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Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in January 2024

No Fewer than **37** Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities Were Carried Out in January 2024, With The Syrian Regime Bombing Civilian Areas Using Incendiary Weapons

Monday 05 February 2024

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

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I. Introduction and Methodology

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

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

This report contains one first-hand account which we collected directly from an eyewitness, rather than including any second-hand sources. In this interview, we explained the purpose of the interview beforehand to the eyewitness, who gave us permission to use the information provided in the service of this report, without our offering or promising any incentives. We have also tried, insofar as possible, to spare the eyewitness the agony of recalling the traumatic violations that occurred, and gave assurances that we would protect his confidentiality.

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



II. State of Human Rights in Syria in January 2024

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

1. Northwestern Syria¹

From the very first day of 2024 and throughout January, we documented ground attacks by Syrian regime forces targeting the villages and towns of southern and eastern rural Idlib, western rural Aleppo, and Sahl al-Ghab in western rural Hama, all of which are close to the dividing lines with armed opposition factions. These attacks also targeted Idlib city and villages and towns in western rural Aleppo and southern rural Idlib, which are far from the dividing lines, with the regime's offensive continuing from last December. We have noticed that some of those attacks targeted vital civilian areas, resulting in dozens of civilian deaths and injuries, including of [children](#) and women, as well as damaging [many vital civilian facilities](#). For instance, [on January 1](#), Syrian regime forces fired simultaneous barrages of artillery and rocket shells at Darat Ezra city in western Aleppo, killing three civilians and injuring another four. Multiple vital civilian facilities were also damaged in this bombardment, including a popular market, a school, and an automated bakery. On January 3, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) released [a statement](#) describing the situation under the intensified attacks in northwestern Syria as "tragic". The statement noted that hospitals, which had already been grappling with a shortage of staffers and supplies, were now facing even more pressure due to the large influx of wounded people. On December 25, 2023, we documented a massacre perpetrated by the Russian air force, in which [five civilians - a man, his wife, and their three children](#) - were killed, in Alata area in western Idlib.

We also documented the [use of incendiary weapons](#) by Syrian regime forces in areas far from the dividing lines, although we detected no military presence or movement in the areas targeted at the time of the attack. On January 7, Syrian regime forces used a rocket launcher to fire a rocket loaded with incendiary submunitions, suspected to be a 9M22S rocket loaded with ML-5 submunitions, [at a shelter housing internally displaced persons \(IDPs\)](#), formerly al-Iledad al-Hizbi School, on the northern outskirts of Idlib city. [The rocket created a crater in the center of the shelter's yard](#). This attack by Syrian regime forces used six missiles, at least two of which were loaded with incendiary submunitions. One of these rockets struck the IDPs shelter, [and another struck a residential building also on the northern outskirts of Idlib city](#).



↑👁 Ground attack by Syrian regime forces that saw the use of a rocket loaded with incendiary submunitions on the al-Shamali neighborhood in Idlib city - January 7, 2024



↑👁 Damage caused by a regime ground attack on Sarmin city in Idlib - January 6, 2024

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

On January 15, [long-range rockets hit an empty, unused building](#) on the southern outskirts of Taltita village in northwestern Idlib, which was fired by members of Iran's so-called Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), an ally of the regime's, from Khuzestan city in southern [Iran according to an IRGC officer in statements in which the IRGC claimed responsibility for the attack](#). The same officer added that the attack targeted ISIS groups" in Idlib. The rockets heavily destroyed the building, as well as injuring two civilians nearby, who were near the site targeted. An investigation by SNHR determined that the building hit by the rockets had previously been a medical dispensary which had been turned into a military outpost by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), and then an IDPs temporary shelter/reception center. Eventually, the building was vacated and had been lying empty for nearly a year. On January 16, the UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric expressed the [UN's concern over this attack during his daily press briefing](#).

IDPs camps are densely spread across northwestern Syria. The residents of those camps are living in dire conditions in every way. On January 19, the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC)² released [a report noting](#) that, as of June 2023, 1.97 million IDPs are living in 1,531 IDPs sites in northwestern Syria. The report adds that "46 percent of households in IDP sites are living in tents while 44 percent of those need their tents replaced."

