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The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in August 2022

A Military Escalation between the Parties to the Conflict and the Controlling Forces in Northern Syria Kills Dozens of Civilians: Syria Remains Unsafe for the Return of IDPs and Refugees

Sunday 04 September 2022

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 analyzes 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, which SNHR documented in August 2022, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during this period. 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 August

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

In August, SNHR documented an increase in the frequency of artillery shelling carried out by Syrian regime forces in the Idlib region in northwest Syria. This shelling was focused on the villages and towns of Jabal al Zaweya in the southern Idlib suburbs, as well as on the western suburbs of Aleppo, and Sahl al Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama close to the line of contact with the armed opposition factions. The towns and villages of the northern, southern, and western suburbs of Idlib far from the contact lines, were also subjected to ground attacks by Syrian regime forces. One of these attacks on August 29 on Ghaniya village of Jisr al Shoghour city in western Idlib governorate, [injured a woman](#) and damaged several houses. We also documented Syrian regime forces' targeting of some roads in the areas nearby the contact lines using anti-armor missiles.

In August, Syrian regime forces continued their escalation of violence in areas of Daraa governorate, with regime artillery forces firing mortar shells at [Tafas city](#) in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate on August 10. This shelling, which injured five people, was accompanied by clashes between these regime forces and local fighters from among the city's residents, during the Syrian regime's attempt to storm the southern neighborhoods, which witnessed displacements among its residents, who fled to other neighborhoods as a result of that escalation.

Russian forces continued to carry out overflights and air attacks on northwest Syria in August. The last week of August witnessed an escalation by these forces, as Russian warplanes launched air raids on agricultural areas on the western outskirts of Idlib city on two consecutive days, August 22 and 23.



Smoke rising in the western part of Idlib city as a result of Russian air strikes on August 22, 2022 - Photographed by: Eyad Badra

In August, we recorded that Syrian Democratic Forces continued to launch ground attacks on areas of the northwestern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo. A ground attack using several missiles on residential neighborhoods on the center of Izaz city, north of Aleppo, on August 3 [injured five civilians](#) (three children and two women); meanwhile, a guided-missile attack targeting a car [killed a civilian](#) in Marea city, east of Aleppo, on August 18. In the same area, we also documented an escalation in the frequency of missile bombardment, which originated from the areas under the joint control of Syrian regime forces and Kurdish Self-Management forces in the north of Aleppo. On August 19, al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo was subjected to a ground attack using around six missiles fired by a party which SNHR has so far been unable to identify, though we believe that the missiles were fired either by Syrian regime forces or by the Syrian Democratic Forces, since the shelling came from an area jointly controlled by both. This attack resulted in [a massacre](#) of 16 civilians and injured more than 30 others, as well as causing significant material damage to vital civilian facilities. The SNHR will issue an extensive report on this incident.

In the context of reactions to the massacre, the [Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#) issued a press release on the same day, asserting that "An immediate independent investigation must be launched into the Friday morning missile shelling on the city of al-Bab in the eastern countryside of Aleppo, northern Syria. The shelling resulted in the death or injury of about 50 civilians."

The statement added that this incident serves as yet another reminder that there is no safe zone in Syria, and it demonstrates the frailty of the agreements designed to protect those areas from military attacks.

Meanwhile, the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Imran Riza, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Muhannad Hadi, and UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Adele Khodr, issued a [joint statement](#) on August 20 regarding the escalation of hostilities in northern Syria, confirming that an attack on August 18 in Hasaka city claimed the lives of four women and girls, while another attack on August 19 in al Bab city in Aleppo killed 13 civilians. The statement added that these terrible tragedies once again show that civilians, many of them women and children, continue to suffer the effects of ongoing hostilities in parts of Syria. On August 22, [US Department of State](#) Spokesman Ned Price issued a press release stating that the United States is deeply concerned about recent attacks along Syria's northern border, adding that "We deplore the civilian casualties in Al-Bab, Hasakah, and elsewhere. We remain committed to our efforts to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS and a political resolution to the Syrian conflict."

On August 23, workers for the local council in Izaz city in the northern suburbs of Aleppo found a mass grave during excavations to widen a road from the direction of Nadda village, east of the city. The grave, which contained the remains of five individuals, including a child and a woman, is believed to date back to the period when ISIS controlled the area before 2016.



The exhumation of the remains of individuals from a mass grave near Nadda village in the northern suburbs of Aleppo - August 23, 2022 - Photo by Ayoub Akkash

Tal Tamar city and surrounding villages in the eastern suburbs of Hasaka, which are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, were subjected to intense artillery and mortar shelling during August by the Syrian National Army forces stationed in Ras al Ein area in the western suburbs of Hasaka, which didn't cause any casualties among civilians or result in any change in the areas of control.

