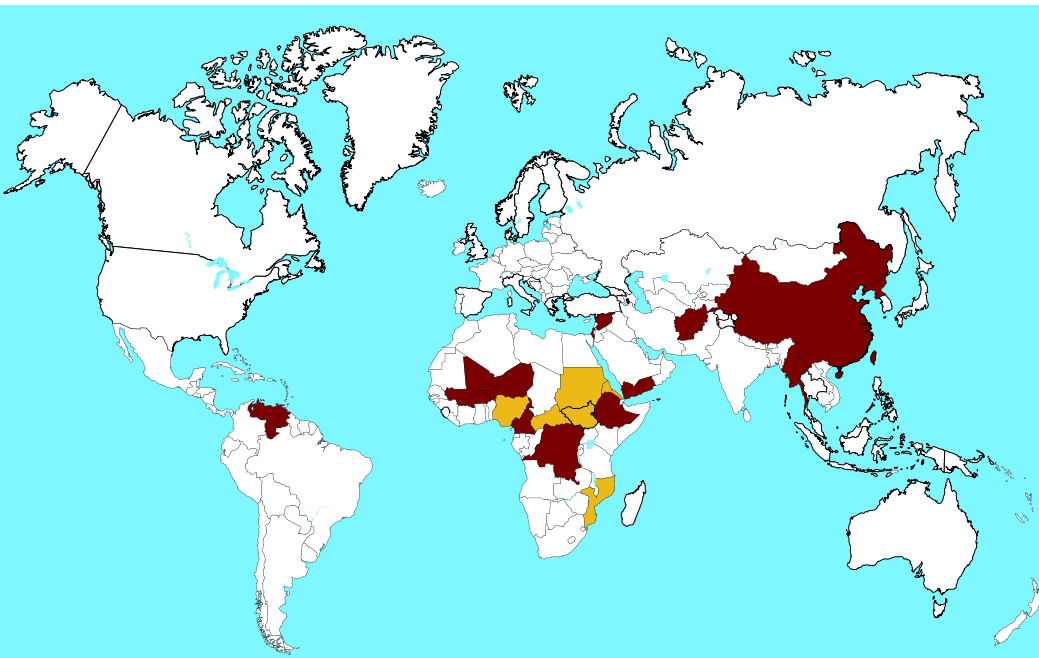


Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1569
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Titel:	R2P Monitor
Udgivet:	1. september 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. september 2021



R2P MONITOR

1 SEPTEMBER 2021
ISSUE 58

A quarterly bulletin by
the Global Centre for the
Responsibility to Protect

The **Responsibility to Protect** (R2P) is a global norm, unanimously adopted by heads of state and government at the 2005 UN World Summit, aimed at preventing and halting Genocide, War Crimes, Ethnic Cleansing and Crimes Against Humanity. R2P stipulates that:

- » Every State has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from the four mass atrocity crimes (Pillar I).
- » The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual States in meeting that responsibility (Pillar II).
- » If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter (Pillar III).

R2P Monitor applies an atrocity prevention lens to the following situations of concern:

CURRENT CRISIS

Mass atrocity crimes are occurring and urgent action is needed.

IMMINENT RISK

The situation is reaching a critical threshold and the risk of mass atrocity crimes occurring in the immediate future is very high if effective preventive action is not taken.

SERIOUS CONCERN

There is a significant risk of occurrence, or recurrence, of mass atrocity crimes within the foreseeable future if effective action is not taken.

R2P Monitor:

- » Provides *background* on populations at risk of mass atrocity crimes, with particular emphasis on key events and actors and their connection to the threat, or commission, of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.
- » Offers *analysis* of the country's past history in relation to mass atrocity crimes; the factors that have enabled their possible commission, or that prevent their resolution; and the receptivity of the situation to positive influences that would assist in preventing further crimes.
- » Tracks the *international response* to the situation with a particular emphasis upon the actions of the United Nations, key regional actors and the International Criminal Court.
- » Suggests *necessary action* to prevent or halt the commission of mass atrocity crimes.