In January, we documented fires in seven IDPs' camps (six were caused by the [misuse of heating devices](#), while the other one was caused by the misuse of cooking tools). On January 15, three siblings (two boys and one adult) suffocated to death, inside their tent in Mtawwa 1 Camp within Atama Camps in northern rural Idlib governorate. The IDP children, who were originally from al-Latamena city in northern rural Hama governorate, suffocated as a result of inhaling the emissions from a household heating device which burned coal and pistachio shells. [On January 21](#), a young man sustained burn injuries in the explosion of a household heater in an IDPs housing unit in Hayfa al-Karmal Camp in Jabal Kelli area in northern rural Idlib governorate. Additionally, the young man's daughter suffered suffocation and breathing difficulties.



↑👁 Fire caused by the misuse of cooking utensils in an IDP housing unit in the al-Aramel 'Widows' Camp in al-Kafra village in Aleppo - January 24, 2024

The poor weather conditions also damaged no fewer than 105 camps sheltering IDPs and people affected by the earthquake³ in the rural areas of Idlib and Aleppo. [The rains formed water streams and floods](#), as well as pools of muddy water cutting off roads, and completely destroying no fewer than 292 tents and temporary housing units, and partially destroying about 1,530 others. On January 18, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) [noted on its official website](#) that over 1,500 IDPs tents in northwestern Syria had been damaged by flooding in the preceding two weeks.

2. According to its official website, the Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordination mechanism that supports people affected by disasters and internally displaced people affected by conflict with the means to live in safe, dignified and appropriate shelter. The GSC is a public platform co-chaired by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) at the global level. See: <https://sheltercluster.org/resource/about-us>
3. A devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake that struck northwestern Syria (with the epicenter in Kahramanmaraş province in southern Türkiye). The earthquake forced thousands of families to take shelter in designated camps after their houses were destroyed.



↑ 👁 Tents damaged by flooding in heavy rainstorms that hit al-Zouf Camp, which houses earthquake-affected persons in western Idlib - January 17, 2024

As for the living and service conditions in northwestern Syria, civilians are still grappling with worsening economic and living standards in light of rising prices for foodstuff and supplies. For instance, [bread prices have increased across the region](#), as dictated by the interim government in an official [decision issued on January 12](#), that put the price of a one kilogram-pack of bread, which contains 12 circles of bread, at 7.5 Turkish Lira (TRY). Residents in these areas are already suffering from greatly reduced purchasing power due to the widespread unemployment and rising poverty rates, as well as low wages, especially in areas housing IDPs camps, which is all made worse by the plummeting value of the TRY, the currency used in northwestern Syria, with one USD currently equaling over 30 TRY. In terms of services, many areas are also suffering from poor water access in light of the weak water grid and frequent power outages. [On January 10](#), Stéphane Dujarric, the UN spokesperson, spoke about the underfunding issue in his daily press briefing, saying it is overstressing the UN's humanitarian operations in Syria: "...We are already seeing the consequences of this shortfall in the new year, [with] one of our partners having reported suspending support to three water stations serving 250,000 men, women and children. Those stations are in Idlib, and that is, of course, due to [the] underfunding that we've been talking about."

On January 11, [the OCHA revealed](#) that the UN has been given permission by the Syrian regime to extend the delivery of humanitarian assistance from Türkiye to northwestern Syria via the Bab al-Hawa Border Crossing by six months. The agency revealed that, as of the time of the extension announcement, 5,000 trucks carrying aid had entered northwestern Syria from Türkiye since February 2023, via the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salam, and al-Ra'ie crossings.