The frequency of clashes between clans in SDF-controlled areas increased in August compared to previous months, as the villages of al Sh-heil and al Sh'aitat in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour and Jdaidet Kahit in the western suburbs of Raqqa witnessed almost daily clashes with light and medium weapons between several clans against the background of revenge, killing at least 13 people and burning dozens of houses. The eastern region continues to witness insecurity due to the availability of weapons in the hands of the clans and the failure of the controlling party to take deterrent measures to limit the spread of weapons and end the clashes between these clans.

August also saw continuing [civilian deaths due to explosions caused by landmines and munitions remnants from the conflict](#) in various governorates and regions of Syria, with these incidents being concentrated in Idlib governorate, and with [most of the victims](#) this month being [children](#). SNHR documented the deaths of 11 civilians, including five children, resulting from landmine and remnants of war explosions in August, bringing the total death toll caused by these munitions since the beginning of 2022 to 101 civilians, including 50 children and nine women.

On August 18, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said in a [press release](#), commenting on [the deaths of two children](#) as a result of a mine explosion in Aleppo city on August 17, “ERW [explosive remnants of war] remain a source of danger for many people in Syria, particularly in areas that witnessed heavy fighting during the conflict,” with the statement adding that children are particularly vulnerable to these deadly explosions as they often mistake ERW or unexploded ordnance for toys, unaware of the lethal risks.

August also saw the [killing of civilians](#) in various governorates, mostly in Daraa governorate, by gunmen whom SNHR has been unable to identify. We also monitored the continuation of killings in al Hawl Camp, where we documented the killing of three civilians, [including two Iraqi refugees](#), in August.

On August 12, the Syrian regime’s [SANA news agency](#) reported that Israeli forces had fired two tank shells on the vicinity of Hamidiya village in the northern suburbs of Quneitra, which resulted in injuries to civilians. On August 14, [SANA](#) said, quoting a military source affiliated with the Syrian regime, that the Israeli warplanes had bombed several locations in Damascus suburbs, in conjunction with bombing other sites in the south of Tartus governorates, which resulted in the death of three Syrian regime soldiers, in addition to causing material losses. On August 25, SANA reported that the Israeli Air Force targeted locations in [the vicinity of the cities of Hama and Tartus](#), injuring two civilians, in addition to causing material losses and igniting fires in some of the targeted areas. On August 31, [SANA](#) also reported that the Israeli Air Force targeted some locations southeast of Damascus city, causing material losses. The agency added that the attack was preceded by another attack targeting Aleppo International Airport, which caused material damage.

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in August to pursue and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the regime in areas that had also previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates, with most occurring during campaigns of mass raids and arrests and at checkpoints. We documented widespread arrests carried out by Syrian regime forces through the regime’s Criminal Security Force, targeting a number of civilians, including lawyers, government employees, and university students, on charges of their communication/collaboration in reporting news to external media or reporting corruption in government institutions on social media pages; those arrested faced charges related to the regime’s [cybercrime law](#).

We also documented arrests targeting returnees, “refugees and internally displaced persons”, while they were trying to reach areas under the control of the Syrian regime. These arrests were concentrated near the Kasab border crossing in the northern suburbs of Latakia, and at illegal crossings on the Syrian-Lebanese border in the suburbs of Homs governorates.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group’s policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in August, with the number detained and forcibly disappeared increasing this month as SDF personnel continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and detentions, targeting civilians on the pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters. We also documented detentions targeting a number of civilians, including college students, during campaigns of mass raids and detentions and at checkpoints with the aim of taking them to SDF recruitment camps. These arrests were concentrated in Raqqa governorate. We also recorded detentions of [media activists](#), including women, in connection with criticizing the living and service conditions and arrests in the areas under SDF control. According to the information we obtained, these detainees work for several media agencies and local institutions, and the detention was carried out through the Syrian Democratic Forces’ intelligence service, with those detained being accused of “espionage.”

We also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces kidnapping children with the aim of taking them to its training and recruitment camps and forcibly conscripting them, preventing their families from communicating with them, and failing to disclose their fate.

August also saw Hay’at Tahrir al Sham detaining civilians, including media activists and politicians, with these arrests concentrated in Idlib governorate; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS’s management of areas under its control. These detentions were carried out arbitrarily in the form of raids in which HTS members stormed their victims’ homes, often breaking down the doors, or abducted their victims while they were traveling or passing through temporary checkpoints. We also recorded detentions targeting a number of civilians on charges of communicating with their relatives living in areas under the control of Syrian regime forces.

