

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1173
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Syrian Association for citizens dignity
Titel:	Between Hammer and Anvil: Motives and experiences of Syrians Forced to Return to Assad-held areas
Udgivet:	01. december 2019
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	17. december 2019

277 Civilians, including Two Media Workers, Three Medical Personnel and Two Civil Defense Personnel, Documented Killed in Syria in November 2019

SNHR Documented 13 Massacre and 27 Persons Who Died due to Torture



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Sunday, December 1, 2019

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.



Contents

- I. Introduction and Methodology
- II. Death Toll of Civilian Victims Documented in November
- III. Death Toll of Victims Who Died due to Torture, and Victims amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Documented in November
- IV. Record of Most Notable Massacres Documented by SNHR in November
- V. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Introduction and Methodology

The documentation process to register victims killed in Syria is one of the most important roles performed by the Syrian Network for Human Rights since March 2011. This is all the more crucial since murder is the most prevalent of all the violations perpetrated, and the one which most profoundly affects the Syrian people, with countless families suffering incalculable and irreparable trauma through the loss of fathers, mothers, brothers, friends, etc. These violations have become widespread, primarily through Syrian regime forces' and affiliated militias' systematic killing of civilians using every kind of weapon. The regime began by using tanks and artillery, then progressed to also deploying warplanes and helicopter gunships which have dropped or fired barrel bombs, in addition to Scud missiles and chemical weapons.

The entry of several parties into the Syrian conflict has increased the importance and complexity of documenting the victims killed in Syria.

Since 2011, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has created complex electronic programs to archive and categorize the victims' data, which the team collects and verifies, enabling us to catalogue the victims according to their gender and the location where each was killed, the governorate from which each victim originally came, and the party responsible for the killing, and to make comparisons between these parties, and identify the governorates which lost the largest proportion of residents.



Since 2011, we have also deemed it appropriate to highlight the death toll among women and children due to the vulnerability of these groups, their central role in the community, and because they give a strong indication of the targeting of civilians. We later added other groups which have played a key role in the popular movement and later in the armed conflict, such as media, medical, relief and civil defense personnel.

Given the importance and sensitivity surrounding the murder of Syrian citizens, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has never stopped issuing daily death toll of victims for nearly eight years, or publishing monthly reports documenting the death toll of victims Syria lost each month, in addition to issuing an annual report, as well as dozens of other reports documenting massacres committed on Syrian soil. Also, SNHR periodically sends a special form to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings.

It should be noted that the United Nations has relied on the Syrian Network for Human Rights for all the statistics it has used in its analysis of victims in the conflict, given SNHR's prominent role as one of the most credible sources. SNHR is also used as a trustworthy source by a large number of Arab and international news agencies and many international human rights organizations.

Methodology

This report records the death toll of victims killed by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria in November 2019, particularly focusing on those victims killed under torture, and victims amongst media and medical personnel, paying particular attention to those massacres which the SNHR was able to document that were committed by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict over the past month.

We should note that in this context we use the term “massacre” to refer to any attack that resulted in the deaths of five or more peaceful individuals in the same incident.

The report also includes an outline of the most notable incidents during this period. Finally, we maintain the full details of every incident on the SNHR database.

The report catalogues the death toll of victims perpetrated by each of the main perpetrator parties in the Syrian conflict. Accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. On some occasions, when we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for particular attacks to one specific party, as in the case of air strikes by Syrian or Russian warplanes, Syrian-Iranian attacks, or attacks by Syrian Democratic Forces and US-led coalition, we indicate that responsibility for these attacks is held jointly by the parties in question until we are able to likely establish which one of the parties was responsible, or it's proved that the attack was a joint initiative carried out in coordination between the two parties.



In addition, in cases where we are unable to definitively assign responsibility for a particular killing to one of two possible parties because of the area's proximity to the lines of engagement, the use of similar weapons, or other reasons, the incident is categorized among 'other parties' until we have sufficient evidence to conclusively assign responsibility for the violation to one of the two parties.

The main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria are:

- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)
- Russian forces
- Extremist Islamist groups
- Factions of the Armed Opposition
- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic forces (the Democratic Union Party)
- US-led coalition
- Other parties

The death toll of victims included in this report includes civilian victims who were killed in neighboring countries as a result of the conflict in Syria.

On October 9, 2019, the military operations of the Operation Peace Spring between the Operation Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces) and Syrian Democratic Forces in north-east Syria began. Military operations related to this operation have been conducted within Syrian territory bordering the Syrian-Turkish border in areas controlled by the SDF and factions of the Armed Opposition; it should be noted that the Syrian Network for Human Rights' access to contacts and information sources useful in its investigations varies according to the authority controlling the area in question, mainly in relation to the extent of violations suffered by the area; Accordingly, we can document and verify a larger number of incidents and violations committed by Syrian Democratic Forces, given that these incidents and violations took place in areas under the control of factions of the Armed Opposition and within Turkish territory, where we have wide access to witnesses and survivors, compared with the difficulty in documenting violations committed by Operation Peace Spring forces, given that these incidents and violations took place in areas under the control Syrian Democratic Forces, which have previously experienced only a limited number of violations. We note that we are still carrying out investigations into dozens of incidents, with the information-gathering process still ongoing.

