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The Syrian Regime Has Bombed the Areas Affected by the February 6 Earthquake 132 Times, including 29 Attacks that Targeted Areas Far from the Dividing Lines

**Five Civilians Killed, 42 Others Injured, and Seven
Vital Facilities Damaged**



Tuesday, April 13, 2023

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. The Earthquake Exacerbated the Suffering of the Residents in Northwestern Syria

Northwestern Syria was one of the regions worst affected by the earthquake on February 6, 2023. This region houses the overwhelming majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria, estimated at 3.2 million in total, who fled there from across Syria, in the hopes of escaping the brutal onslaught by the Syrian regime and its allies, Iran and Russia. Women and children account for 75 percent of all IDPs in the region. It is estimated that the total percentage of IDPs who have returned to their original areas to date amounts to less than two percent, even though some of these IDPs live only a few kilometers from their homes, all due to their fear of further violations by the Syrian regime. In fact, this has been the longest internal displacement in modern history, worsened by the violations against IDPs in areas where they sought shelter, and by the declining levels of international support.

The IDPs' suffering has not been limited to this traumatic displacement alone. In fact, we documented hundreds of deliberate attacks against civilians and vital infrastructure in the areas to which they fled seeking safety. Furthermore, international observers often turn a blind eye to the Syrian regime's deliberate severance of IDPs' access to all basic services, including water and electricity, even while insisting that the same regime should be the sole recipient and distributor of all UN humanitarian assistance due to its control of the Syrian state, despite its shameful history of murderous violence and its deliberate obstruction of the delivery of aid supplied, as well as its blatant theft of the overwhelming majority of this aid. All these reasons led to the establishment of the cross-border relief aid delivery mechanism without the need to obtain the Syrian regime's permission and those reasons still very much exist.

All of the aforementioned factors have only led to an increase in the death toll caused by the February 6 earthquake in northwestern Syria, with the final figure for the total number of deaths caused directly as a result of the catastrophic natural disaster in the region of northwestern Syria rising to 4,191 as the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) confirmed in a [report](#) published on March 28.

Adding further to the IDPs' suffering, the entire region of northwest Syria was already suffering from wide devastation and poor infrastructure even before February 6 due to years of bombardment in airstrikes, missile strikes and other military operations in the area, mostly at the hands of the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance. The destruction wrought by the earthquake vastly exacerbated the existing devastation from these causes. As noted in [a report released by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\) on April 7](#), a total of 1,869 buildings were destroyed completely by the earthquake, while 8,731 others were partially destroyed.

The earthquake also resulted in the further displacement of 160,000 Syrians according to SNHR's estimates, most of whom had already been displaced on at least one occasion before and who were already grappling with horrendous living conditions. The multilayered suffering and trauma of Syrians in northwest Syria has been further intensified by the aftershocks still taking place as of this writing, [with 11,020 aftershocks recorded as of March 1](#) according to Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD). Roughly 80 percent of residents in the region have had to leave their homes and spend nights in the open air in freezing conditions, for fear of further destruction to buildings from any potential aftershocks, which protracted their suffering amid already dire living and psychological conditions.

It seems, despite all of the above, that all of this unimaginably horrendous devastation and tragedy still did not satiate the Syrian regime's thirst for inflicting suffering on the people, with SNHR documenting multiple instances of Syrian regime forces bombing many of the areas in the region that had just witnessed the most severe earthquake in its history; this, needless to say, led to many further casualties and fathomlessly massive suffering, even as the millions of IDPs and local people in the region work to deal with the endless pain unleashed by the devastating earthquake.

This report summarizes the most notable attacks carried out by the Syrian regime on northwestern Syria in recent months. We hope that this report will further confirm that the Syrian regime, which displaced and bombed IDPs, cannot ever be trusted to deliver UN relief aid to those same people.