Meanwhile, all Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in August, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime. In addition, we documented detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under all Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate. Most of these arrests occurred without judicial authorization and without the participation of the police force, which is the legitimate administrative authority responsible for arrests and detentions through the judiciary, with these arrests also carried out without presenting any clear charges against those being detained. In addition to these cases, we also documented raids and detentions carried out by Syrian National Army personnel, targeting civilians, including women, on charges of collaborating with Syrian Democratic Forces. These incidents were concentrated in some villages near Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. We also recorded arrests targeting dozens of civilians in connection with freedom of expression over their participation in peaceful demonstrations by local activists under the title 'We will not reconcile' in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Regarding living conditions:

The living, economic, and service conditions in all regions of Syria continued to deteriorate drastically and constantly in August. The areas under the control of Syrian regime forces are still suffering from the steady rise in the prices of living materials, which has been further worsened by the sharp drop in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound against the US dollar, with the [exchange rate standing at 4,450](#) Syrian pounds to one US dollar in the last week of August, an increase of over 400 Syrian pounds since the start of July when it stood at 4,020.

In terms of services, the electricity crisis continued to afflict these areas, with the policy of rationing still applied during the hours of electricity connection. The pro-regime news site [al Watan Online](#) reported that the daily connection period did not exceed 15 minutes, compared to the 5 hours and 45 minutes cut in Hama city, which exacerbated the severe water cuts and shortages due to the high prices of water tankers. The pro-regime [Tishreen newspaper](#) reported on August 14 that the price of a small tank of water had reached 30,000 Syrian pounds in Suwayda city. As for the bread crisis, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection has reduced the already meager weekly allowances for bread distributed through the electronic card for the category of one and two persons, as the share of one person decreased from four to three packages per week, while the allowances for the two-person category decreased from six to five packages per week, according to a report published by the ministry on its [Facebook page](#) on August 20.

As for fuel prices, on August 6, [SANA](#) published a decision by the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, according to which it raised the price of a liter of subsidized gasoline (octane 90) purchased via the electronic card from 1,100 to 2,500 Syrian pounds (an increase of 230%). The decision also raised the price of a liter of gasoline (octane 95) from 4,000 to 4,500 Syrian pounds per liter. The increase in fuel prices has further exacerbated the transportation crisis experienced by most of the areas under the control of Syrian regime forces. On August 8, [Tishreen newspaper](#) published photos on its Facebook page showing dozens of citizens gathering at public transportation stops in Aleppo city.

Hospitals and government medical centers affiliated with the Syrian regime are also suffering from the crisis of losing medicines and medical supplies, with the pro-Syrian regime [al Watan newspaper](#) reporting on its official Facebook page on August 23 that some hospitals lack even casts, with patients now required to bring these supplies or medicines at their own expense, imposing a further burden on citizens in light of the already exorbitant prices.

In northwestern Syria, civilians continued to suffer as a result of the deteriorating economic and living situation at all levels, due to the high prices of all consumer goods, supplies, and fuels. The Turkish lira, used in trading in the region, recorded a new decline against the US dollar, losing about 8% of its value since the beginning of July, in light of a significant shortage in purchasing power due to the spread of unemployment and the high rate of poverty, especially in the areas which include IDP camps, in addition to the low wages of labor. The service and health sector in the region is also suffering from a funding crisis in light of a sharp increase in humanitarian needs.

Throughout August, Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate witnessed protests against the Syrian Democratic Forces' practices, especially the kidnapping of children. The city's markets also witnessed a major stagnation, along with a state of great anxiety about the possible outbreak of battles in the region with the Turkish forces, in addition to intermittent fuel shortages at the city's gas stations.

As for northeastern Syria, the situation in the region continued to deteriorate in light of the tense security situation, insecurity, and the spread of administrative corruption, with the people there still suffering from several living and economic crises, in conjunction with the increase in the unemployment rate and the high prices of some foodstuffs and fuel, in addition to the failure of service sectors to secure the needs of civilians, especially at the level of supplying drinking water and electricity, and meeting the requirements of the agricultural sector.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

In August, the massive suffering of IDPs in northwest Syria continued in regard to living conditions and shortages of humanitarian aid, especially in light of the deteriorating economic conditions and the increase of needs which are reaching record levels even as the support required to meet these needs declines, with this already desperate situation further worsened by the almost complete lack of job opportunities and the significant decrease in purchasing power, especially among IDPs living in the camps. The prevailing severe weather conditions in the area worsened the living conditions of the IDPs in the camps, as the first week of August witnessed a [windstorm](#) that hit northern Idlib governorate, causing the collapse and destruction of a number of IDPs' tents in several IDP camps. In August, we also recorded the continuation of fires breaking out in the IDP camps in the Idlib areas. On August 28, a fire broke out due to the misuse of cooking equipment in one of the IDPs' tents in [a camp in the north of Idlib governorate](#) burned two tents completely and causing moderate damage to another tent.

