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No less than 453 Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities in Syria in the First Half of 2018

Including 38 Incidents in June



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Sunday, July 8, 2018

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

Article 52 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 defines Civilian Objects as: **"....all objects which are not military objectives" with Military Objects being: "military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage."**

Civilian objects include medical facilities, educational facilities, infrastructures, places of worship, and other facilities that are used for civilian purposes.

Since March 2011, Syrian regime forces, and then Syrian-Russian alliance forces, have trumped all parties in targeting vital civilian facilities – especially in the areas under the control of armed opposition, and to a lesser degree in ISIS-held areas. We have recorded repeated attacks on thousands of vital facilities, which proves that these facilities were deliberately destroyed and corrupted. We have also recorded hundreds of massacres that resulted from attacks on such objects.

Certainly, other parties committed similar violations, but to varying degrees, and never to the extent of the crimes by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian forces.



The attacks we have recorded include deliberate bombardments that targeted civilian objects, lootings, and attacks that involve disabling these objects and undermining their purpose in serving civilians despite the lack of any pressing military necessity or these objects being used for combat purposes by a party which would have justified targeting them by the other parties to the conflict.

In light of the prolonged duration of the conflict and these facilities being continually targeted, as well as the ongoing demographic changes, a need rose for alternating the functions of some facilities (for example, many schools have been turned into IDPs shelters). We have also noticed that some facilities moved between multiple buildings and areas more than once in order to evade bombardment, while others were moved to secure sites such as caves.

SNHR has dedicated a periodic monthly report to monitor attacks on vital civilian facilities. In addition, SNHR has released extensive reports and researches on vital facilities that have been destroyed by the parties to the conflict.

Methodology

The report monitors the attacks on vital civilian facilities that we were able to document in June, except for attacks on medical facilities, civil defense facilities, and international humanitarian insignia which are documented in a separate [monthly report](#).

This report draws upon, firstly, the daily, ongoing documentation and monitoring efforts by SNHR team, and, secondly, on accounts from survivors, eyewitnesses, and local media workers that we've talked to via phone or social media. We have also analyzed a large number of the videos and pictures that were posted online or we received from local activists via e-mail, Skype, and social media. Videos posted by local activists have shown wide destruction in vital civilian facilities. We have copies of all the videos and pictures included in this report in a secret online database, as well as backup copies on hard drives. For more information, please see the methodology adopted by SNHR for [classifying vital civilian facilities](#).

This report contains a number of attacks that were perpetrated by an air force. However, we weren't able to accurately determine the party responsible for those attacks – the Syrian regime or Russian forces. Therefore, we assigned responsibility, in these attacks, to the Syrian regime/Russian forces.



This report documents a number of incidents of attack that were the result of bombings. However, we weren't able to identify the groups behind it in light of the considerable difficulty in identifying the responsible party in such bombings.

This report also contains an attack using a mortar shell. However, we weren't able to accurately determine who fired them, as we couldn't visit the site or obtain evidences to help properly identify the source.

Most of the attacks we have documented targeted civilian areas, as our investigations have proven, where no military bases or armories were found during or before the attacks. The attacking forces didn't take into consideration the principle of proportionality. We also didn't record that the attacking forces put out warnings for civilians prior to the attack as the international humanitarian law requires.

The type and number of evidences vary from one case to another. In light of the challenges we mentioned above, many of the incidents' legal description change based on new evidences or clues that surface after we had released the report. We add these evidences and clues to our data archive. On the other hand, many incidents don't constitute a violation to the international humanitarian law, but it involved collateral damages, so we record and archive these incidents to know what happened historically and to preserve it as a national record. However, they don't necessarily qualify as crimes.

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations that occurred. Also, it doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

II. June Outline

Russian-Syrian alliance forces launched a vicious offensive in south Syria in mid-June which resulted in damages to vital civilian facilities.