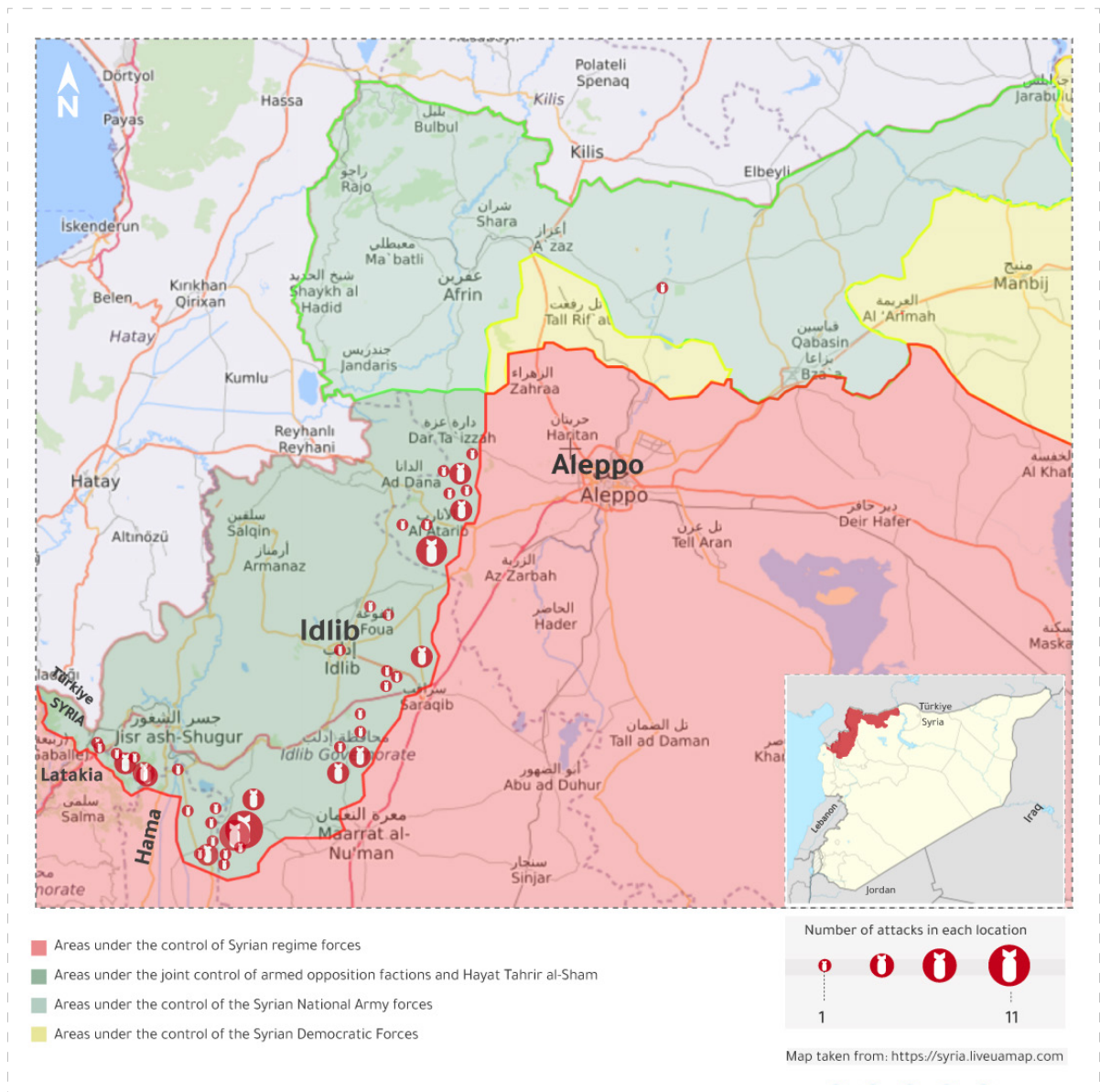
II. The Syrian Regime Has Bombed the Areas Devastated by the Earthquake, With Some Attacks Carried Out in tandem With Rescue Operations to Save Those Trapped Under the Rubble

The Syrian regime did not wait for long before resuming bombing on the areas affected by the earthquake. In fact, we have documented a ground-based bombardment the very next day following the earthquake, with airstrikes targeting the outskirts of Marea in the northern suburbs of Aleppo.

In the nine weeks that followed the earthquake, from February 6 until April 10, ground-based attacks by Syrian regime forces and their allies have continued, with some attacks hitting areas near the camps where earthquake victims are taking shelter, displacing them once more.

SNHR has documented no fewer than 132 ground-based attacks by Syrian regime forces within the nine weeks that followed the earthquake, including 29 attacks that targeted areas far from the dividing lines.

A map showing the distribution of the areas that were bombed by Syrian regime forces in the region of northwestern Syria from February 6 until April 10, 2023



Those attacks resulted in the killing of five civilians, including one child, while 42 others were injured, in addition to seven attacks on vital civilian facilities; including one school, one medical dispensary, one mosque, and two markets; as documented by SNHR.

Below is an outline of the most notable attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces on the region of northwestern Syria from February 6 until April 10, 2023

On February 22, [two civilians](#) were killed in artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired a shell targeting civilians on a motorbike in Barza village in the Jabal al-Akrad area in northern Latakia.

On February 27, Syrian regime artillery forces fired shells at the southwestern neighborhood of al-Nayrab village in eastern Idlib. One of the shells landed next to [al-Nayrab New School](#), wounding a girl pupil, and partially destroying the school's fence. On the same day, Syrian regime artillery forces also fired multiple shells at the Idlib-Sarmada highway in the northern suburbs of Idlib. Some of these shells landed near the IDP camps in the area, while another shell landed in the vicinity of a farm housing IDPs who were displaced by the earthquake.