In northeastern Syria, meanwhile, a fire broke out due to a short circuit in an IDP camp west of Hasaka city on 7 August resulting [in the deaths of two siblings](#) and burning down seven tents. Another fire that broke out in Sector One of [al Hawl Camp for IDPs](#) in Hasaka suburbs on August 27, resulted in the death of an Iraqi refugee girl, and also caused the complete burning of four IDPs' tents. On August 17, Imran Riza, the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (for Syria, issued a [press release](#) following a mission to northeastern Syria in which he was briefed on the conditions of the camps, including al Hawl and al Rouj camps. In his statement, Riza expressed concerns about increasing levels of violence among the resident population in al Hawl Camp, adding that "already this year, at least 26 people have been murdered in the camp, including three this week, and 20 of them women." The statement noted that criminality, gender-based violence, and attacks against humanitarian workers are also commonplace in the camp.

Regarding the camps in northeastern Syria and foreign governments' repatriation of detainees held there in August, [the Iraqi News Agency](#) on August 10 quoted an announcement by the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement stating that 500 Iraqi families are scheduled to be transferred to Iraq from al Hawl Camp in northeastern Syria this year in groups. The agency added that the ministry has started transferring the first group of IDPs from al Hawl Camp, numbering about 153 families, while the second group will include the transfer of around 150 families during the next few days. The agency indicated that these were mostly elderly and sick people who would be accompanied by a medical team and taken to al Ja'da Camp in Nineveh governorate, northern Iraq, while the rest are scheduled to be transferred before the end of this year. On August 13, the Iraqi [agency](#) said that the Iraqi authorities had received "50 Iraqi terrorists from Syria", adding that this operation was carried out in coordination with the Syrian Democratic Forces, as it also indicated that some of these "are dangerous criminals and leaders in ISIS and are responsible for lots of terrorist operations."

On August 14, the twenty third group of IDPs left al Hawl Camp, [consisting of 77 IDP families](#) (nearly 400 people) from Deir Ez-Zour governorate returning to Deir Ez-Zour governorate, under a decision issued by Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority [No. 146](#) in October 2020 to empty al Hawl Camp.

On August 25, [Syrian Democratic Forces announced](#) the launch of a security campaign in al Hawl Camp, entitled 'Security and Humanity' in search of ISIS cells, announcing the following day that 27 ISIS cells members had been arrested in the first sector of the camp.

Regarding al Rukban camp, the suffering of the approximately 7,500 residents of the camp, which is located on the Syrian-Jordanian border east of Homs governorate, grew even worse in July and August, with rising temperatures exacerbating the repercussions of reducing the quantity of potable water that was previously brought across the Jordanian border to the camp with the support of UNICEF by almost half, since last May, in a way that threatens the lives of the camp residents. On August 3, the SNHR issued a [distress call](#) to stop the suffering of the camp's IDP residents. On August 16, the bakery that supplies the camp's residents with bread stopped working due to the complete lack of flour supplies entering the camp as a result of the further tightening of the siege imposed by Syrian regime forces there which is still being imposed as of the moment of preparing this report, with the exception of the entry of about 250 kg of flour that was sold to a limited number of camp residents. The SNHR condemns the increased pressure on the camp's residents to force them to return toward Syrian regime-controlled territory due to the serious threat they are under, and calls on the international community to move to save their lives.



Residents of al Rukban camp in a protest demanding the lifting of the siege imposed by Syrian regime forces on them and the improvement of their poor living conditions inside the camp - August 8, 2022

Regarding Syrian refugees, on August 15, [the International Rescue Committee](#) (IRC) issued a press release saying that a group of 39 Syrian refugees remain trapped on a small islet in the Evros river, where the borders of Greece and Turkey meet. The IRC called for their immediate evacuation and warned that illegal pushbacks in Greece and across the EU are costing lives. On the same day, [Reuters](#) reported that Greek police had located 38 Syrian refugees in the Lavara area of Evros, among them one pregnant woman and seven children. The agency added that the refugees had been trapped for days on a small islet in the Evros river along the border between Greece and Turkey.