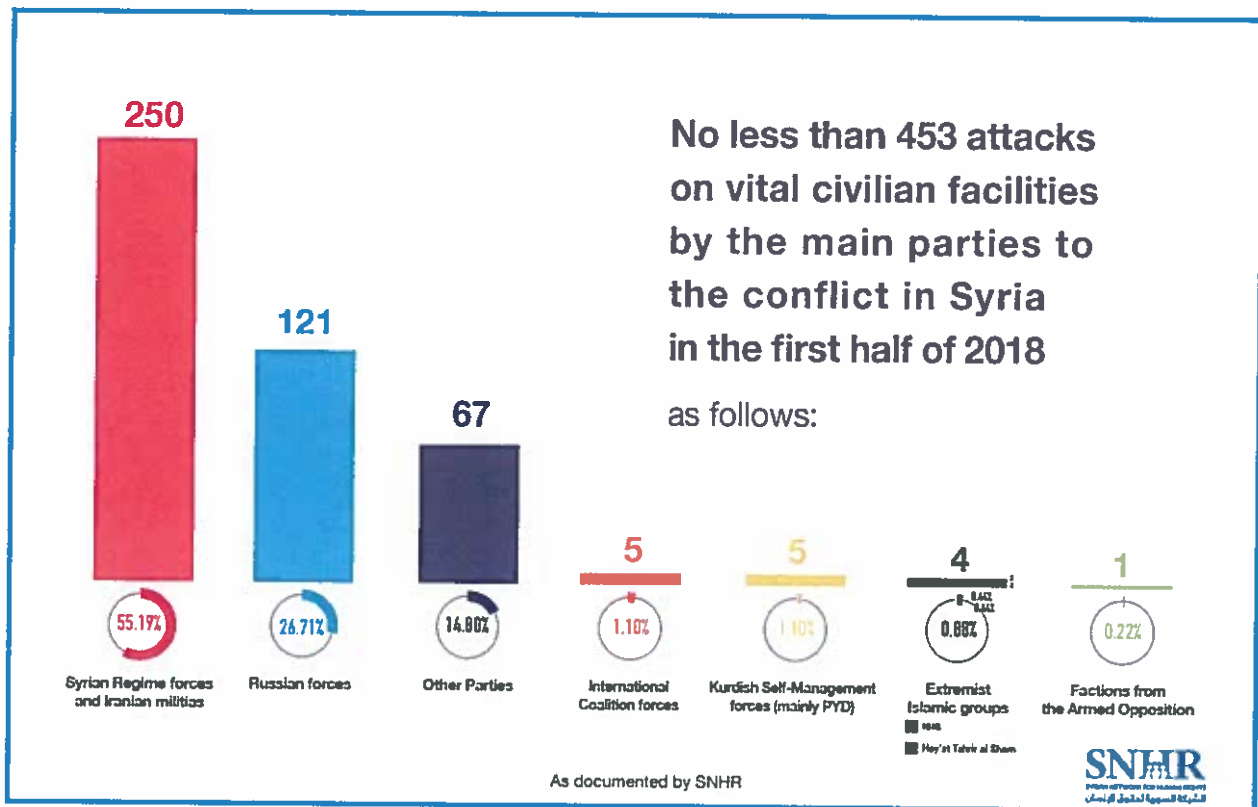
Russian-Syrian alliance forces topped all parties with 31 attacks on vital civilian facilities, including 16 in Daraa governorate and 11 in Idlib governorate.



III. Executive Summary

A. Attacks on vital civilian facilities in the first half of 2018

Through daily documentation and monitoring, we, at SNHR, have recorded no less than 453 attacks on vital civilian facilities in the first half of 2018, distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:



A- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 250

B- Russian forces: 121

C- Extremist Islamic groups:

- ISIS (self-proclaimed the Islamic State): 2
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of armed opposition factions): 2

D- Factions from the armed opposition: 1

E- Self-Management forces (consisting primarily of the Democratic Union Party – a branch for the Kurdistan Workers' Party): 5

