

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	467
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	HRW
Titel:	Syria: Barrage of Barrel Bombs
Udgivet:	30. juli 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	17. september 2014

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
HRW - Human Rights Watch
- **Title:**
Syria: Barrage of Barrel Bombs
- **Publication date:**
30 July 2014
- **ecoi.net summary:** Government is still using barrel bombs against civilians in defiance of UN Security Council resolution, HRW reports [ID 282207]
- **Countries:**
Syrian Arab Republic
- **Original link** <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/30/syria-barrage-barrel-bombs>

Recommended citation:

HRW - Human Rights Watch: Syria: Barrage of Barrel Bombs, 30 July 2014 (available at ecoi.net)
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/282207/399311_en.html (accessed 02 September 2014)



Syria: Barrage of Barrel Bombs

(New York) – The Syrian government is raining high explosive barrel bombs on civilians in defiance of a unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution, Human Rights Watch said today. Resolution 2139 of February 22, 2014, ordered all parties to the conflict in [Syria](#) to end the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs and other weapons in populated areas.

The Security Council will meet on July 30 for its fifth round of reporting on the resolution. Since it was passed, Human Rights Watch has documented over 650 major new damage sites consistent with barrel bomb impacts on neighborhoods of the city of Aleppo held by non-state armed groups. Non-state armed groups participate in indiscriminate attacks as well, including car bombings and mortar attacks in pro-government areas.

“Month after month, the Security Council has sat idly by as the government defied its demands with new barrel bomb attacks on Syrian civilians,” said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), Middle East and North Africa director. “Russia and China need to allow the Security Council to show the same resolve and unanimity it brought to the issue of humanitarian aid to call a halt to these deadly attacks on civilians.”

The UN resolution also strongly condemns the arbitrary detention and torture of civilians in Syria, as well as kidnappings, abductions, and forced disappearances, and demands that “all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders.” When Syria failed to comply with that demand, the Security Council, in a July 14 follow-up resolution, authorized UN agencies and their implementing partners to deliver humanitarian assistance across the border even without government consent.

Witness statements, satellite imagery analysis, and video and photographic evidence obtained by Human Rights Watch indicate that government forces have maintained and even increased their bombardment rate of Aleppo since the Security Council passed the resolution in February. In the 113 days prior to the February resolution, Human Rights Watch [identified](#) at least 380 distinct damage sites in areas held by non-state armed groups in Aleppo by analyzing four satellite images recorded over the city since October 31, 2013.

In the first 140 days since the resolution was passed, through July 14, 2014, Human Rights Watch identified over 650 new major impact strikes in Aleppo neighborhoods held by armed groups opposed to the government, an average of almost five a day. The heaviest concentrations were in the neighborhoods of Masaken Hanano, al-Sakhour, Bostan Pasha, Sheikh Kheder, Trab al-Hellok, Aynat-Tal, Rasafeh, and Sheikh Saed.

A substantial majority of these sites have damage that is strongly consistent with the detonation of barrel bombs. Barrel bombs, and other high explosive unguided bombs, tend to create larger zones of building destruction than is typically seen with other types of air strikes and artillery fire, often with irregularly shaped blast craters of shallow depth with scalloped edges.

These unguided high explosive bombs are cheaply made, locally produced, and typically constructed from large oil drums, gas cylinders, and water tanks, filled with high explosives and scrap metal to enhance fragmentation,

and then dropped from helicopters. The damage to a small number of the identified sites was probably caused by other explosive weapons, either bombs delivered by conventional aircraft or prolonged artillery shelling. There is also strong evidence that government forces on the ground have fired hundreds of mortars and heavy artillery shells during this period, Human Rights Watch said.

A member of the local civil defense forces in Aleppo who participates in rescue operations, and who has access to a database of attacks in the area compiled by civil defense teams on the ground, told Human Rights Watch that one of the deadliest recent barrel bomb attacks in the city was in the al-Sukari neighborhood on June 16. He estimated that the attack killed about 50 civilians. The Violations Documentation Center, a local group, has identified 68 civilians killed in aerial attacks in al-Sukari on that day. Several videos published on YouTube show the destruction following the bombing and some of the killed and injured.

The member of the local civil defense forces said that an attack on the al-Shaar neighborhood on July 9 killed approximately 20 civilians. The Violations Documentation Center has identified 10 civilians killed in al-Shaar from aerial attacks on that day. Videos posted on YouTube show the destruction following the bombing and some of the victims of the attack.

Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that bombings had continued since the Security Council passed the February resolution. Human Rights Watch previously documented 10 air strikes using barrel bombs after February 22 that killed over 150 people. In 11 new barrel bomb strikes in Aleppo and the surrounding countryside, evidence compiled by Human Rights Watch from witnesses, published fatality figures, and videos and photographs indicates that at least 178 people were killed.

The Violations Documentation Center [reported](#) that aerial attacks killed 1,655 civilians in the Aleppo governorate between February 22 and July 22.

The deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime, and if carried out in a widespread or systematic way as part of a policy of the government or an organized group, can amount to crimes against humanity. Military commanders should not, as a matter of policy, order the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas due to the foreseeable harm to civilians, Human Rights Watch said.

By using barrel bombs on densely populated areas, Syrian government forces are using means and methods of warfare that do not distinguish between civilians, who are accorded protection under the laws of war, and combatants, making attacks indiscriminate and therefore unlawful.

In its February 22 resolution, the Security Council explicitly expressed "its intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance with this resolution."

Russia and China, who have repeatedly blocked Security Council action aimed at penalizing the Syrian government for its rights abuses, should allow the Security Council to impose an arms embargo on Syria's government, as well as on any groups implicated in widespread or systematic human rights abuses, Human Rights Watch said. Such an embargo would limit the Syrian government's ability to conduct aerial attacks that violate international law, including by ensuring that Syria does not receive new helicopters or have its current helicopters serviced overseas. Russia and China should also allow the Security Council to impose a travel ban and an asset freeze on individuals credibly implicated in grave abuses, and refer the situation to the International Criminal Court, Human Rights Watch said.

Companies and individuals that provide arms, ammunition, or materiel to Syria, or to non-state armed groups that have been implicated in crimes against humanity or war crimes, risk complicity in these crimes, Human Rights Watch warned.

Under international law, providing weapons to forces or armed groups in Syria knowing that they are likely to be used in the commission of war crimes or crimes against humanity may amount to assisting in the commission of those crimes. Any arms supplier could bear potential criminal liability as an accessory to those crimes and could face prosecution, Human Rights Watch said.

On September 27, 2013, the Security Council acted to bring an end to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. While the unlawful use of chlorine gas has been documented since that time, the red line the Security Council drew has led to the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles, and radically diminished the risk to the civilian population from that threat.

"Barrel bombs, car bombs, and indiscriminate mortar fire are killing thousands of Syrians – many times the number of those who lost their lives in chemical weapon attacks," said Whitson. "What will it take to get Russia and China to allow the Security Council to enforce its own words, and take real steps to address these unlawful attacks?"

Attacks on Aleppo

The neighborhoods in northern Aleppo with the highest concentration of damage sites as reflected in the May

2014 through June satellite imagery are at some distance from front-line positions, with a high density of residential buildings. While many residents have been displaced from these areas, those who cannot afford to leave or do not want to abandon their homes have stayed behind. Some of the areas most affected in southern Aleppo, however, including the Masaken Hanano and Sheikh Saed neighborhoods, have become front-line areas, the member of the civil defense forces who is active in the area told Human Rights Watch.

The Syrian government has made recent advances in its offensive to take eastern parts of Aleppo and the surrounding countryside. In early July the government retook the city of Sheikh Najjar to the northeast of Aleppo. According to news reports the government has also taken control of the villages of al-Rahmaniya, al-Muqbilla, al-Sheikh Ziyad, Kafer Saghir, and Tel Shaeer in the northeast. In June government forces also took the villages of Ain Assan, Rasm Bakro, Rasm al-Khanat, Rasm al-Jdeideh, and Azzan, south of Aleppo, SANA, Syrian state media reported. In mid-May the government regained control of Aleppo central prison.

Human Rights Watch has also received reports of what appears to be indiscriminate shelling by non-state armed groups opposed to the government of the villages of al-Zahraa and Nubul in the Aleppo countryside. The villages, whose residents are Shia, are under siege and have been hit with an improvised rocket fitted with a gas canister – locally referred to as “hell’s cannon” – and other locally produced rockets since the passage of the resolution.

Human Rights Watch has previously documented numerous indiscriminate attacks by non-state armed groups in violation of resolution 2139. Jabhat al-Nusra, an extremist Islamist group opposed to the Syrian government, has claimed responsibility for car bombings including in Homs that killed dozens of people. Other armed groups have carried out car bomb attacks in populated areas as well. Human Rights Watch has collected evidence of many mortar strikes originating from territory held by armed groups that have killed civilians in Damascus and Homs neighborhoods under government control.