In Lebanon, the Lebanese authorities are still promoting the return of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in cooperation with the Syrian regime. On August 5, [the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) said that there must be “cooperation, consultation and dialogue to develop a road map that would allow the gradual return of the displaced Syrians to their homes with dignity and safety, in order to ensure the stability of Lebanon and common interests with Europe.”

On August 6, Issam Sharaf El-Din, Minister of the Displaced in the Lebanese caretaker government, told [Sawt Beirut International](#), “The Lebanese demand is the return of 15,000 refugees per month to Syria, and the Lebanese state asked the High Commissioner for Refugees to stop the financial funding for 15,000 refugees every month in order to motivate them to return,” adding that the issue of political refugees is being followed up with the Syrian regime. On August 15, the minister held meetings with ministers of the Syrian regime government to discuss “the file of the return of Syrian refugees,” according to the [Lebanese LBC TV website](#).

On August 18, the Lebanese [National News Agency](#) stated that a fire had broken out in the Martyrs' Camp for Syrian Displaced Persons in the Lebanese town of Aarsal, completely destroying 14 tents, and damaging six others, with a number of minor burn injuries recorded among the camp's residents. The agency added that the fire was caused by a gas leakage from one of the tents.

In Jordan, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [said](#) on August 22 that the refugee situation in Jordan may become a humanitarian crisis in a matter of months if urgent funding is not provided, as the current funding does not cover the basic needs of refugees. Jordan currently hosts some 670,000 Syrian refugees, with 85% of these refugee households forced to borrow money to buy food and pay their rent in the first quarter of 2022.

On the political and human rights level:

On July 31, [The Telegraph](#) reported that the Britain is accused of flouting the law by funding IS prisons in northeastern Syria where people suspected of being affiliated with ISIS are held, including children. The newspaper said that 750 boys as young as nine, including Westerners, at least one of them British national, are languishing in this prison without being charged or brought before any court.

On August 1, the US Department of Homeland Security issued a [decision](#) in which it extended the designation of Syria among the countries whose citizens, and individuals having no nationality who last habitually resided in Syria, could benefit from temporary protection status in the United States of America, for a period of 18 months. The decision added that the designation of Syrians as being eligible for temporary protection status began on March 29, 2012, and that this had been extended three times since then due to the continuation of the armed conflict in the country and the exceptional and temporary circumstances it is going through.

On August 2, the [Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor](#) issued a press release in which it said that the states supporting the SDF share responsibility for the horrific human rights violations committed by these forces. The statement added that the SDF continues to receive generous political, military, and financial support from countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, despite lacking respect for the rights of people residing in the areas which the SDF controls, especially as the latter holds thousands of prisoners in inhumane conditions.

On August 4, the UN World Food Program (WFP) account on [Twitter](#) published a tweet in which it reported that 14 WFP trucks had transported food rations, flour, wheat and nutritional supplements, from Aleppo to the WFP's warehouses in Sarmada city in Idlib suburbs, in line with Security Council Resolution No. 2642 and complementary to cross-border aid deliveries.



On August 4, [Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#) said that [the Netherlands' Council of State ruling](#) issued in July, which stated that Syrian asylum seekers in the Netherlands cannot be automatically transferred to Denmark under the European Union's 'Dublin' arrangement, concluding that it cannot be assumed the prohibition of inhuman treatment is respected by the Danish authorities, is a decision that helps protect EU's Syrian asylum seekers.

On August 5, [Refugees International](#) said in a report that approximately 4.1 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria, including 3.1 million people who suffer from food insecurity, and 1.7 million people who are displaced and live in camps. The report added that it would be very difficult to find suitable alternatives to the United Nations cross-border aid mechanism for those who need it in northwest Syria if the Russian veto continues to block it. The report said that members of the Security Council should reject attempts to replace the cross-border aid mechanism fully in the mechanism of cross-line aid delivery in future decisions.

On August 5, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, said during a [press briefing](#) in New York that the cross-line operation is at this time not able to substitute for the massive cross-border operations which the UN runs and which reaches 2.4 million Syrians each month in northwest Syria. He noted that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in that region is due to the continuation of hostilities and the aggravation of the economic crisis.

On August 8, the official Twitter account of the EU Delegation to Syria posted a [tweet](#) in which it said that Dan Stoenescu, the Head of the Delegation, made the first joint visit with Imran Reza, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, to Aleppo, Homs and Hama.

On August 10, US President Joe Biden issued a statement marking the tenth anniversary of the disappearance of American journalist Austin Tice in Damascus on August 13, 2013, and held the Syrian regime responsible for his abduction; according to the [statement](#) published by the White House website, "We know with certainty that he has been held by the Government of Syria." On August 17, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a [statement](#) describing these statements as "misleading and far from logical," adding that the United States of America "violated the provisions of the Vienna Conventions on consular and diplomatic relations when it turned a blind eye and even encouraged dozens of its citizens to travel to Syria and enter to its territories illegally and to the areas of presence of armed terrorist groups."