Through use of SNHR's extensive database, we can catalogue the victims according to the governorate where they were killed, and also by the governorate from which they originally came. This report catalogues the death toll of victims according to the governorate in which they were killed, rather than by the governorate they originally came from.



In relation to victims amongst armed forces, these are divided into two categories:

- Victims from the armed opposition: We face additional difficulties in assessing these casualties as many of these victims are killed on battlefronts rather than in cities or other urban settlements. We are also often unable to obtain information on the victims such as names, photographs and other important personal details due to the reluctance of armed opposition forces to reveal such sensitive information for security concerns among other reasons. Therefore, the actual number of victims is far higher than the number documented.
- Victims from Syrian Regime force, extremist Islamist groups, and Kurdish Democratic Union Party forces: It is almost impossible to access information about this category of victims and the margin of error is considerably higher than usual due to the lack of any applicable methodology in this type of documentation, since these parties don't publish, reveal, or document information about their casualties. From our perspective and given these facts, it is rational to conclude that the statistics published by some groups concerning casualties amongst this category of victims are fabricated rather than being based on any actual data.

In this report, we record only the toll of civilian casualties - with the exception of the death toll among victims who died due to torture, which includes armed combatants as well as civilians - whose deaths we were able to document during the last month. Some of the victims documented may have been killed months or even years ago, as in some cases of death due to torture; in these cases, where the deaths have only recently been confirmed, we include two dates, the date when we were able to document the victim's death, and the date on which we think the death occurred.

The methodology adopted by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in documenting the victims can be seen at this link¹.

This report draws upon the ongoing daily monitoring of news and developments by SNHR's team, and on information from our extensive network of various sources that has been built up over the course of our work since 2011. When we receive information or learn some news about violations via the internet or media outlets, our team works to follow up these reports and attempts to verify information and collect evidence and data. In some cases, researchers are able to visit the incident location promptly. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the scarcity of human and material resources. Therefore, the opportunities available to access

¹ "Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology", Syrian Network for Human Rights, <http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf>



evidence vary between one case and another, and consequently the level of certainty in classification of each incident varies. SNHR's customary policy in such cases is to rely on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, in addition to analyzing available materials from open sources such as the Internet and media outlets. We also talk with medical personnel who treated the injured in these incidents, examined the deceased victims' bodies, and identified the cause of death. The Syrian Network for Human Rights also provides [a special form](#) that can be filled in with victims' names and personal information so that the Victims Documentation Department can follow up on this information and verify its accuracy and then include it in the database.

SNHR has analyzed videos and photographs that our team documented, which were posted online, or submitted by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media platforms. These videos and photos show, amongst other things, the sites of attacks, and bodies of the victims and the injured, whilst other photos may show the bodies of victims killed under torture, and of victims amongst medical and media personnel who died in attacks carried out by parties to the conflict. We also retain copies of all the videos and photographs included in these reports, which are also reviewed in this report, in a confidential electronic database and in hard disk backup copies, and we ensure always that all these data are stored with their original source.

We do not claim, however, that we have documented all cases, given the severe prohibitions, restrictions and persecution by the Syrian Regime forces and some other armed groups.

This report contains two accounts that we've collected through speaking directly with eyewitnesses, which are not cited from any open sources. We explained the purpose of these interviews beforehand to the eyewitnesses, who gave us permission to use the information they provided without us offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR endeavors always to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violations as much as possible, and to provide assurances that we will conceal the identity of any witness who prefers to use an alias.

Our investigations confirm that all of the attacks included in this report that were carried out by the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria targeted civilian areas where we documented no military presence or armories before or during the attacks, and in which the perpetrators failed to issue any warnings to civilians prior to any of the attacks as required by international humanitarian law.



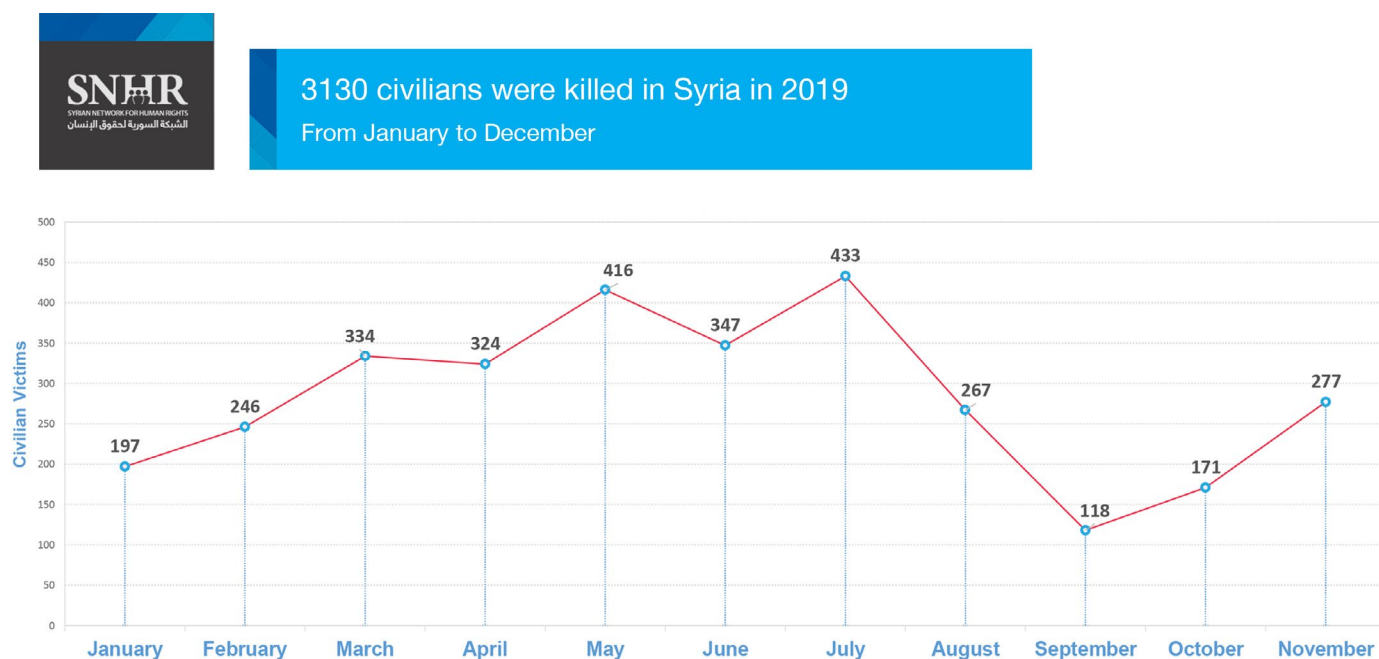
The type and level of evidence available varies from one case to another. In light of the aforementioned challenges, the legal definition of many of the incidents documented may be subject to change based on any new evidence or information which emerge after this report is released. We shall update our data archive with any such items of evidence and information as soon as they become available. Meanwhile, although many incidents don't technically constitute a violation of international humanitarian law under the terms of such legislation, they involved collateral damage, so we have recorded and archived these incidents to document what happened historically and to preserve these as part of the national record, although we don't qualify these specific incidents as crimes.