Handarat Neighborhood, March 4

On the morning of March 4, a barrel bomb struck the Handarat neighborhood of Aleppo. Elias, a 17-year-old boy who was injured in the attack, told Human Rights Watch that he was getting bread from the local bakery when the barrel bomb struck, killing his brother and another child, both nine years old, and injuring him and at least four others:

I was waiting in front of the bakery in Handarat when I saw a helicopter roaming. It was 9:30 a.m. It circled in the air three times and then dropped the barrel bomb. It fell two meters from me. I saw it falling, but where could I hide? I felt the explosion. I felt the shrapnel going inside my leg.... The shrapnel hit my neck and leg and my other leg was broken.... I saw four injured people. They were moving on the ground. I was told in the field hospital that five or six people died.

Elias told Human Rights Watch that there were no non-state armed group positions in the vicinity and that the neighborhood is residential and far from the front line.

Hellok Neighborhood, May 1

On May 1 several barrel bombs struck the Hellok neighborhood of Aleppo. Amal, who lives in the neighborhood, told Human Rights Watch that five barrel bombs struck two residential buildings in the neighborhood. “I saw the helicopters and I saw two barrels falling,” she said. “The barrels did not fall on our building but it was a few meters away.” She said that she saw 12 people who were killed in the attack, including a child who appeared to be about 12.

The Violations Documentation Center has identified 61 civilians, including 18 children, who were killed by aerial shelling in Hellok on May 1. Amal told Human Rights Watch that the nearest front line was about 500 meters from the strike sites and that there was a Free Syrian Army office about 100 meters away, although it was not struck in the attacks. Several videos posted on YouTube show the destruction following the bombing, as well as civilians who were injured and killed.

Karam al-Nuzha Neighborhood, May 1, July 5 and 7

On May 1 at least two barrel bombs struck the Aleppo neighborhood of Karam al-Nuzha. A 33-year-old carpenter who was injured in the attack told Human Rights Watch that it took place in the morning while he was at work. He said the first strike hit about 500 meters from his workshop and then a second bomb fell minutes later on the workshop where he was working with 17 other carpenters:

It was around 9:30 a.m. when a barrel bomb fell around 500 meters away [from our workshop]. I went out and saw the smoke from the blast and then saw the helicopter flying away. We went back to work and after a few minutes another barrel bomb fell on the workshop.... I remember seeing complete destruction. People were dragging me outside and removing the stones and debris that covered me. My leg and back were injured with shrapnel.... When I saw the helicopter flying away I did not imagine it would come back to hit us.

He told Human Rights Watch that at least five people were killed. The Violations Documentation Center has identified three civilians killed in Karam al-Nuzha on May 1 by aerial attacks. According to the witness, the nearest front line is three kilometers away, in the al-Sheikh Saed neighborhood.

A barrel bomb also struck the Karam al-Nuzha neighborhood on July 5. Tamer, a local resident, told Human Rights Watch that it struck his home in the evening while he was there with his family. "My wife and 9-year-old girl were injured by shrapnel," he said. "My 5-year-old boy's face is disfigured. My wife's back is also injured. My 7-year-old boy was killed."

In the evening on July 7 a third barrel bomb attack targeted the neighborhood. A local resident told Human Rights Watch that his building was hit:

I was at home with my 4-year-old daughter when the barrel bomb fell.... All I remember was that there was destruction ... I live in a residential building with several floors. The building was destroyed and they removed me from under the rubble.... My 4-year-old daughter was also injured by shrapnel. My body is covered with shrapnel as well.

He estimated that the front line was more than one-and-a-half kilometers away.

Anadan, June 14

In an aerial attack on June 14 a barrel bomb fell on a crowded market in Anadan, a town northwest of Aleppo. Marwan, a 15-year-old boy injured in the attack, told Human Rights Watch that he knew that it was a barrel bomb that struck the market because of the characteristic noise the bomb made when it was dropped. The Violations Documentation Center has identified 16 civilians killed by aerial attacks in Anadan on June 14, including two children.

Marwan told Human Rights Watch that at the time of the attack he was working in the market selling vegetables and that the market was full of people. "I don't remember anything other than waking up and seeing people killed," he said. "A two story building fell on me and people were pulling me out from under the rubble ... I saw several people on the ground. I was told later in [the hospital in Turkey in] Killis that 20 people died and 16 others were injured."

