [in addition](#) to [killing hundreds](#) of birds that were in [the hangars](#), and [almost complete](#) destroying the poultry farm building and some of the houses surrounding it. We issued [a report](#) on the incident.



On Monday, July 13, 2020, Syrian Regime forces, stationed in Kafranbel city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, used a missile launcher to fire missiles targeting [al Shamali Mosque](#) in al Mozara village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying](#) the [mosque building](#), and [causing moderate](#) material damage to its furniture. The village was under the joint control of the Armed Opposition, the Syrian National Army and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, August 13, 2020, personnel affiliated with Syrian Democratic Forces stormed the drinking-water purification station in [al Sh-heil](#) city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, where they [destroyed](#) and [sabotaged](#) the pumps, control and [monitoring](#) panels, and some of the station's equipment, putting it out of service. The city was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, August 20, 2020, a car bomb of unknown source exploded in a popular market in Slouk town, which is administratively a part of Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, resulting in casualties, in addition to causing severe [material damage](#) to [10 of the shops](#) and the market facilities. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Slouk town was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, September 14, 2020, unknown gunmen opened fire at a vehicle belonging to the Turkish Red Crescent Society which Red Crescent medics were in at the time whilst it was passing through the Tal Battal area, which is administratively a part of al Bab city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the death of one of the humanitarian organization's personnel and injuring one other, in addition to causing minor [material damage](#) to the body of the vehicle. SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses to obtain more details of the incident. The area was under the control of the Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army at the time of the incident.

On the night of Tuesday, October 27, 2020, Syrian Regime artillery forces - stationed in al Hamidiya military camp near Ma'aret al Numan city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate - fired a shell at Ariha city in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. One of the shells landed in the main square inside the Civil Defense Center compound to the north of the city, causing minor material damage to [the center's building](#), in addition to [inflicting various types of material damage to two ambulances belonging to it](#). The SNHR notes that the Civil Defense Organization is headquartered in the former Garage building. Ariha city was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident. [The Syrian Civil Defense](#) Organization published a news report on the targeting of the center via its official Arabic-language account on the 'Twitter' social networking platform.



On Tuesday, November 24, 2020, an explosion of unknown type and origin occurred at Jisr al Nahl (al Nahl Bridge), known as Jisr al Khashab, located on the 'M4' Latakia-Aleppo International Road, near Mhambel town in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, [partially destroying the bridge](#), putting it [out of service](#). SNHR is still trying to contact witnesses to obtain more details of the incident. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

2. In December 2020:

In December 2020, SNHR documented at least one incident of an attack on a vital civilian facility, being perpetrated by the Syrian National Army forces in Hasaka governorate.

On Monday, December 7, 2020, Syrian National Army personnel damaged an electricity transformer supplying electricity to Louthi village, which is administratively a part of Ras al Ein city in the northern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, and stole the [copper wire](#) from it, cutting off the [electricity supply](#) to the village. The village was under the control of Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident

D. Record of indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons:

1. In 2020:

SNHR documented at least four cluster munition attacks in 2020, all of which at the hands of Syrian Regime forces in Idlib and Hama governorates. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians, including seven children and three women, and injured 27 others.

The Syrian regime's helicopter and fixed-wing warplanes also dropped at least 474 barrel bombs in the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo and Hama. These attacks resulted in the deaths of 13 civilians, including four children and two women. At least 27 vital civilian facilities were damaged, including five schools, eight places of worship, and two medical facilities.

The most notable indiscriminate attacks and attacks using outlawed weapons that we were able to document in 2020:

On Wednesday, January 15, 2020, at around 15:45, Syrian regime helicopters dropped [a barrel bomb](#) near the Civil Defense center in south of Shnan village in Jabal al Zaweya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [causing](#) moderate [material](#) damage to [its building](#) and [furniture](#). Shnan village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, February 9, 2020, Syrian regime helicopters dropped a number of barrel bombs on the outskirts of al Sheikh Ali village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in the deaths of three civilians, and injuring others. The village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

2. In December 2020:

The Syrian Network for Human Rights was unable to document any indiscriminate attacks or attacks using outlawed weapons in December.

IV. The Syrian Regime Bears Primary Responsibility for the Spread of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic has swept across most of the world, and caused massive numbers of infections and deaths, with most of the world's stable countries worldwide dealing with it seriously and taking exceptional measures to protect the population; many countries have announced their desire to attract and employ more medical personnel, and some governments have released large numbers of imprisoned people and detainees as a precautionary measure to stop the disease from spreading.