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. Death Toll of Civilian Victims Documented in November

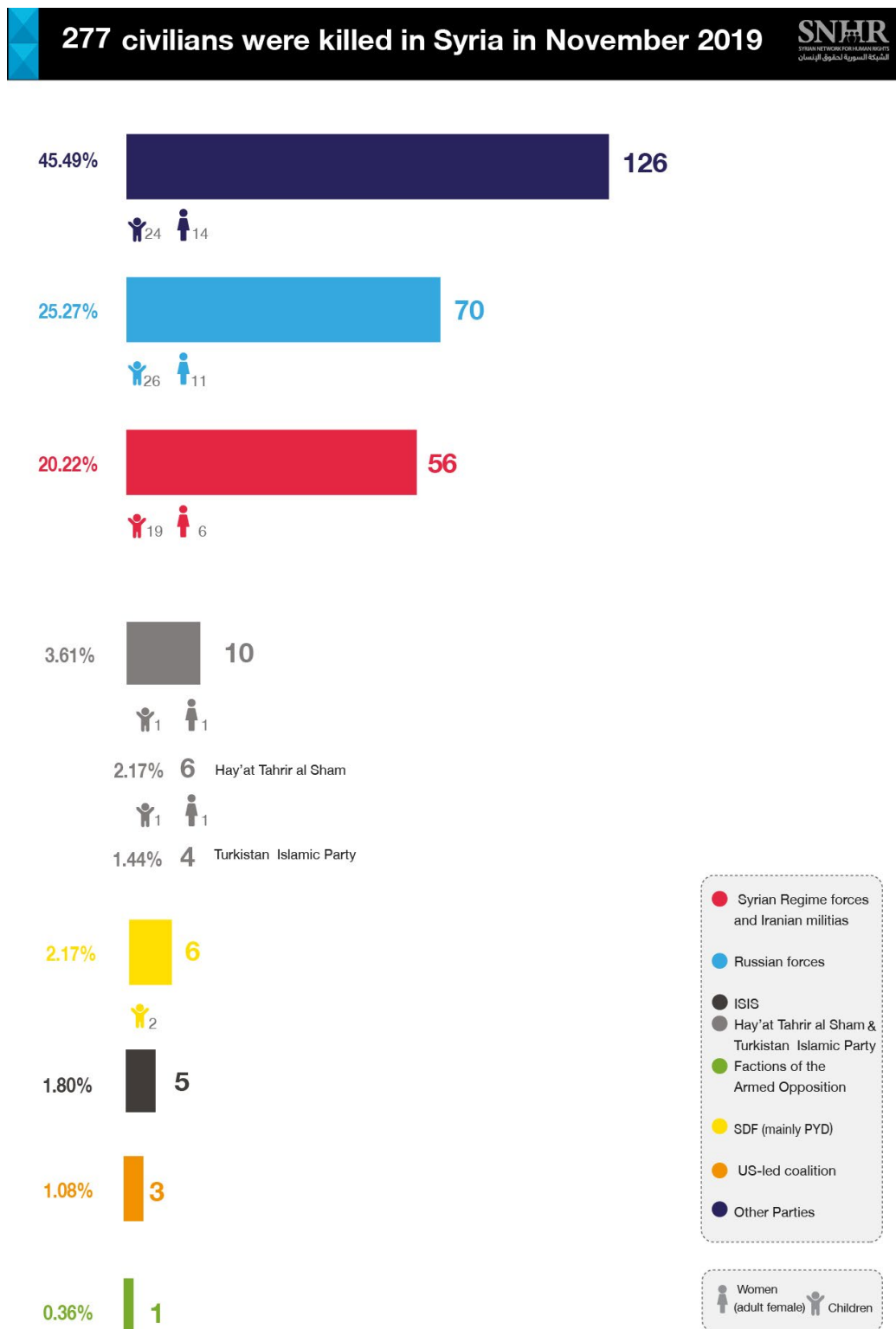
SNHR documented in November 2019 the deaths of 277 civilians, including 72 children and 32 women, bringing the death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria since the beginning of 2019 up to December 2019 to 3,130.