F- International coalition forces: 5

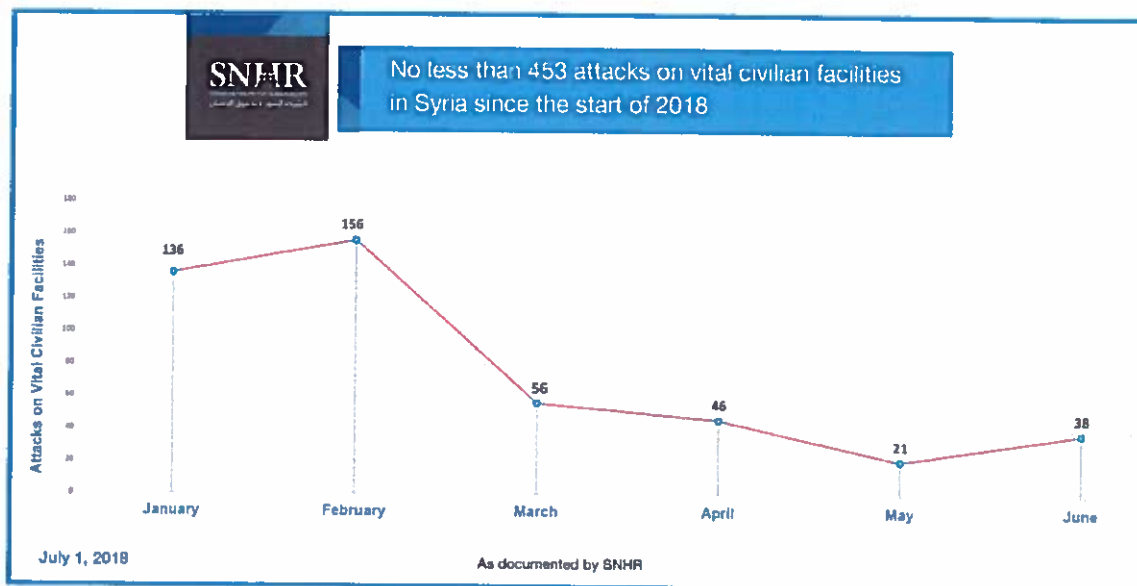
G- Other parties: 67

Most notable facilities that were attacked in the first half of 2018:

108 vital medical facilities, 103 infrastructures, 93 places of worship, 78 vital educational facilities, 46 communal facilities, 13 refugee camps, 9 international humanitarian insignia, and 3 vital cultural facilities.