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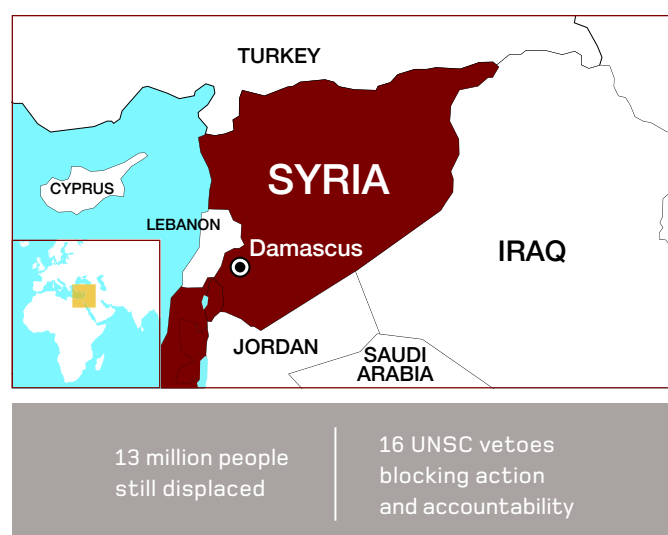
*Updates for DPRK and Eritrea are available on our website.

globalr2p.org

rule, including by imposing economic sanctions on Myanmar's oil and gas sector. The military junta should not be diplomatically recognized as the legitimate representatives of Myanmar. Foreign companies should immediately divest and sever ties with all businesses linked to Myanmar's military. The ASEAN Special Envoy should promptly travel to Myanmar and engage with both the junta and the NUG.

Myanmar's military must cease attacking healthcare workers, occupying hospitals and obstructing efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Min Aung Hlaing and other senior military leaders who bear responsibility for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide should face international justice.



SYRIA

Populations continue to face war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by various state forces and non-state armed groups.

BACKGROUND

Since the armed conflict between the government and opposition groups in Syria began in 2011 at least 580,000 people have been killed. The HRC-mandated Col on Syria has reported more than 130,000 arbitrary detentions, abductions or disappearances since 2011, with the majority attributable to the Syrian government. Nearly 13 million people have been displaced – the largest number displaced by any conflict in the world – including 6.7 million Syrian refugees. An estimated 13.4 million Syrians remain in need of humanitarian assistance.

While various parties to the conflict continue to perpetrate serious violations and abuses of international law, over the past year the conflict has shifted away from large-scale military hostilities along major frontlines to localized clashes between armed groups and government forces.

In southern Syria, clashes have escalated between government forces and armed opposition groups, particularly in Dara'a governorate, since July. Syrian government forces have launched raids and missile attacks. The government has also besieged towns and imposed heavy restrictions on civilians attempting to flee. More than 24,000 civilians have been displaced.

Government forces also continue to commit murder, torture and sexual violence as a matter of state policy across southern Syria. The Col recorded over 130 targeted killings of medical workers, former judges, and "reconciliation leaders" between July 2020 and April 2021. The government is also imposing arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement and depriving individuals of their property in areas previously held by the opposition, which the Col alleges may amount to the war crime of collective punishment.

Despite a ceasefire in northwest Syria brokered in March 2020 between Russia and Turkey, there has been a marked escalation in hostilities since January in Idlib governorate. Ground fighting, shelling and airstrikes – perpetrated by forces loyal to the Syrian government – have damaged medical facilities, markets and schools. Attacks in June and July alone caused over 70 civilian deaths, including dozens of children. In northwest Syria, approximately 3.4 million people are in need of humanitarian aid and 2.7 million are internally displaced.

Elsewhere in northern Syria, the Syrian National Army and other Turkish-backed armed groups have perpetrated torture, sexual violence, systematic looting and arbitrary detention. Meanwhile, indiscriminate shelling and airstrikes by government forces in Aleppo and across northern Syria have hit densely populated neighborhoods, hospitals and displacement camps, resulting in dozens of civilian casualties. Unclaimed IED attacks also killed and wounded hundreds of civilians.