The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria since the beginning of 2019 was distributed as follows:



We noted that this month saw an increase in the death toll compared to what has been documented since August 2019 as a result of the recent military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in northwest Syria, and the high frequency of bombings in areas outside the control of Syrian Regime forces during this month.

The death toll we documented in November was distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:



- Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):

We documented the deaths of 56 civilians at the hands of Syrian Regime forces, including 19 children and six women (adult female).

- Russian forces:

We documented the deaths of 70 civilians, including 26 children and 11 women, as a result of bombardment by forces which we believe were Russian.

- Extremist Islamist groups: killed 15 civilians, including one child and one woman, distributed as follows:

- ISIS (the self-proclaimed 'Islamic State'): Killed five civilians.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (an alliance composed of Fateh al Sham Front and a number of factions of the Armed Opposition): Killed six civilians, including one child and one woman.
- Turkistan Islamic Party: Killed four civilians.

- Factions of the Armed Opposition:

SNHR documented the death of one civilian.

- Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):

SNHR documented the deaths of six civilians, including two children.

- US-led coalition:

SNHR documented the deaths of three civilians.

- Other parties:

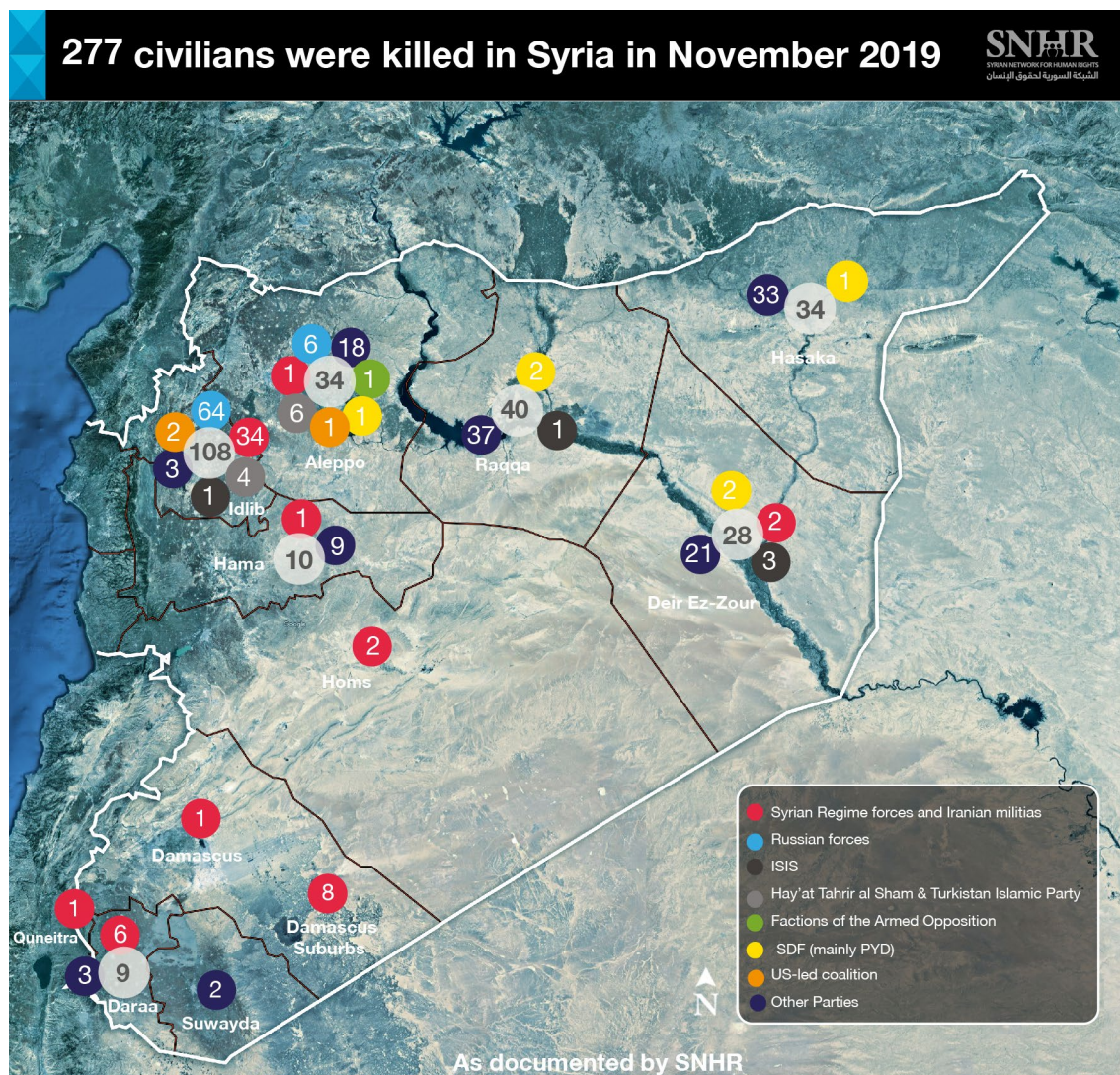
We documented 126 civilians, including 24 children and 14 women, killed by other parties. Victims in this category include those who were killed in bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified, victims who died in fires of unknown source, victims killed by landmines of unknown origin, in addition to victims who died at the hands the forces of the Operation Peace Spring alliance (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces), and victims who were killed by Jordanian or Lebanese forces.