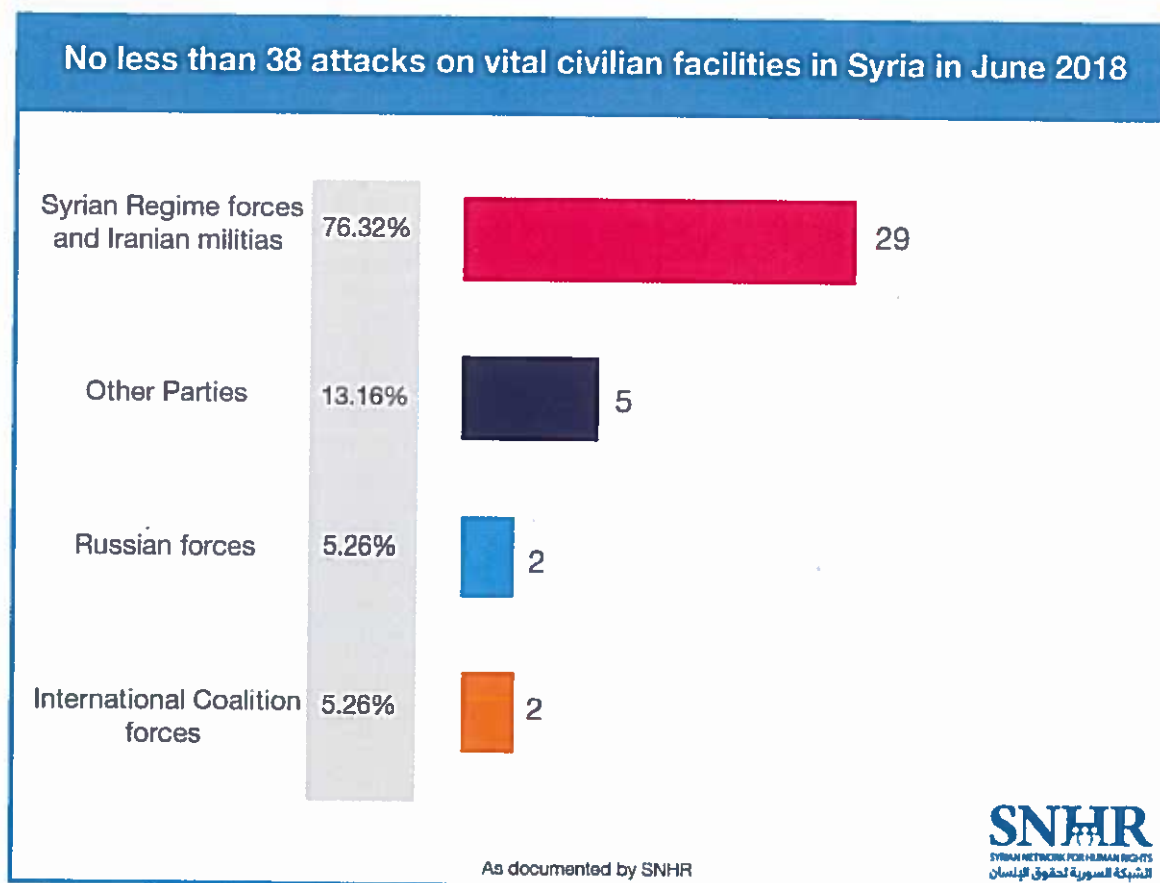
Distribution of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities in the First Half of 2018								
Perpetrator Party	Syrian Regime Forces	Russian Forces	Extremist Islamic Groups		Factions from the Armed Opposition	Kurdish Self-Management Forces	International Coalition Forces	Other Parties
Attacked Facility			ISIS	Hay'at Tahrir al Sham				
Places of Worship								
Mosques	60	16	2	1			1	9
Churches and Monasteries	1							3
Vital Educational Facilities								
Schools	38	23					1	4
Kindergartens	3							1
Universities	1	2		1				1
Institutes	2							
Orphanages								1
Vital Medical Facilities								
Medical Facilities	55	23				2	2	8
Ambulances	3	12						3
Vital Cultural Facilities								
Archeological Sites								1
Museums	1	1						
Communal Facilities								
Parks								1
Markets	34	4				1		5
Malls								1
International Humanitarian Insignia								
Red Crescent	5							4
Infrastructure								
Power Stations and Energy Sources					1			
Civil Defense Facilities	28	16						3
Water Systems	1	3						1
Official Headquarters	10	7						16
Transportation Systems		1						1
Bakeries	4	1					1	
Silos		1						
Domestic Animal Farms		1						
International Organizations and								1
Industrial Facilities	2	2						2
Refugee Camps								
Refugee Camps	2	8				2		1
Total	330	124	2	2	1	3	3	47

Attacks on vital civilian facilities since the start of 2018 were distributed by month as follows:



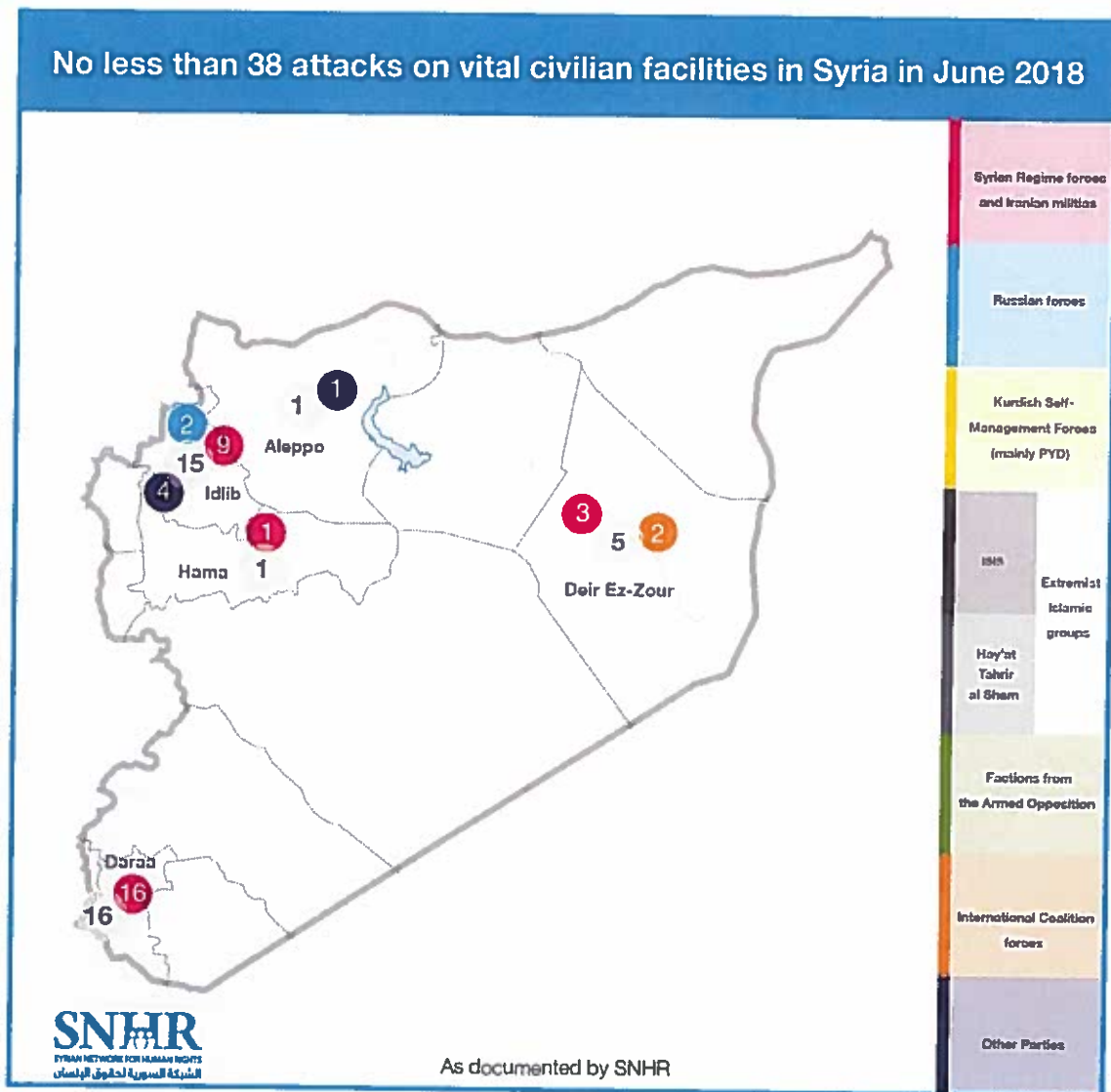
B. Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities in June

Through daily documentation and monitoring, we, at SNHR, have recorded no less than 38 attacks on vital civilian facilities in June 2018. Attacks were distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:



- A- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 29
- B- Russian forces: 2
- C- International coalition forces: 2
- D- Other parties: 5

Attacks on vital civilian facilities in June were distributed across governorates by the perpetrator party as follows:



- Most notable facilities that were attacked in June 2018:
- Attacks on vital civilian facilities in June were distributed as follows
- 10 places of worship, 8 vital educational facilities, 9 infrastructures, 9 vital medical facilities, 1 communal facilities, and 1 international humanitarian insignia.



Distribution of Attacks on Vital Civilian Facilities by the Perpetrator Party in June 2018

Perpetrator Party	Syrian Regime Forces	Russian Forces	International Coalition Forces	Other Parties
Attacked Facility				
Places of Worship				
Mosques	7	1	1	1
Vital Educational Facilities				
Schools	6		1	
Kindergartens	1			
Vital Medical Facilities				
Medical Facilities	9			
Communal Facilities				
Markets				1
International Humanitarian Insignia				
Red Crescent				1
Infrastructures				
Civil Defense Facilities	5	1		1
Official Headquarters	1			1
Total	29	2	2	5



IV. Details of Most Notable Incidents in June 2018

This report outlines the most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities. We have the details of the complete incidents stored in SNHR's database.

A- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)

Places of worship

- Mosques

Tuesday, June 12, 2018, Syrian regime forces artillery, stationing in al Boukamal city, fired a number of mortar shells that landed near al Ghannam Mosque in al Sosa town, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. the mosque building was slightly damaged. The town was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

Wednesday, June 20, 2018, Syrian regime forces rocket launcher shelled Abu Obayda ben al Jarrah Mosque in [al Hrak city](#), northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The mosque building and its furniture were heavily damaged. The city is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this writing, while it was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



Damages in the aftermath of a shelling by Syrian regime forces on Abu Obayda ben al Jarrah Mosque in al Hrak city, Daraa – June 20, 2018

Wednesday, June 27, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a number of missiles at [Abu Bakr al Siddeeq](#) Mosque in [al Ghariya al Sharqiya](#) town, northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The mosque building was partially destroyed and its furniture was heavily damaged, as the mosque was rendered out of commission. The town is under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of this writing, while it was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.





Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by Syrian regime/Russian forces on Abu Bakr al Siddeeq Mosque in al Ghariya al Sharqiya town, Daraa – June 27, 2018

Vital educational facilities

- Schools

Monday, June 11, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes fired a number of missiles near Mamdouh Shu'aib High School in the center of [Binnish city](#), northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The school building was partially destroyed and its furniture was moderately damaged. The city was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Destruction in the aftermath of a bombing by Syrian regime forces on Mamdouh Shu'aib High School in the center of Binnish city, Idlib – June 11, 2018



Thursday morning, June 28, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a missile in front of [Nawa 1st High School](#) for Girls, for elementary and feminine education, in Nawa city, northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The school building was partially destroyed and its furniture was heavily damaged. The town was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

- Kindergartens

Thursday, June 28, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime/Russian forces warplanes (the incident is still being investigated to accurately identify the perpetrator party) fired a number of missiles at a [kindergarten](#) in [Nawa city](#), northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. The kindergarten building was partially destroyed and its furniture was heavily damaged, as the kindergarten was rendered out of commission. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

Infrastructures

- Official headquarters

Sunday, June 10, 2018, fixed-wing Syrian regime forces warplanes (Su-22) fired a number of missiles near the local council's building in [Taftanaz town](#), northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The building and its furniture were moderately damaged. It should be noted that the local council uses the former municipal building in Taftanaz as a headquarter. The town was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

B- Russian forces

Places of worship

- Mosques

Thursday night, June 7, 2018, fixed-wing warplanes we believe were Russian carried out two consecutive airstrikes near Saed ben Mu'ath Mosque in western [Zardana village](#), north-eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missiles landed in a residential neighborhood about 50 meters from the mosque, which resulted in a massacre. Additionally, the mosque building and its furniture were moderately damaged. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