By contrast, since the beginning of the global pandemic outbreak, the Syrian regime has dealt with it with callous, total and extreme disregard and absolute negligence, with several countries announcing the arrival of infected cases from Syria since the beginning of March 2020. Despite this, the Syrian regime continued to deny the existence of any infections in Syria until March 22. The COVID-19 coronavirus does not distinguish between one person or another or between one region and another, and all the regions of Syria, particularly Idlib and surrounding areas, that have witnessed bombings, destruction and forced displacement are suffering from further challenges in addition to the usual ones, which cannot be compared to those in any other location; at the forefront of these challenges are the nearly 1.1 million Syrian citizens displaced between mid-December 2019 and the beginning of March 2020, with exceptional humanitarian aid efforts required to focus particularly on these people in the areas to which they were displaced. There are a number of factors which make them more vulnerable than others to infection with COVID-19, most notably:

- The Idlib region and the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo and its environs are already experiencing massive overcrowding due to the earlier displacement of tens of thousands of Syrians to these places from several areas such as the Eastern Ghouta, the northern suburbs of Homs, southern Syria, and recently the suburbs of Idlib and Hama, which has caused a drastic increase in the existing overcrowding, making the process of social physical distancing virtually impossible.
- Most of these people live in hastily constructed camps or structures which are wholly inadequate and unsuitable for housing (such as schools, shops, unfinished apartments, demolished buildings, caves, etc.), which lack the most basic sanitary infrastructure such as toilets, functioning sewage networks, or clean water, which makes the available water allocations necessary for periodic personal hygiene for each person far less than would be available in normal conditions or in other areas in Syria. The IDPs are struggling to obtain enough tents, and are sometimes forced to live in a tent collectively, which particularly negatively affects women due to their special needs.
- The healthcare system in and around Idlib continues to suffer from the repercussions of violent and focused targeting by the Syrian and Russian regimes' forces, which has contributed to a large number of health centers being put out of service. According to estimates from a number of local relief and humanitarian organizations, the number of doctors in the region ranges between 500 to 600, while the number of beds in medical centers ranges between 2,500 to 3,000, with the number of beds in intensive care units numbering 201 in total; in addition, only 95 ventilators are available for adults, with all of these being in use. The tremendous disparity between these figures and the population levels in northwest Syria shows the immensity of the grave deficit.

On April 14, Médecins Sans Frontières [warned](#) that the health system in Idlib, which is currently overstretched and low on supplies, will be overrun if COVID-19 spreads there.

The Syrian Jazira region (Deir Ez-Zour, Hasaka, Raqqa), which is controlled by the Kurdish-majority Syrian Democratic Forces, suffers from a similar situation, and also includes large numbers of IDPs living in camps. Russia's use of its United Nations veto has caused the cancellation of three of the four crossings, with al Ya'rubiya crossing with Iraq being one of the crossings canceled; this caused the region to be denied direct UN aid, which is now provided exclusively through the Syrian regime that deliberately creates obstacles to aid provision and systematically carries out large-scale extortion, which we addressed extensively in our report: [Sanctions Are Linked to the Syrian Regime's Continuing Violations and Don't Include Medical Supplies and Food. Which Shouldn't Be Delivered Through the Regime](#), with the United Nations Secretary-General speaking about this in [his report issued on February 21, 2020](#). [Human Rights Watch also issued a report](#) on the crisis facing the medical sector in that region and the complex difficulties it faces due to the closure of al Ya'rubiya crossing.

As for the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, whilst these are better off than the Idlib region, its environs, and the Syrian Jazira region, they suffer mainly from the exodus of medical personnel, and from the massive corruption in all the regime's organs, as well as from the depletion of the Syrian state's monetary reserves, which are spent on bombings, military operations, and security services at the expense of supporting the medical sector and services. SNHR has also demanded that Russia, a massively wealthy country, help its ally, the Syrian regime, given the circumstances of the spread of the COVID-19, as this would be far better and less costly than airstrikes on medical facilities, cities and towns in and around Idlib.

In short, the whole of Syrian society suffers from mismanagement of the coronavirus crisis, in all areas of control:

One: In the areas under the control of the Syrian regime, these shortcomings are summarized in the following main points:

1. The Syrian regime denied the existence of any cases of COVID-19 in areas under its control until March 22; it should be borne in mind that when the regime finally admitted the existence of a case of infection, it was in a girl coming from outside the country. Another problematic factor is the complete lack of any transparency in the announcement of cases of infection and deaths, which are certainly far greater than those officially announced, due particularly to the constant contact with Shiite religious groups, individuals and militias coming from Iran and Iraq (most notably the al Nujaba Movement, the Imam Ali Brigade, the Fatemiyoun Brigade, the Quds Corps Brigade, the Abu al Fadl al Abbas Brigade and the Haideriyoun Brigade) via the al Boukamal land crossing, with the Syrian regime failing to close the al Sayyidah Zaynab area, which is known to be very crowded with Iranians and Iraqi Shiites, until April 2.
2. The Syrian authorities have not taken any effective measures to limit air traffic from other countries, with Damascus International Airport still witnessing multiple flights to and from many countries, including Iran.
3. Quarantine centers are not equipped and lack the minimum levels of hygiene, in addition to lacking the most basic conditions for healthcare and medical protection and the facilities to provide the medical procedures and services related to COVID-19, which are supposedly intended to contribute to curbing the spread of the disease if discovered. [Press websites](#) and social media platforms have published photos and [videos](#) showing the [dire situation](#) of the [Quarantine Center](#) in al Dwair area, where people [were placed](#) after [arriving on a trip](#) from Iran
4. The Syrian regime has taken no serious measures to prevent overcrowding of citizens in front of retail outlets or in [commercial areas](#). The regime has also failed to take any measures to limit or prevent [crowds from gathering in stadiums and sport halls](#) to attend football and basketball matches and has not imposed measures that oblige citizens to follow precautionary measures; despite the significant increase in the number of infection cases

recorded on a daily basis, no measures were taken to restrict the gathering of citizens in public squares [to celebrate the lighting of Christmas trees](#). Rather, some of these events witnessed officials in attendance without any precautionary measures taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic; we have mentioned this in a wide range of [news](#) reports in recent months.

Two: In and around opposition-held areas in Idlib:

1. The areas under opposition control suffer from an absence of a central authority to issue unified instructions, a shortcoming largely reflected in the disparity seen in the individuals' approach to prevention and medical treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. There is a low degree of medical and religious awareness of the dangers of overcrowding and gathering. We have noted numerous instances of dozens of people gathering in marketplaces, or attending sporting events in playgrounds and sports halls, without the controlling authorities imposing any restrictions to limit overcrowding or to prevent holding [college student graduation ceremonies](#) within the faculties' headquarters, despite the rapid spread of the pandemic in recent times in northwestern Syria, and among IDPs in camps in particular. This is greatly exacerbated by a sense of indifference prevailing among many people, primarily caused by what they have been subjected to, including bombings, displacement and torture by Syrian regime's forces and allies.

Based on all the above facts, there is no doubt that the negligence shown by the Syrian regime and its disastrous mismanagement of the Syrian state in recent years are further clear indications of the regime's indifference to citizens' wellbeing, showing once again that the only Syrians which it cares about protecting are the ruling family, the regime's inner circle, and its wealthy elite; this indifference to the Syrian public may well lead to massive additional numbers of deaths among Syrian citizens. It should always be remembered that the Syrian regime and its Russian ally have been primary accused of the targeting, bombing and destruction of most medical facilities in Syria, and the killing of hundreds of medical personnel, as documented on the SNHR's database, with dozens of these lifesaving medics still classified as having been forcibly disappeared at the regime's hands.

The regime's failure to release arbitrarily detained individuals, particularly the elderly and individuals detained with no charges, provides further clear evidence of the Syrian regime's primary responsibility for the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria, as the regime controls and manages state institutions, and has completely failed to provide even the most rudimentary protection to Syrian civilians, but has instead exploited the state institutions to protect and benefit the ruling family in order to ensure their continued rule, even if 13 million Syrian citizens are displaced from their homes to achieve this, with most of those displaced unable to return home since their homes have been ransacked and subjected to widespread looting and destruction by regime forces and affiliated militias.

V. Attachments:

[Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 1,734 Civilians in Syria in 2020, Including 99 in December](#)

[At Least 1,882 Cases of Arbitrary Arrest/ Detention Documented in Syria in 2020, 149 of Them in December: Detainees Include 52 Children and 39 Women](#)

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrest, torture, and enforced disappearance. 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 government 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 find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack under the requirements of 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 Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army 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, caused massive collateral damage that involved 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 arms 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 Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:

UN Security Council

- The 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 who are responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as 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 heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, looting 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 include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other 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, 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 Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on 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 who were involved.

- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan have 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', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.
- Work to launch projects to create maps revealing the locations of landmines and cluster munitions in all Syrian governorates. This would facilitate the process of removing them and educating the population about their locations.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.
- Train Syrian organizations to undertake clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the dangers of such ordnance.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.
- Work on preparing a special report on the use of landmines in Syria and the risks they pose to civilians, and identify the most prominent locations where landmines were planted.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

The United Nations Special Envoy to 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.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 84,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services whose fate has been concealed to date.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the regime planted landmines, especially in civilian areas or near residential communities.

The 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 the wounded.
- 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 apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.
- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 83,000 people forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime.

The Coalition (US-led coalition and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- 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 and towns under their control.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the SDF planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army 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.
- Pledge to cease any arbitrary arrests, and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

Humanitarian Organizations:

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Exert efforts in landmine clearance operations in parallel with relief operations whenever the opportunity arises.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

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