The death toll of victims is distributed as follows:

- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: 56 civilians, including 13 children and five women.
- Fires of unknown source: 34 civilians, including two children and six women.
- Landmines of unknown origin: 28 civilians, including eight children and one woman.
- Peace Spring forces: Seven civilians, including two women.
- Shelling from unknown sources: One child.



The death toll of civilian victims killed at the hands of the main perpetrator parties documented in November 2019 was distributed across Syrian governorates as follows:



The map above shows that the death toll in Idlib governorate is the highest of all the country's governorates during this period, with most having been killed by Syrian-Russian alliance forces; this is followed by the governorates of Raqqa, Hasaka and Aleppo.

III. Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture, and Victims Amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel Documented in November

A. Death toll of victims who died due to torture

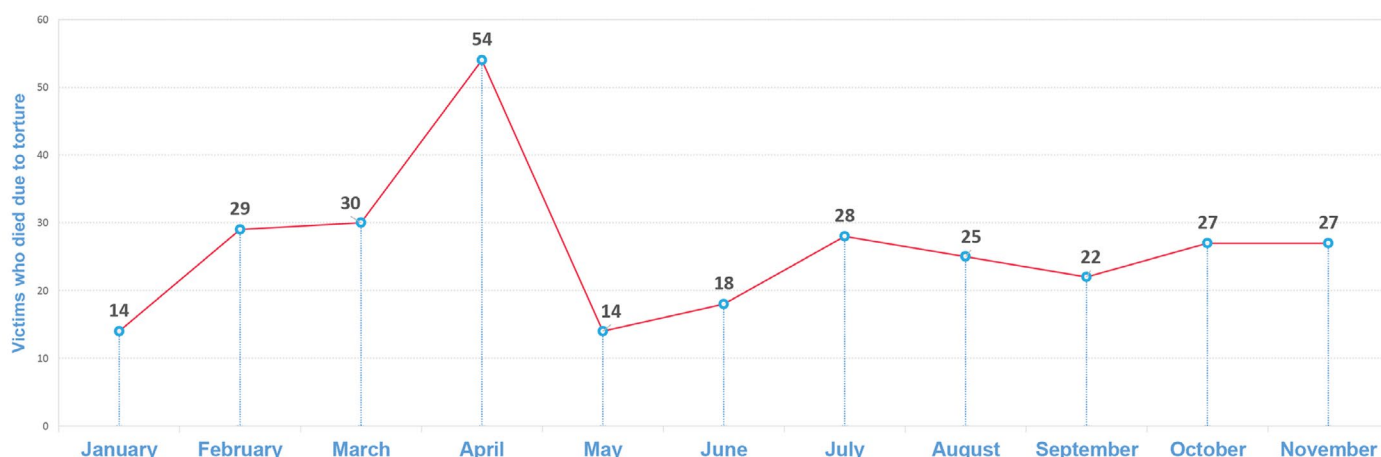
SNHR documented the deaths of 27 individuals due to torture in November 2019, including one Armed Opposition fighter, bringing the death toll of victims who died due to torture at the hands of the main perpetrator parties in Syria since the beginning of 2019 up to December 2019 to 288.



The death toll of victims who died due to torture at the hands of the main perpetrator parties to the conflict in Syria since the beginning of 2019 was distributed as follows:



288 individuals died due to torture in Syria in 2019
From January to December



The chart shows that the documented death toll of victims who died due to torture in April was the highest monthly toll to date since the beginning of the year, accounting for 19 percent of the total documented toll in 2019.

The death toll of victims SNHR documented in November as having died due to torture was distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

27 individuals died due to torture in Syria in November 2019



92.59% 25

7.41% 2

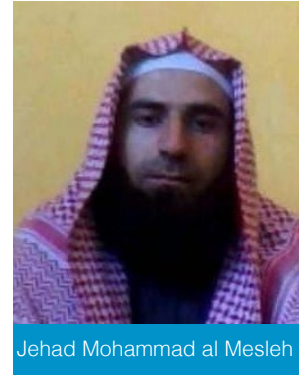
● Syrian Regime forces
● SDF (mainly PYD)

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 25
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** Two.



The most notable cases are:

Jehad Mohammad al Mesleh, an imam and preacher of a mosque in Nawa city in the west of Daraa governorate, came from Deir al Bakht town in the northwestern suburbs of Daraa governorate. Al Mesleh, who had previously settled his security situation with the regime, was arrested by Syrian Regime forces in 2018 in Deir al Bakht town. On Friday, November 15, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in a Syrian regime detention center.



Dr. Osama Omar al Khaled, a 64-year-old general practitioner of Palestinian-Syrian nationality, was a resident of al Shajara town in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate. He was arrested on Friday, August 3, 2018, by Syrian Regime forces while he was in Ma'raba IDPs Camp in Hawd al Yarmouk area in the western suburbs of Daraa governorate, and was taken to the Raid Branch prison – Branch 215 - in Damascus city. On Monday, November 25, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to medical negligence in Adra Central Prison in Damascus Suburbs governorate after he had been transferred to a hospital in Damascus city.