On August 10, Minister of Justice in the Syrian regime government issued [Circular No. 22](#) specifying the procedures for the conduct of proceedings related to registering deaths within Sharia courts. The circular included new conditions stipulating that five items of evidence must be submitted to and approved by the relevant judges in proceedings related to registering the death. It also requires that all relevant courts involved in death registration cases comply with the circular's content. The circular imposed security clearance on Judicial Authorities to register death cases, increasing the security services' intrusion. We issued a [report](#) in which we reviewed our analysis of the constitutional and legal violations contained in this circular's text and the consequences thereof. SNHR's report pointed out that the Syrian regime has refrained from issuing death certificates, with the exception of a very few cases, to the families of victims the regime has killed since March 2011.

On August 11, [Reporters Without Borders \(RSF\)](#) said that in recent weeks, the governments in "the autonomous regions of Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan" have been targeting journalists working for TV channels linked to rival political parties, adding that journalists in those areas have been paying the price of political rivalry. RSF confirmed that on August 2, TV reporter Barzan Ferman was abducted in Qameshlic city in northeastern Syria. The Kurdish Self-Management authorities in northeastern Syria have banned Rudaw TV since last February, and banned Kurdistan 24, the Iraqi Kurdish TV channel.

On August 11, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said in its situation [report](#) on northwestern Syria that the shelling on the area continued in June and July, killing 14 civilians, including five children and two women. The report added that in terms of internal displacement, 8,590 people and 7,842 people were newly internally displaced in June and July respectively, according to the Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP).

On August 21, US Department of State Spokesperson Ned Price issued a [press release](#) on the ninth anniversary of the chemical attack carried out by Syrian regime forces in the two Ghoutas of Damascus suburbs, in which he said that there can be no impunity for those who use chemical weapons and that the United States uses all available tools to promote accountability for such attacks.

On August 25, Joseph Manso, Representation of the United States of America to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), said in [an interview](#) with Alhurra TV that the United States believes that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons at least 50 times during the conflict in Syria, adding that "The Syrian regime still has a stockpile of chemical weapons, and that it still has the ability to produce a new chemical weapon." He pointed out that the international community has made efforts to send teams from the OPCW to verify the Syrian regime's announcement of the destruction of its chemical weapons, but the problem is that the Syrian regime is impeding the work of these teams and it does not cooperate with the OPCW and does not abide by its international obligations.

On August 29, Geir O. Pedersen, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, said in a [briefing](#) to the Security Council that August saw an increase in strikes attributed to a wide range of actors, adding, "I am concerned that an escalatory cycle could see events further unravel, with civilians continuing to pay an already immense cost." He pointed out that there is an urgent need for a political process that moves steadily forward, and this is not being achieved at the present time due to the degree of fragmentation in Syria, the region and internationally, and deficits of trust and will.

On August 29, Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in a [briefing](#) to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, "Violence is also impeding our ability to operate. The cross-line mission to Ras al Ayn was postponed due to increased hostilities." Ms. Msuya added that the lack of funding comes with severe consequences, including more drop-outs from school, and higher malnutrition rates. She noted that by not taking urgent action, a generation of Syrian children might be lost.

On August 30, Jonathan Hargreaves, the UK Special Representative for Syria, said in an [article](#) published by Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper that "Syrian refugees who return face grave human rights abuses and persecution at the hands of the Syrian government and affiliated militias." He added that the returnees have suffered arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and ill-treatment, involuntary or enforced disappearances, and summary executions, while land and property have been stolen making a sustainable return impossible, and concluded by emphasizing that Syria is not a safe country for refugees to return to.

On August 30 and 31, representatives of the Arab League, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, the United Kingdom, and the United States met in Geneva to discuss the crisis in Syria. At the end of the meeting, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis consistent with UN Security Council resolution 2254, as stated in [the joint statement](#) published by the US Department of State website on August 31. The statement also added that the participants reaffirmed their continued support for implementing and sustaining an immediate nation-wide ceasefire, the Constitutional Committee, free and fair elections in Syria, and the end of arbitrary detention. The statement called on all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to resume meetings of the Constitutional Committee to advance an inclusive political solution in Syria. The statement also underlined the necessity to continue to press for accountability for all atrocities and international crimes perpetrated in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons.