2. Regime-held areas and southern Syria

In January, Syrian regime forces continued their restrictive policies against civilians in areas under their control, with civilians still being persecuted and targeted over their political dissidence and expression of dissenting views, a freedom that should be protected by both the Syrian Constitution and international law. Syrian regime forces have also carried out arrests and other acts leading to enforced disappearances throughout the areas under their control. The governorates of Damascus, followed by Rural Damascus 'Rif Dimshaq', and then Daraa saw the highest number of such practices in the month of January. Meanwhile, torture is still widespread in regime detention centers, with SNHR documenting new deaths due to torture and medical negligence in regime detention centers. Moreover, despite the 23 amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian regime forces since 2011, at least 135,000 of those arrested by the regime since March 2011 are still detained and/or forcibly disappeared.

Even more, the regime continues to take over properties, a practice legitimized by a system of laws and articles of legislation that we have outlined in an extensive report released on March 25, 2023: ['The Laws Employed by the Syrian Regime to Control Real Estate Ownership and Lands Before and After the Beginning of the Popular Uprising in March 2011'](#)⁴. Syrian regime forces are also still enforcing practices that may restrict the return of refugees and IDPs to their original areas.

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

Below are the most notable developments on the ground that took place in regime-held areas in January 2024

On January 1, [HTS used a rocket launcher to bomb](#) the regime-held towns of Nebbel and al-Zahra in western Aleppo, killing three civilians from the same family, including a girl and her mother.

Daraa governorate's al-Yadoda town saw clashes that lasted over seven hours between personnel from the Syrian regime's Eighth Division backed by a group of pro-regime armed groups (known as locally as the 'Central Militias'⁵), and another armed group commanded by Mohammad Jadallah al-Zou'bi. The clashes broke out following a raid by regime forces aiming to crack down on Al-Zou'bi and members of his group and search for affiliates, under the pretext that this group is an ISIS cell, and has been responsible for assassinations of members of the Central Committee who serve as representatives in the negotiations with the regime. The clashes involved the use of light and medium weapons, as well as bombardment from both sides, including anti-aircraft machine guns and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs). The clashes resulted in casualties on both sides, [while a civilian was killed](#), and 14 others injured by the regime's Eighth Division. Moreover, about 15 houses, mostly owned by civilians with no links to either side, were damaged or destroyed in the clashes.

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

5. This term refers to pro-regime local committees that were formed by former armed opposition commanders and local Daraa dignitaries following the settlement agreement with the Syrian regime in July 2018. There are three committees: The western rural committee, the Daraa city committee, and the eastern rural committee.

Also in January, some areas located near the Jordanian borders, mostly in rural Suwayda governorate, were the target of aerial attacks carried out by fixed-wing warplanes originating from Jordanian territories, with these planes suspected to be affiliated with the Jordanian air force. The stated intention of those attacks was to combat the trade in Captagon and other narcotics. We have documented increasing attacks of this kind since December 18, continuing throughout January. These attacks resulted in [civilian deaths](#) and injuries, with the most notable one carried out on January 18, when 10 civilians were killed in an aerial attack on Orman town in southern Suwayda. On January 29, SNHR released an [extensive investigative report](#) documenting the details of the January 18 massacre, holding the regime responsible for concealing both Syrian and non-Syrian drug-traffickers among Syrian civilians, especially since regime-controlled areas have become the world's largest Captagon source under the auspices of the regime, and in coordination with Hezbollah and Iranian militias.

Visual analysis

showing the strike site of missiles fired by fixed-wing warplanes suspected to be affiliated with the Jordanian Armed Forces at Orman town in rural Suwayda governorate, killing 10 civilians, including two girls and five women on January 18, 2024



29 January 2024

By: SNHR

SNHR spoke with Mr. Abu Hakim,⁶ a resident of Orman town in rural Suwayda, who witnessed the bombardment and the massacre. He told us,



↑ Destruction inflicted in an aerial attack by fixed-wing warplanes suspected to be affiliated with the Jordanian air force that fired missiles at a house in the middle of Orman town in Suwayda, resulting in a massacre, on January 18, 2024 ©SNHR

On the subject of bombings, also on January 18, an improvised explosive device (IED) of unidentified source, which was affixed to a car belonging to a commander of the Syrian regime’s Military Police in Khan Arnaba city in rural Quneitra, [killed a child and injured two other civilians, one of whom is also a child.](#)