Mohammad Samir Hussein, from Misraba town in Eastern Ghouta in Damascus Suburbs governorate, was arrested in September 2019 by Syrian Regime forces in Misraba town. He was among those who had previously settled their security situation. On Saturday, November 3, 2019, we received information confirming his death due to torture in a Syrian regime detention center.



B. Death toll of medical personnel

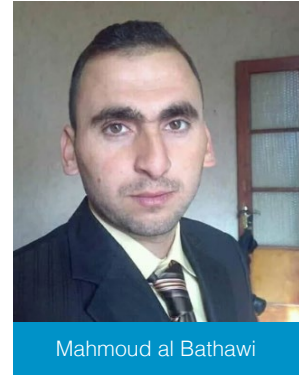
SNHR documented in November the deaths of three medical personnel, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Two, including a doctor who died due to medical negligence in a detention center.
- **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** One

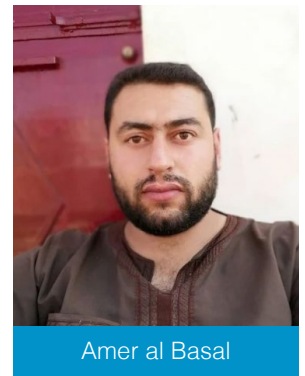


The most notable cases are:

[Mahmoud Trad al Bathawi](#), a 35-year-old pharmacist, from Tal Abyad city in the northern suburbs of Raqqqa governorate, who was married with three children, was killed along with his brother, the child Mu'aweya, on Saturday, November 2, 2019, in a car bomb explosion in the middle of the popular market in Tal Abyad city that caused a massacre. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details.



[Amer Kamal al Basal](#), a nurse from Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, worked for al Salam Dispensary in Kfarrouma village. Amer, a graduate of the Nursing Training Institute in Idlib city, was also a second year student in in Teacher Class department at the Faculty of Education in Idlib city. He was killed on Sunday, November 10, 2019, when Syrian Regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at al Gharbi neighborhood in Kfarrouma village while he was aiding people there injured in previous bombing by fixed- wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian.



C. Death toll of media workers

SNHR documented in November the deaths of two media workers, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One.
- **Other parties:** One killed by forces of the Operation Peace Spring alliance (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces)

On Friday, October 11, 2019, the journalist [Vedat Fateh Erdemci](#) died due to wounds sustained by shrapnel which penetrated most of his body during bombardment by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe belonging to the Turkish forces in Operation Peace Spring (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces), which fired a number of missiles that landed near his home in Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, which was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

Vedat, [a photographer and documentary filmmaker](#), from Urfa city, Turkey, was born in 1999.



On Sunday, November 10, 2019, media activist Abdul Hamid Khader al Yousef was killed by [lethal shrapnel wounds to the head and back](#), as [a result of a shell](#) which fell [near him](#) that was fired by Syrian Regime artillery forces, while he was covering a previous bombing by fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, on al Gharbi neighborhood in Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Abdul Hamid al Yousef

[Abdul Hamid](#), a photographer with Kfarrouma Media Office, from Kfarrouma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was born in 1996. A graduate of the Institute of Journalism and Information, he was married with a female child.

The SNHR contacted Abdul Mu'in al Khatib² from Kfarrouma village, who was inside a house in al Gharbi neighborhood of Kfarrouma village when the attack took place on the morning of Sunday, November 10: **“While I was checking and rescuing some of my family members because their houses had been bombed by the Russian air force, I heard a sudden explosion that was not preceded by a sound of warplanes or a missile, and was not preceded by any circulation of information from the observatory either. I rushed out and I saw smoke rising from the side of the neighborhood where I live. I went straight to the site and started checking and helping my family members. In the meantime, the observatories then circulated reports about the presence of Russian warplanes in the sky, so I carried her and her son to the shelter when the warplane carried out the second raid. I went out immediately and found Abdul Hamid with one of the paramedics and the Civil Defense members. Upon the return of the warplanes, we took refuge in the shelters and buildings then they carried out the third raid, but without human casualties, thank God.”**

Abdul Mu'in told us that the Syrian regime's artillery forces stationed in Khan Sheikhoun targeted the neighborhood with missiles about 15 minutes after the Russian warplanes' attacks: **“When we left, we found Abdul Hamid, his cousin, the paramedic Amer al Basal, had died near the cave door near Abdul Hamid's house; how they looked was awful.”**

Media activist Ammar al Deek³, Abdul Hamid's friend, told us: **“Upon hearing of the death of Abdul Hamid, I contacted Hassan Bayyour, a Civil Defense media worker who came to the site of Abdul Hamid's death, and told me that Abdul Hamid was killed instantly**

² “We contacted him via WhatsApp on November 13, 2019

³ We contacted him via WhatsApp on November 20, 2019



when he was hit by artillery shelling by Syrian Regime forces while he was documenting the victims of Russian warplanes airstrikes on a nearby site. The nurse Amer al Basal, who worked at al Salam Dispensary in Kfarrouma village, was also killed, while a number of civilians were injured.”

D. Death toll of Civil Defense personnel

SNHR documented in November the deaths of two Civil Defense personnel, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One.
- **Extremist Islamist groups:**
- **Turkistan Islamic Party:** One.