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

On August 12, the [French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#) said in a statement published on its official website that it has received important documentation of possible crimes committed by Syrian regime forces. The statement added that these documents provide evidence of atrocities committed by pro-regime forces during the 2013 Tadamun massacre in Damascus, where several dozen civilians were killed, and that the alleged actions are likely to constitute the most serious international crimes, specifically crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Commenting on this, on August 15, [SANA](#) quoted the Syrian regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as saying that the videos of al Tadamun massacre, on which the statement of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs was based, are "fabricated, of unknown source and therefore lacking the lowest levels of credibility." The agency added, quoting the statement of the Syrian regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The French government, through its full involvement in its unlimited support for terrorism in the war on Syria, bears primary responsibility for the shedding of Syrian blood and the crimes committed against Syrians, which amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and require political and legal accountability."

On August 15, the SNHR issued a [statement](#) saying that the UN Secretary-General's 2021 report on [Children and Armed Conflict](#) shows again that Syria is either the worst or amongst the worst countries worldwide in several types of violations, adding that the SNHR annually reviews the United Nations Secretary-General's report on children, given its status as a primary source on violations against children in Syria, through cooperation and partnership with UNICEF's Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).

On August 21, the SNHR issued a [report](#) on the ninth anniversary of the largest chemical weapons attack by the Syrian regime against Syrian citizens in the two Ghoutas of Damascus, in which SNHR revealed that this attack resulted in the deaths by suffocation of 1,144 individuals, including 194 women and 99 children, who constituted a third of all the victims, showing the Syrian regime's deliberate intention to kill the largest number of innocent people. The report noted that although the Syrian regime being responsible for carrying out 217 chemical attacks against the Syrian people, the barbaric attacks on the two Ghoutas of Damascus on August 21, 2013, remain the cruelest and most difficult of all these attacks.

On August 25, the [Syrian British Consortium](#) published an investigation into the massacre committed by Syrian regime forces in Daraya city in Damascus Suburbs in August 2012, in cooperation with a team of Syrian investigators, or those of Syrian origin, based on the testimonies of survivors and witnesses scattered all over the world, through which they were able to prove the responsibility of Syrian regime forces, Iranian militias, and the Lebanese Hezbollah militia for the massacre.

On August 30, the SNHR issued the 11th [annual report](#) on enforced disappearance in Syria on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. The report revealed that the number of people detained since March 2011 who still remain forcibly disappeared as of August 2022 has now reached at least 111,000 individuals, the vast majority of whom were detained by the Syrian regime, constituting a crime against humanity. The report added that the Syrian regime has systematically used enforced disappearance as one of its most notorious tools of repression and terrorism aimed at crushing and destroying political opponents simply for expressing their opinion. The report documented that at least 154,398 of the individuals arrested between March 2011 and August 2022, including 5,161 children and 10,159 women, are still arrested/detained or forcibly disappeared at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria, 88% of them by the Syrian regime.

In August, the SNHR briefed the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, as well as briefing the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health on one case of enforced disappearance.

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in August

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria that were documented by the SNHR in August.



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In August, SNHR documented the deaths of 91 civilians, including 28 children and two women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. Among the victims was one media worker. We also documented the deaths of seven individuals due to torture, in addition to documenting at least one massacre. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

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 (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)¹:** 14 civilians, including four children.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Four civilians.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 73 civilians, including 24 children and two women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- **Shells whose source we have been unable to identify:** 15 civilians, including five children.
- **Landmines whose source we have not been able to identify:** 11 civilians, including five children.
- **Gunfire whose source we have been unable to identify:** 24 civilians, including one child and one woman.
- **Bombings whose perpetrators we have not been able to identify:** Four civilians, including three children.
- **Killings by parties we have been unable to identify:** Nine civilians, including five children.
- **Messing around with weapons:** One child.
- **Turkish border guards:** Two civilians.
- **Turkish forces:** Seven civilians, including four children and one woman.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In August 2022, SNHR documented at least 186 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 17 children and 11 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 Damascus, then Damascus Suburbs, followed by Daraa. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in August at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

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:** 83, including three women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham²:** Nine, including one child.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army:** 43, including four children and six women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 51, including 12 children and two women.

¹ 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 reality 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.

² The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In August 2022, SNHR documented at least three incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, all of which took place in Aleppo governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented two on educational facilities, and one on a market.

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

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** One.