A number of other victims, also children, were killed or injured by the explosion of landmines in January. [On January 7, a boy died of wounds](#) sustained six days earlier on January 1, when a landmine of unidentified source exploded in Mazloom village in northeastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The explosion also injured three other children. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On January 2, [the Syrian regime’s Syrian Arab News Agency \(SANA\) reported](#) that Israeli air forces carried out an attack targeting multiple military points for regime forces in rural Damascus, resulting in material losses. On January 20, the Israeli air force carried out another air raid targeting a residential building in al-Mazza neighborhood in Damascus, killing four advisors from Iran’s IRGC and injuring a number of others, [according to the statements issued by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.](#)

6. Via Microsoft Teams on January 23, 2024.

Meanwhile, economic and living conditions continued to deteriorate, along with the service and security situation, across all sectors in regime-held areas. For one, [the value of the Syrian Pound \(SYP\)'s exchange rate to American Dollars has continued to rise steadily](#). Naturally, this leads to price increases for all goods and services, including food supplies, which adversely affects citizens' purchasing power. [Fuel prices, meanwhile, have been volatile, with the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection issuing several price gazettes announcing fuel price rises this month](#). Moreover, [the Syrian regime's government is still enforcing a rationing policy for electricity](#). Another issue plaguing regime-held areas is the state of rampant insecurity, with continuing thefts and assaults targeting [public institutions and facilities](#).

Elsewhere, peaceful civilian demonstrations continued in the regime-held Suwayda governorate in January for the sixth consecutive month. The protestors continued to condemn Bashar Assad for the dire state of the country, and to call for regime change. These protests are continuing at a time of multiple, unprecedented and increasingly dire economic, living, and human rights crises in Syria.

3. Northeastern Syria⁷

In January, we documented an escalation in the number of artillery attacks carried out by regime forces and pro-regime Iranian militias against areas in Deir Ez-Zour where Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) troops are positioned. In turn, the SDF retaliated by bombarding regime-controlled areas. These skirmishes, which also involved occasional clashes between the two sides, [resulted in civilian injuries](#), as well as damaging some residential buildings and public facilities.

We also documented the killing of multiple civilians who were shot dead by SDF personnel in northeastern Syria. In one case, on January 13, SDF personnel stationed in al-Hamad al-Ali School, located on the bank of the Euphrates River in al-Tayyana village in eastern Deir Ez-Zour, shot two civilians on the opposite bank of the river in the regime-held al-Qouriya city, [killing one and injuring the other](#). Additionally, SDF personnel arrested multiple civilians in territories under the group's control, with the most notable of these incidents taking place on January 3, when the group [arrested six civilians](#) from the same family in al-Hawayej town in eastern Deir Ez-Zour, before taking them to an undisclosed location.

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

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

Also in January, the skirmishes between troops stationed at military bases housing US-led International Coalition forces and Iranian militias stationed in regime-held areas further escalated. The two sides have been targeting one another in ground attacks in the two governorates in Hasaka and Deir Ez-Zour. We also documented attacks involving the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, that targeted both Coalition bases and Iranian militia enclaves in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour. However, we have not yet been able to conclusively identify the parties responsible for these attacks as of this writing.

On January 14, we recorded rocket attacks carried out by drones which we believe are affiliated with Turkish forces, in tandem with artillery attacks also by Turkish forces who are stationed in the multiple Turkish bases scattered across rural Aleppo, as well as from the Turkish lands. Those attacks targeted Ein al-Arab (Koubani) city, and mostly hit military outposts belonging to the SDF, who control the city. Those attacks resulted in damage to civilian facilities located in the vicinity of these SDF military outposts, including a power station.