On March 11, a civilian young man was killed, while five others, including women, were wounded, in artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired a shell targeting civilian houses on the eastern outskirts of al-Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo.

On March 19, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a mortar shell that hit the Omar bin al-Khattab Mosque in the center of Kafr Ta'al village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [Parts of the mosque's minaret and dome were destroyed](#), while the mosque's furniture was moderately damaged.



On March 23, Syrian regime artillery forces fired multiple shells at the popular market in the center of al-Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [The street where the market is located and several shops there were partially destroyed.](#)

On March 24, [a young civilian man](#) was killed in artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces who fired multiple shells at around dawn targeting the town of al-Abzemou in the western suburbs of Aleppo. The shells hit residential neighborhoods and a popular market in a main street in the town that houses a number of shops, which is where the young man was killed. The shelling also partially destroyed a number of the shops there.

On March 24, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at the eastern outskirts of al-Jena village in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. [Some of the shells landed a few meters from the tents in the al-Mal'ab Camp](#) which was designated to house the victims of the February 6 earthquake. The shelling caused mass panic, although no material damage was recorded in the camp.

On March 30, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a shell at an irregular market (a group of separate IDPs tents) affiliated within the Tal al-Daman IDP Camp in southern Termanein town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The shell landed on a car next to the tents, wounding an IDP, who was using the vehicle as a shelter, as well as slightly damaging a number of tents.

On April 9, Syrian regime artillery forces fired three shells at Sarmin city in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. One of the shells landed near the medical dispensary in the center of the city (the shell landed about 10 meters away), [killing an IDP child named Ibrahim Haj Mousa, and wounding four other children](#). In addition, the medical dispensary building was slightly damaged.



Mohammad al-Mousa, a baby, wounded in a ground-based attack by Syrian regime forces on Sarmin city in Idlib - April 9, 2023

The bombardment by Syrian regime forces have resulted in the repeated displacement of earthquake survivors who had already suffered the traumatic experience of displacement due to the earthquake, and were then once again terrorized by the bombardment. Further, the bombardment obstructed rescue operations to save some of those trapped under the rubble.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- The Syrian regime has targeted the areas that were devastated by the February 6 earthquake to further exacerbate the residents' suffering and human losses, rather than sending humanitarian assistance and upholding its legal responsibilities.
- The Syrian regime has demonstrated an unfathomable and unparalleled level of inhumanity by bombing areas already devastated by the earthquake, even while the entire world, both governments and states, showed sympathy for the victims.
- The attacks disclosed in this report, which were carried out by Syrian regime forces, have led to deaths among Syrian citizens, and in many injuries and disabilities, as well as exacerbating the suffering of the residents as relates to food security and healthcare.
- The Syrian regime has unequivocally violated Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254, which call for ending indiscriminate attacks, as well as the rules of international humanitarian laws on the distinction between civilians and combatants.¹
- The Syrian regime has violated the procedures established under international humanitarian law, which led to the spread of fear among the civilian population and to civilians fleeing for their lives - most outrageously deliberately directing attacks at civilians² and carrying out vicious and indiscriminate attacks with the aim of spreading fear.³
- The Syrian regime actively opposes any political transition at the n because this will lead to a transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Recommendations

Security Council

- The situation in Syria must be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and all those involved must be held accountable. The use of veto powers should be blocked in cases of crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Impose UN military and economic sanctions on the Syrian regime, especially on the heads of the regime who are involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Make serious efforts to bring about a political transition process towards achieving stability, preserving the integrity of Syrian territory, and enabling the safe and dignified return of refugees and IDPs.

1. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Rule 1 of the international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule1>

2. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Rule 7 of the international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule7>

3. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Rule 2 of the international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule2>

International community

- In light of the division and deadlock at the Security Council, action must be taken at the national and regional levels to establish coalitions to support the Syrian people and increase relief aid. Also, work should be done to invoke the principle of universal jurisdiction in regard to the crimes being committed in Syria at national courts as part of fair trials for all those involved.
- Support the process of political transition and apply pressure to compel all parties to bring about a political transition within no more than six months, so that millions of displaced persons can return to their homes in a safe and stable manner.
- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC.
- UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)
- Condemn the attacks cited in this report, call out those responsible by name, and condemn their brutality.

UN and donor states

- Embrace the legal opinion which argues that impartial UN humanitarian assistance does not require permission from the Security Council in the event that a state is demonstrating arbitrary objections, a failure to meet its legal responsibilities, and is involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity.
- Establish an international support platform to effectively and professionally coordinate humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria. Such a body would act as an alternative option in addition to the UN, instead of relying fully and only on the UN, which has proven to be a failure in light of Russia's extortion of the UN in the past years.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We extend our most sincere gratitude to the families of the victims and all local activists in various fields for their invaluable contribution to this report. Our most heartfelt condolences go to the victims' families.



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