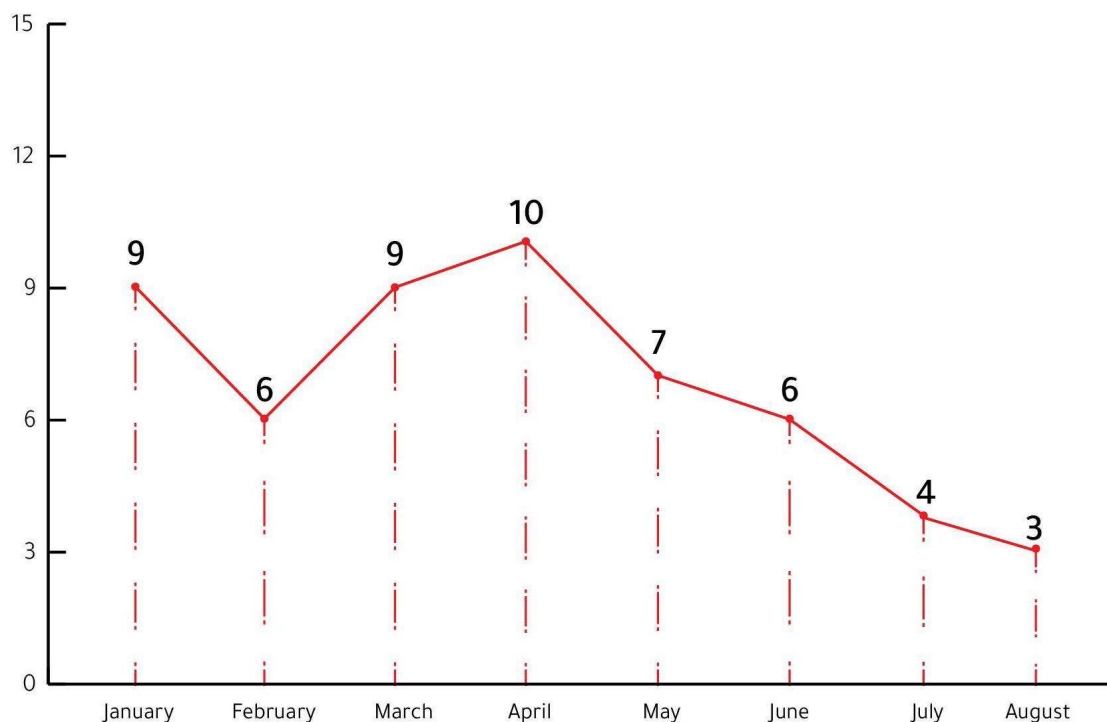
B. Other parties:

Shells whose source we have been unable to identify: Two attacks which are still under investigation, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for these two attacks are either Syrian regime forces or Syrian Democratic Forces.

The record of attacks on vital civil facilities documented in August 2022 was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Perpetrator Party Attacked Facility	Syrian Democratic Forces	Other parties
		Shells whose source we have been unable to identify
Education Facilities		
Schools	1	1
Communal Facilities		
Markets		1
Total		

The record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2022 up to September of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 54 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart shows that the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities in August was the lowest monthly record since the beginning of 2022, with August accounting for 6% of the total record of attacks on vital facilities documented by SNHR in 2022.

The most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in August:

On Wednesday, August 3, 2022, Syrian Democratic Forces used a missile launcher to fire several missiles at residential neighborhoods of [Izaz city](#) north of Aleppo governorate. One of the missiles hit an area adjacent to al Andalus Elementary School, southwest of the city, wounding five civilians and causing moderate material damage to the school perimeter wall. The city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, August 19, 2022, at around 10:40 local time, al Bab city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate was hit by around six missiles fired by a party which SNHR has so far been unable to identify, though we believe that the missiles were fired either by Syrian regime forces or by the Syrian Democratic Forces, since the shelling came from an area jointly controlled by both. Investigations are underway to determine the party responsible for the attack.

[A number of missiles landed](#) in the middle of a [public street known as al Khamis Market](#), about 70 meters from the Sheikh Doshel Mosque, [resulting in a massacre](#), [in addition to causing varying material damage to a number of shops and market facilities](#). Another missile landed beside the perimeter wall of [Waddah School](#), currently known as Erzurum School for Basic Education, [partially destroying the wall and one of the buildings attached to the school yard](#). Al Bab city was under the control of the Syrian National Army forces at the time of the incident.



IV. Attachments

[91 Civilians, Including 28 Children, Two Women, and Seven Victims Who Died Due to Torture, Including One Child, Were Documented Killed in Syria in August 2022](#)

[At Least 186 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in Syria in August 2022, Including 17 Children and 11 Women](#)

V. 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, 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 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.
- All Armed Opposition factions/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 IV 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.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (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 and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

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.
- 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 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.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

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.

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

- 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.
- 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.

All Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/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.
- 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.

Acknowledgments

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, as well as eyewitnesses and local activists whose contributions have enriched this report.



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