C- International coalition forces

Places of worship

- Mosques

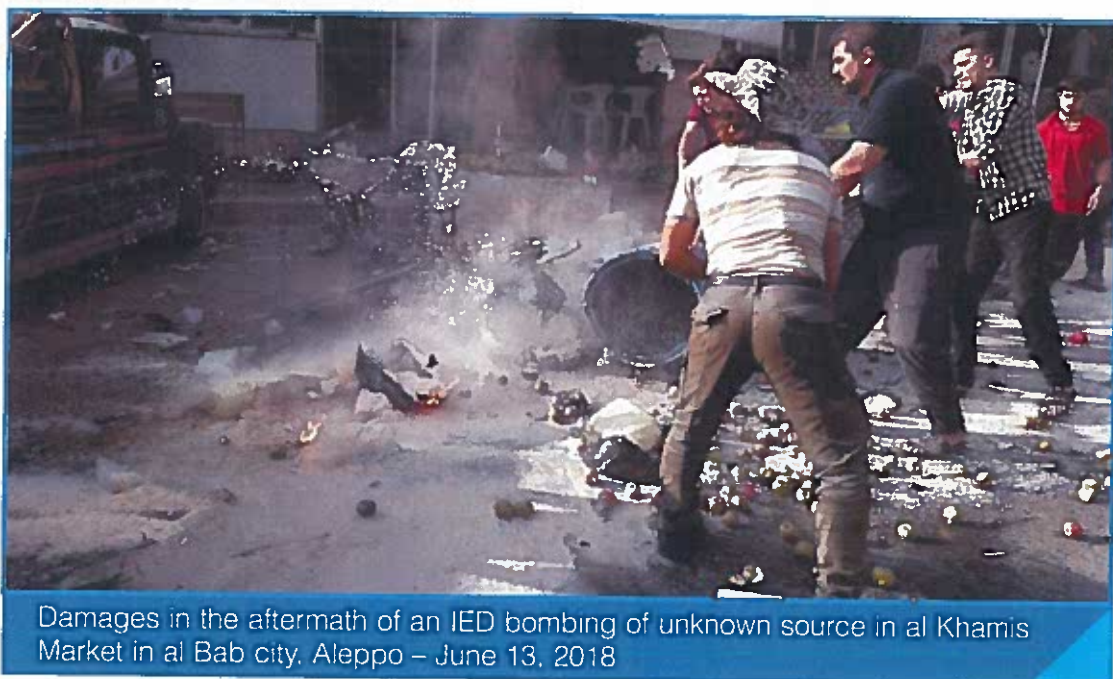
Sunday, June 24, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition forces warplanes fired a number of missiles near Huthayfa ben al Yaman Mosque in Rmielan neighborhood, al Sh'afa city, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal city, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The mosque building was slightly damaged. The city was under the control of ISIS at the time of the incident.

D- Other parties

Communal facilities

- Markets

Wednesday, June 13, 2018, an IED planted inside a motorbike exploded in the square of al Khamis Market for Vegetables in [al Bab city](#), eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The market facilities were moderately damaged. As of this writing, we have yet to identify the group behind the bombing in light of the considerable difficulties in identifying the responsible party in such bombings. The city was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.



V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Syrian regime and Russian forces

- Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be ceased.
- We can confirm that the bombardment mentioned in this report has targeted civilian objects. Therefore, Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces have violated Articles 52,53,54,55, and 56 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions.
- The attacks mentioned in this report that were carried out by the Syrian-Russian-Iranian alliance forces, are considered a violation of the rules of the customary international humanitarian law (rules 7 through 10).
- Aerial bombardment has caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks, as well as the repeated targeting, must be based on high orders, and a state policy.

The Coalition (international coalition and SDF)

The attacks by Coalition forces have caused significant damages to civilian facilities. In most cases, these attacks have also resulted in losses that involved casualties or injuries. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was too excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Other forces

Other parties have carried out attacks that targeted civilian objects, which also resulted, in some cases, in loss of lives. These violations might qualify as war crimes. However, these violations don't qualify as crimes against humanity, as with the Syrian regime and pro-regime forces who carry out unlawful attacks in a systematic and widespread manner.

Recommendations

Security Council

- The Security Council has to take additional steps after resolution 2139 and 2254 have been adopted, and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombing have been made. All parties to the conflict should respect these steps, and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- Expand sanctions to include the Syrian, Russian, and Iranian regimes who were directly involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.
- List the militias who are fighting on the side of the Syrian government and had committed wide massacres - such as Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, other Shiite groups, the National Defense Army, and Shabiha, on the international list of terrorist groups.



- Abstain from considering the Syrian government an official side after it perpetrated crimes against humanity with regard to the relief aspect, and stop giving it the largest portion of financial and other aids as they are being delivered to the people who support the Syrian government instead of people who are truly in-need.