Since mid-January, we have documented renewed and intensified drone attacks that we believe were carried out by Turkish forces in tandem with artillery attacks by the same side targeting SDF military outposts in Hasaka governorate and its vicinity. Some of those attacks targeted civilian service facilities, mostly oil and power facilities, in some of which SDF troops have been stationed. [On January 18, the UN expressed concern over the continued attacks on infrastructure and the safety of civilians in northeastern Syria](#). The day before, January 17, Stefan Schneck, Germany's Special Envoy for Syria [expressed his concern](#), in a post on X (formerly Twitter), over the serious damage to the vital infrastructure in northeastern Syria resulting from the Turkish operations, while noting that Türkiye has the right to defend itself against "violent attacks".

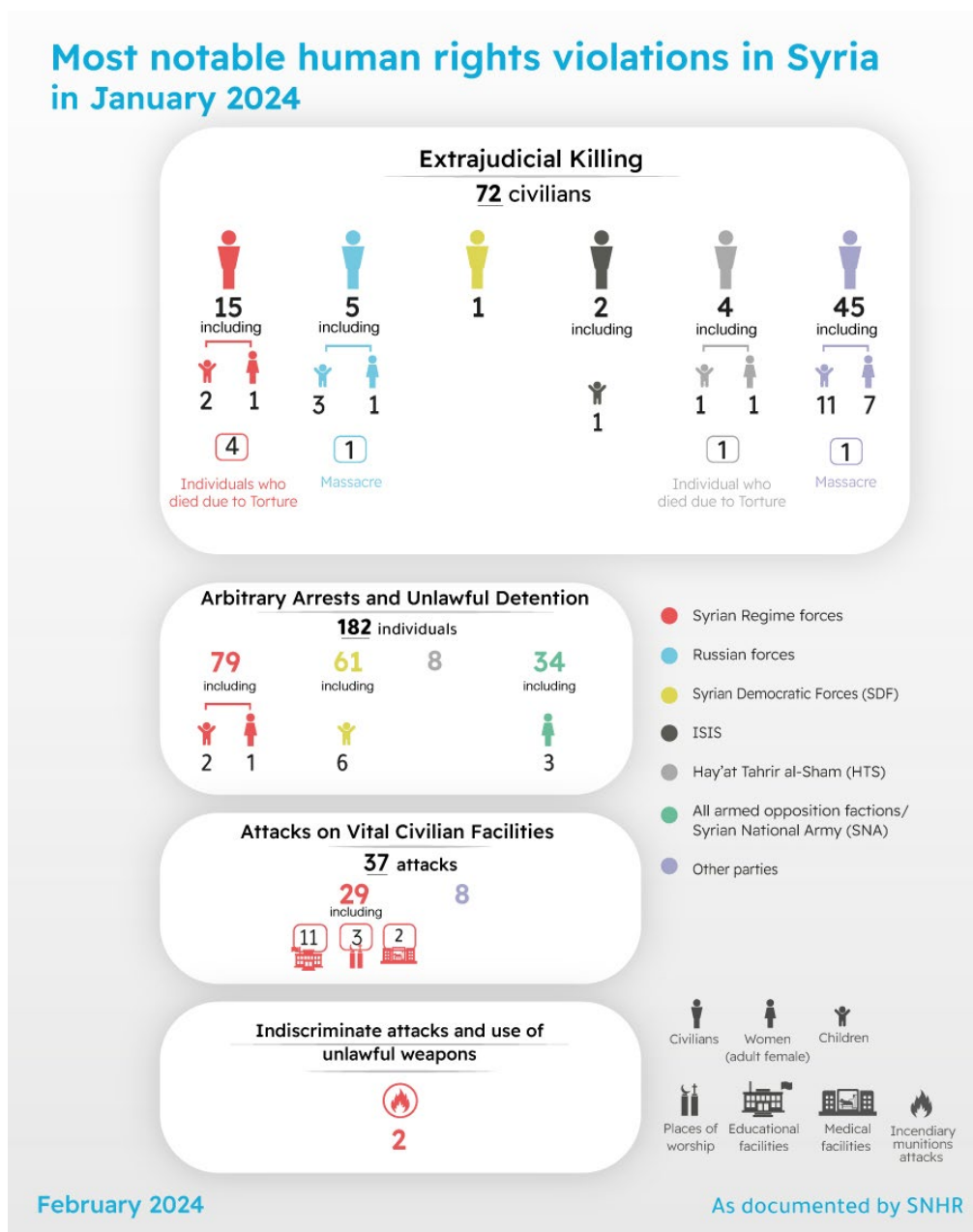
IDPs' suffering also continued in January in many of the irregular camps spread across northeastern Syria, particularly those located in western rural Deir Ez-Zour, with these IDPs still grappling with inadequate access to basic services, and lack of water and power, all further exacerbated by the winter and the harsh weather conditions. We have documented that [many tents in al-Hawl Camp⁸ were damaged and flooded by the heavy rainfalls](#), further exacerbating the already-extreme suffering of the camp's residents who had to take shelter in adjacent camps, while others had to buy alternative tents priced as high as 400,000 SYP, after camp officials in charge of distributing tents refused to compensate them. On January 14, the MSF [released a report](#) on the al-Hawl Camp stressing that living in the camp has exacerbated the suffering of its inhabitants who had already suffered profound traumas, including violence and displacement. «The camp has only exacerbated their anguish," the report reads. "The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety loom large over the camp, casting a shadow over the mental well-being of its residents." Additionally, the report reveals that as of October 2023, 93 percent of the camp's residents are women and children, with 65 percent aged under 18, and 51 percent aged under 12.