Ahmad Qebba, a member of Civil Defense - Darkoush Center, from Darkoush city in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate, [was killed](#) on Thursday, October 31, 2019, while he was extinguishing a fire caused by [an explosion](#) in a weapons warehouse belonging to the Turkistan Islamic Party, west of Darkoush city, located under a medical point belonging to the same faction. Successive explosions in the warehouse during the work by the Civil Defense team there resulted in the deaths of Ahmad and three other civilians.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) mourned Ahmad on its official ‘Twitter’ account.



[Ahmad Ali al Ali](#), member of Civil Defense- Ma’aret Harma Center, from al Ghariya al Gharbiya village in the northeastern suburbs of Daraa governorate, was killed on Tuesday, November 12, 2019, as a result of artillery shelling by Syrian Regime forces, with a shell hitting a Civil Defense ambulance while it was located in agricultural lands to the southwest of Ma’aret Harma village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, as the ambulance team was transferring people injured in previous bombing of the same area by fixed- wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian.

[The Syrian Civil Defense](#) mourned Ahmad on its official ‘Twitter’ account.



IV. Record of Most Notable Massacres Documented by SNHR in November

SNHR documented at least 97 massacres since the beginning of 2019, including 13 massacre in November, distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** One.
- **Russian forces:** Four.
- **Other parties:** Eight, distributed as follows:
 - o **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** Seven.
 - o **Landmines of unknown origin:** One.

According to the SNHR's Victim Documentation team, the massacres documented this month resulted in the deaths of 106 civilians, including 39 children and 14 women (adult female). This means that 50 percent of all the victims were women and children, a very high proportion, and a clear indication that civilian residents were specifically targeted in most of these massacres.

The death toll of these massacres was distributed by the main perpetrator parties as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 15 civilians, including 10 children (four males and six females) and six women.
- **Russian forces:** 26 civilians, including 10 children (four males and six females) and six women.
- **Other parties:** 65 civilians, including 19 children and five women, distributed as follows:
 - o **Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified:** 59 civilians, including 13 children and five women.
 - o **Landmines of unknown origin:** Six children.

The most notable cases are:

On Saturday, November 2, 2019, a car bomb exploded in the center of the popular market in [Tal Abyad](#) city in the northern suburbs of Raqqa governorate, resulting in the deaths of 11 civilians, including [six children](#), one woman, and a male pharmacist, in addition to injuring about 20 others. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. Tal Abyad city was under the control of Operation Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces) at the time of the incident.



On Wednesday, November 6, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired a number of missiles at residential neighborhoods of [al Sakhara](#) town in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [eight civilians](#), including [two female](#) children and [one woman](#), and injuring 25 others. Al Sakhara town was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Victims of a massacre killed in an air attack by warplanes, which we believe were Russian, on al Sakhara town, Aleppo - November 6, 2019 – The Civil Defense in Aleppo

On Sunday, November 17, 2019, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, fired missiles at a house in [al Mallaja](#) village located in southwest of Hazarin village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, [resulting](#) in [the deaths](#) of [six civilians](#) from one family, including [one child](#) and [four women](#). Al Mallaja village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.





Recovering a victim of the massacre that killed a number of members of the same family in an air attack by warplanes, which we believe were Russian, on al Mallaja village, Idlib - November 17, 2019

On Wednesday, November 20, 2019, at around 20:20, Syrian Regime forces and pro-Syrian regime Iranian militias stationed in Jabal Azan area in the southern suburbs of Aleppo fired a Tochka 9M79 [missile](#) at [Qahh al Qadim IDP Camp](#) near Qahh village in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The missile landed directly in the center of the IDP tents, resulting in [the deaths](#) of [15 civilians](#), including [10 children](#) (five males and five females) and three women. The area was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



Child victims of a massacre perpetrated in a ground attack by the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias on Qahh Camp, Idlib - November 20, 2019



On Sunday, November 24, 2019, at around 11:00, a landmine exploded inside the Ibn Sina Primary School in al Tayba village, which is administratively a part of al Mayadeen city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, during school hours, resulting in the deaths of six school student children (three males and three females), and injuring about a dozen others. The explosion took place while a number of children were playing with the mine, believing it to be a toy. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The village was under the control of Syrian Regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, November 26, 2019, a car bomb exploded in [Tal Halaf](#) village, which is administratively a part of Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, resulting in the deaths of 16 civilians, including three male children and two women, and injuring about 40 others. We still try to reach witnesses and survivors of the incident to obtain more details. The village was under the control of Operation Peace Spring forces (Turkish and Syrian National Army forces) at the time of the incident.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The evidence we collected indicates that the attacks documented were directed against civilians and civilian objects. The Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes ranging from extrajudicial killings to detention and enforced disappearance. Their attacks and indiscriminate bombardment have resulted in 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 and resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, as well as resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the alliance of US-led coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, with the crimes of indiscriminate killing amounting to war crimes.
- Extremist Islamist groups have violated international humanitarian law, causing the deaths of many civilians.
- Factions of the Armed Opposition 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.



- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mentality intended to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the four Geneva Convention (articles 27, 31, 32).
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian regime, or by Russian or US-led coalition forces prior to any attack in accordance with the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- These attacks, 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 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 leads 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.