International community

- In light of the split of the Security Council and its utter inability, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people that would protect them from the daily killing and siege and raise the support for the relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be activated 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 tens 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 been brought out as well as the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be taken and 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 the 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 work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

OHCHR

The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents included in this report and the incidents that preceded, given that they are a glaring mark in a string of daily sporadic violations of a smaller scope. Also, the OHCHR should work on implementing the recommendations in this report.

Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.



European Union and United States of America

Support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism that was established in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/248, adopted on December 21, 2016. And establish local tribunals that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and address the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

Russian regime

- Launch investigations regarding the incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all affected facilities and centers, and reconstruct and rehabilitate them. Also, compensate all the victims' families, who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as the all the wounded.
- Immediately cease bombing hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary international humanitarian law.

The Coalition (international coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition have to unequivocally and truly acknowledge that some of the bombardment operations have targeted civilian objects, while some attacks resulted in the killing of innocent civilians. Instead of denying, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and those who were affected.
- The SDF-supporting states should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns that are under their control.
- All forms of support, weapons and otherwise, should be ceased until SDF commit to the previous recommendations. This is primarily the supporting states' responsibility. Providing SDF with weapons and support while knowing that they can be used in war crimes or crimes against humanity can be seen as a contribution to these crimes.

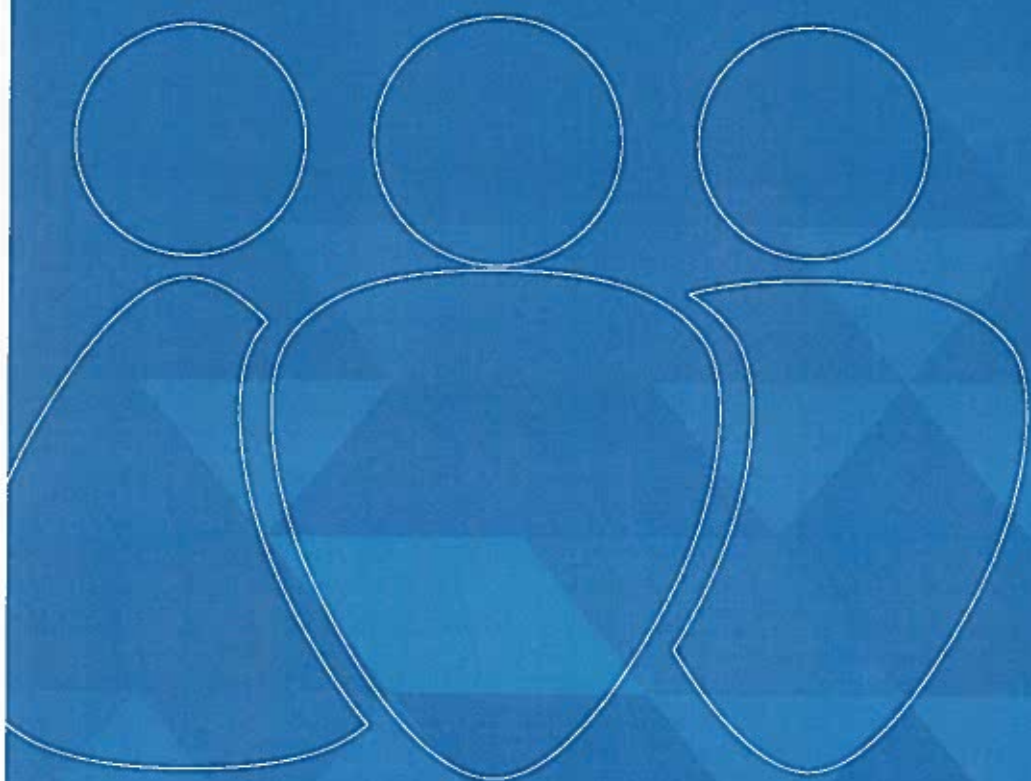
Armed opposition factions

Ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects in all of their areas of control. Also, armed opposition factions should launch investigations on the incidents included in this report.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We would like to thank and extend our most heartfelt condolences to all the residents and local activists who contributed effectively to this report.





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