Meanwhile, the living and security situation in northeastern Syria is increasingly worsening. Prices of food, fuel and other essential commodities in the region continue to rise due to the controlling forces' failure to regulate the market. The situation has further deteriorated in areas in eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate, exacerbated by clashes. Overall, these clashes have made it even more difficult for civilians in these areas to secure water and day-to-day essential requirements such as food and medication.

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

B. Most notable human rights violations in Syria in January 2024 as documented on SNHR's database

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



1. Extrajudicial killing

In January 2024, SNHR documented the killing of 72 civilians, including 18 children and 10 women (adult female). Among these victims were five individuals who died due to torture, while two massacres were also documented this month. On February 1, we released [a report](#) detailing the civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria in January 2024.

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

A. Main parties:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):⁹ 15 civilians, including two children and one woman.
- Russian forces: Five civilians, including three children and one woman.
- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): Two civilians, including one child.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS):¹⁰ Four civilians, including one child and one woman.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): One civilian.

B. Other parties:

We documented the killing of 45 civilians in January, including 11 children and seven women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unidentified source: Two children.
- Gunfire of unidentified source: 13 civilians, including one child.
- Bombings by unidentified parties: Three children.
- Killings by unidentified parties: Three civilians, including one child.
- Drowning: Nine civilians, including one child and one woman.
- Jordanian forces: 14 civilians, including two children and six women.
- Turkish Border Guard: One child.

2. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance

In January 2024, SNHR documented at least 182 arbitrary arrests/detentions carried out by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, with those detained including eight children and four women (adult female). Most of these arrests were carried out by Syrian regime forces. We [released a report](#) on February 2 detailing the arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in January 2024 by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

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

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

10. Designated as a terror group by the UN.

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

- Syrian regime forces: 79 individuals, including two children and one woman.
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS): Eight individuals.
- All Armed opposition factions/Syrian National Army (SNA): 34 individuals, including three women.
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF): 61 individuals, including six children.

3. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

SNHR documented at least 37 attacks on vital civilian facilities during January 2024, including 29 attacks by Syrian regime forces, which were concentrated in the two governorates of Idlib and Aleppo

Of these 37 attacks, we documented 11 that targeted educational facilities, two on medical facilities, and three on places of worship.

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

A. Main parties

- Syrian regime forces: 29 attacks.

B. Other parties

- Turkish forces: Eight attacks.

4. Indiscriminate attacks and unlawful weapons

In January 2024, SNHR recorded no fewer than two attacks by Syrian regime forces that involved the use of incendiary weapons. Those attacks targeted civilian populated areas far from the dividing lines, and caused damage to many properties.