Marwan told Human Rights Watch that his leg was injured in the attack. He said that there were no members of armed groups in the vicinity.

A video published on YouTube on June 14 shows the aftermath of a strike in Anadan.

Tariq al-Bab Neighborhood, June 25

On June 25 at least one barrel bomb struck the Helwanye roundabout in Tariq al-Bab neighborhood in the eastern part of Aleppo, where taxis and minibuses gather to transport civilians to and from the countryside. Khalid, a 15-year-old boy, whose left leg was amputated because of injuries from the attack, told Human Rights Watch that no members of armed groups were in the vicinity of the strike site and that fighters were three to five kilometers away at the front line at Karam al-Jabal or further, at the Aleppo airport. He said he believed a barrel bomb was used in the attack based on the strength of the explosion and what other victims told him.

"On June 25, I was going to visit my grandfather in Helwanye when a barrel bomb was dropped on the roundabout," he said. "I was in a taxi with five other people when the barrel fell on us.... The other men with me were all injured but I was the only one whose leg was amputated.... Now that I lost my left leg I won't get to play football anymore."

The Violations Documentation Center has identified five civilians, including two children, who were killed in Helwanye on June 25 by aerial attacks. It also identified six other civilians who were reportedly killed in the neighborhood of Tariq al-Bab on that day by aerial attacks.

A second resident, a pregnant teenager who was injured in a barrel bomb strike in Tariq al-Bab on June 25, told Human Rights Watch that she believed the closest front line was in Tel Sheikh Youssef and that there were no fighters from armed groups in the neighborhood. Tel Sheikh Youssef is approximately five kilometers from Tariq al-Bab. She told Human Rights Watch:

I was seven months pregnant ... [and] was just leaving from a doctor's appointment when the barrel bomb fell on the street. The doctor had told me that I should walk a bit, that it would be better for the baby, and so I was walking with my mother. We knew it was a barrel bomb from the sound but we did not have a chance to hide. I was injured by shrapnel in my leg and pelvis.... They took me to the Bayan hospital where I gave birth prematurely. I had a girl and she is now in good health.

The girl also told Human Rights Watch that in the aftermath of the attack she saw that one of her neighbors, a local hairdresser, had been killed.

On June 25 the Aleppo Media Center published a video on YouTube showing the aftermath of the attack on the Helwanye roundabout, including injured residents. A member of the local civil defense unit who is interviewed indicates that two barrel bombs fell on the roundabout, killing 20 people. An Orient News broadcast also published on YouTube on June 25 also shows the aftermath of the attack, and states that seven barrel bombs struck the area on June 25.

Al-Qaterji Neighborhood, June 29

On June 30 a barrel bomb struck the al-Qaterji neighborhood in Aleppo city. A man who was originally from Idlib, and who moved to the neighborhood with his wife and 4-year-old daughter because he heard it was relatively safe, told Human Rights Watch that the bomb struck the residential area where they were living, far from the front line or any military targets, injuring his daughter:

My wife and I were inside the house and my daughter was playing on the balcony. I heard the sound of helicopter ... [and] I heard the barrel falling.... When the barrel bomb exploded the balcony was partially destroyed and my daughter fell from the 3rd floor. When I went down I saw a lot of destruction and people screaming but I only focused on my daughter. I took her to the al-Shaar field hospital and then I brought her to Kilis hospital [in Turkey] later that day. There are no fighters or front line close to the scene of attack. The whole point of me leaving Idlib was to not be around the Free Syrian Army.

A member of the local civil defense forces in Aleppo who participates in rescue operations also told Human Rights Watch that the al-Qaterji neighborhood was subject to a barrel bomb strike on June 30.

Tel Rifaat, July 8

On July 8 an aerial attack using a barrel bomb targeted the town of Tel Rifaat and killed at least one child, according to his mother, who spoke to Human Rights Watch. She said she was sleeping in her house when the attack began, at about 3 a.m. She believed other civilians were also injured in the attack:

I was sleeping next to my husband when I woke up and saw stones above me. People the next day told me it was a barrel bomb. My 2-year-old son died and my husband was injured from shrapnel ... I did not know what to do. I remember seeing my son's body very far from his bed.

A news source reported that one child was killed and dozens of other civilians were injured in an air strike on Tel Rifaat on July 8.

The witness told Human Rights Watch that there were no armed groups in the vicinity of her home or in Tel Rifaat more broadly.

A video posted on YouTube on July 8 shows the destruction caused by the bombing.