The UN Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict confirmed more than 4,724 grave violations across Syria in 2020, including killing, maiming and the recruitment and use of children in hostilities. Additionally, at least 58,000 children of alleged ISIL fighters from 57 countries remain trapped in squalid detention camps run by the Kurdish-backed Syrian Defense Forces in northeast Syria.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has documented the illegal use of chemical weapons in Syria. Its Investigation and Identification Team released two reports in 2020 and 2021 that attribute responsibility to government forces for the use of chemical weapons, including chlorine gas and sarin. The Col has also reported on 37 instances of chemical weapons use in Syria since March 2013, including 32 attacks perpetrated by the Syrian government.

ANALYSIS

For the past decade the government of Syria, its allies and armed opposition groups have all perpetrated attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, blatantly disregarding international law. All parties to the conflict have committed acts

that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity and continue to perpetrate violations of IHL and IHRL.

As various armed groups attempt to consolidate their control over territory in a fragmented Syria, civilians continue to face systematic human rights violations. The Syrian government and other parties to the conflict continue to perpetrate detention and disappearance as a strategy to control and intimidate civilians. Ongoing violations of the ceasefire in the northwest greatly increase the risk of a recurrence of large-scale conflict.

The grave situation across Syria is partly a consequence of the inability of the UNSC to hold perpetrators accountable. The Syrian government has directly violated various UNSC resolutions, and Russia has systematically shielded Syria from international accountability measures.

The government of Syria has not only manifestly failed to uphold its responsibility to protect, it bears primary responsibility for the ongoing commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Following the outbreak of violence during March 2011, the international community censured the Syrian government for its widespread violations of human rights. The UN Secretary-General has also repeatedly called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC.

Despite this, the UNSC has failed to respond effectively. Since 2013 the Council has passed 27 resolutions on humanitarian access, peace talks and chemical weapons in Syria. Several refer to the government's responsibility to protect populations, but none have been fully implemented. Russia and China have jointly vetoed 10 draft resolutions and Russia has independently vetoed an additional 6. On 9 July the UNSC adopted Resolution 2585, extending authorization for cross-border aid for six months despite efforts by Russia to end all cross-border deliveries. The HRC has also adopted 37 resolutions condemning atrocities in Syria, the majority of which demand that the government uphold its responsibility to protect.

On 21 December 2016 UNGA voted to establish an International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of atrocities in Syria. A number of countries have also initiated domestic legal proceedings against suspected Syrian perpetrators under the principle of universal jurisdiction. The first conviction of a member of Syria's intelligence services for complicity in crimes against humanity was delivered in Germany on 24 February 2021.

On 18 September 2020 the government of the Netherlands formally requested negotiations with the Syrian government on allegations of torture as a first step towards holding Syria accountable for violations of the UN Convention against Torture. The government of Canada issued a similar request on 4 March.

On 21 April a majority of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention voted to suspend Syria's rights and privileges under the treaty.

NECESSARY ACTION

All parties must uphold their obligations under IHL and IHRL, including ending attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and establish a timetable for the release of all detainees and abductees. All parties to the conflict must facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access to civilians trapped or displaced by fighting. Parties to the conflict should uphold the ceasefire agreements in the northwest and northeast.

All returns of refugees and other displaced Syrians must be in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement.

UN member states should continue to pursue accountability for alleged perpetrators of atrocities under universal jurisdiction. Ten years since the conflict first began, the UNSC should refer the situation in Syria to the ICC and ensure that atrocity crimes do not continue with impunity.



More than 5.6 million people have left the country since 2014

VENEZUELA

Ongoing state-sanctioned persecution and violence in Venezuela may amount to crimes against humanity.

BACKGROUND

Since 2014 Venezuelan security and intelligence forces have been accused of widespread torture, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances in an attempt to silence political dissent. State agents, including the Special Action Forces (FAES), have also allegedly perpetrated thousands of extrajudicial killings in the name of combatting crime. According to reports by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, an estimated 8,200 individuals were killed in "security operations" between January 2018 and May 2020. Provea, a Venezuelan nongovernmental organization, documented 2,853 killings by state agents in 2020 alone.