Recommendations:

Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly states that “all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- 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 repeatedly proven.
- The Security Council should ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians' lives and to save the Syrian people's heritage and historical artefacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions in Syria, similar to the 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 expose its involvement in this regard.



- The Security Council should 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 persons camps, and 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 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 through 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' doctrine 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 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. By failing to do so, 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.

OHCHR

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict.
- Train Syrian organizations to undertake clearance of mines and other unexploded ordnance, and raise local awareness of the dangers of such ordnance.
- Establish a platform that brings together a number of Syrian organizations active in documenting violations and providing humanitarian assistance, in order to facilitate an exchange of skills and experiences within Syrian society.



Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

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

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

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.
- Revive the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, and empower the Constitutional Commission 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 use of prohibited weapons and barrel bombs.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Reveal the fate of some 83,000 Syrian citizens arrested by the security services whose fate has been concealed to date.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

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 the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the victims' families, 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 the 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 allow the unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.
- Stop using incendiary weapons in populated areas, compensate the victims and their families for all human and material damage caused by the use of these weapons, and provide treatment for dozens of civilian casualties.



- Provide detailed maps of sites where Russian forces have launched cluster munition attacks, issue these to the United Nations and inform the Syrian public about them, thus facilitating the disposal of unexploded ordnance.
- Begin to achieve a breakthrough in the issue of detainees by revealing the fate of 83,000 people disappeared by the Syrian regime.

The Coalition (Us-led coalition and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition must unequivocally and sincerely acknowledge that some of their bombing operations have resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. Rather than attempting denial, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and all those affected.
- The states supporting the SDF (which is mainly PYD) should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- The states supporting the SDF should cease all forms of support until the SDF commits itself to complying with the rules of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. This is primarily the responsibility of the supporting states. Providing the SDF with weapons and support while knowing that the SDF violates the rules of international humanitarian law can be seen as a contribution to these violations.
- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF members, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.

Operation Peace Spring alliance:

- Those responsible for Operation Peace Spring should investigate the incidents that resulted in civilian victims and determine the causes behind them, compensate the victims and hold those responsible accountable, as well as working to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.
- The committee established by the Defense Ministry of the Syrian Interim Government to investigate abuses and breaches should publish the findings of its investigations into violations on a dedicated website, update this data regularly, issue recommendations and follow up on their implementation.



Armed Opposition factions

- Armed Opposition factions must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Pledge to cease any arbitrary arrests and investigate incidents that have resulted in violations of international humanitarian law.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

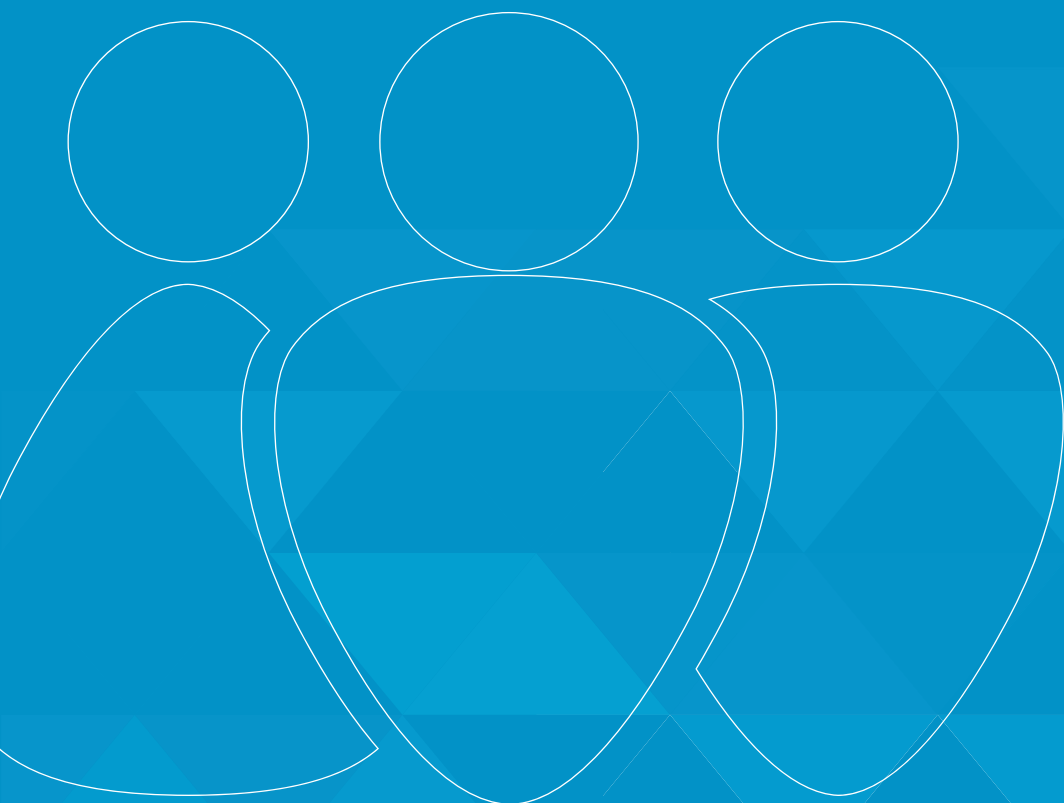
Humanitarian organizations:

Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.

Acknowledgments

We thank all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, along with the eyewitnesses and local activists, whose contributions have enriched this report.





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