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

On December 31, 2023, the [UN Refugee Agency \(UNHCR\) released its global appeal for the year 2024](#), in which it stressed that the Syrian conflict is still the largest cause of displacement in the MENA region. [The UNHCR further revealed that there are over 5.3 million registered Syrian refugees in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt, in addition to 7.2 IDPs.](#)

On January 10, [a Stockholm court announced](#) that Mohamed Hamo, a former Syrian regime forces general now living in Sweden, will be tried for his alleged involvement in committing war crimes in Syria in 2012. The court accused Hamo of having been involved in indiscriminate aerial and ground attacks between January 1 and July 20 of 2012, in and around the two cities of Hama and Homs.

On January 22, [the EU released a statement](#) revealing that it has designated a number of regime-associated individuals and entities on its list for restrictive measures. The entities named will have their assets frozen, with any transfer of funds or economic resources to them or in a manner that serves their interests whether directly or indirectly being wholly outlawed. These individuals and entities are now also banned from travelling to EU countries. According to the EU, the new list includes an economic advisor to Bashar Assad, head of the Syrian regime, three prominent businessmen who provide support for, and benefit from the Syrian regime, and two individuals linked to the Assad family. Also added were five companies that support and benefit from the Syrian regime, which are: Al-Dj Group (also known as ALDJ), Cham Wings, Freebird Travel Agency, Iloma Investment Private JSC, and Al-Aqila Company (also known as al-Akila/Al-Aqeela Insurance Company). These entities have been designated in relation to a range of acts, including transferring Syrian mercenaries, or participating in arms trading, smuggling narcotics, and money laundering.

On January 22, [The Hague District Court in The Netherlands sentenced a 35-year-old man to 12 years in prison](#) for committing crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria. Between 2011 and 2017, the defendant was a member of the pro-regime Palestinian Liwa al-Quds, which was involved in oppressing the demonstrations during the popular uprising for democracy that broke out in March 2011. The defendant in particular was involved in deporting and arresting civilians, as well as being involved in the Syrian regime's ongoing aggression against the civilian population. In the court's view, this violence was carried out in a widespread and systematic manner that amounts to crimes against humanity.

On January 27, Belgium's Public Prosecution Service [issued an arrest warrant against a man](#), named only as H.A., with committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria between 2011 and 2016. The Belgium-based accused H.A. is suspected to have been the commander of a local militia in al-Salamiya city in eastern Hama that attacked and assaulted protestors during the demonstrations that were held as part of the popular uprising for democracy that broke out in March 2011. He is also accused of arresting and torturing civilians. H.A. was arrested by the Belgian authorities on Tuesday, January 25, 2024, in Brussels. On January 30, SNHR [released a statement](#) welcoming the issuance of this arrest warrant, while also revealing that the group has supplied the court with some data on the violations of which H.A. was accused.

On January 24-25, round 21 of the Astana talks was held in the Kazakhstani Capital Astana, with the participation of the Astana Agreement's guarantor states: Russia, Türkiye, and Iran.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

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

Recommendations

UN Security Council

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

International Community

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

UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

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

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

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

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria

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

Syrian regime

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

Russian regime

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

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

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

All Armed Opposition factions/SNA

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

Humanitarian Organizations

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

Acknowledgment

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



Annex

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

- Human Rights Watch (HRW). [World Report 2024 \(Syria\)](#). (2024, January 11).
- Curmi, B. (2024, January 12). [Don't let Syria slip off the global agenda](#). Al Majalla.¹¹
- Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR). (2024, January 23). [SNHR's 13th Annual Report: Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in 2023](#).
- Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA).¹² (2023, January 19). *Behind the Curtain: Unravelling the Bureaucracy of Syria's Machinery of Death*.

11. Al Majalla is a weekly London-based political news journal that was founded in 1980. The Al Majalla is affiliated with the Saudi state-backed Saudi Research and Media Group.

12. CIJA is a non-profit organization founded by the Canadian investigator William H. Wiley in 2012. It enlists international investigators, analysts, and lawyers.



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No justice without accountability

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