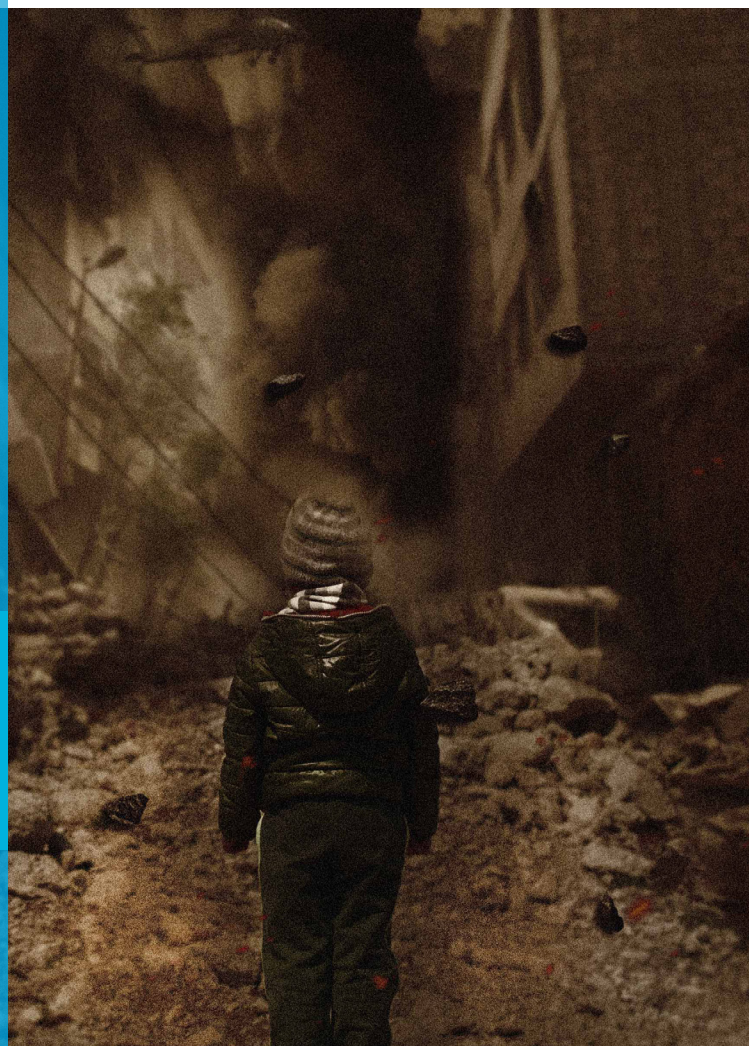


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161 Civilians, Including 34 Children, 44 Women, and Two Individuals Who Died due to Torture Documented Killed in Syria in October 2023

**Approximately 49 Percent of
October's Victims Are Children
& Women**



Wednesday 01 November 2023

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.

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I. Background and Methodology

This report documents the death toll of victims whose deaths were recorded by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) as taking place in Syria at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in October 2023. The report sheds light particularly on victims who died due to torture, and victims among medical personnel, as well as focusing on documenting the massacres perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria which the SNHR team was able to document during this period; it should be noted that we use the term, 'massacre' to refer to an incident in which no fewer than five peaceful individuals were killed. The report also includes a summary of the most notable incidents during this month. Full details of every incident are archived on the SNHR database.

Documenting deaths in Syria has been one of the most important roles performed by SNHR since March 2011. This task is all the more crucial since murder is the most prevalent of all the violations perpetrated in the country, and the one which most profoundly affects the Syrian people, with countless families suffering incalculable and irreparable trauma through the loss of parents, spouses, children, siblings, friends, etc.

These violations have become so widespread primarily due to the systematic killing of civilians by Syrian regime forces and their affiliated militias. Between March 2011, and the beginning of 2012 as ever since, Syrian regime forces were responsible for the overwhelming majority of deaths in Syria. The regime began by using tanks and artillery, then proceeded to also use warplanes and helicopter gunships which were deployed in attacks using barrel bombs, in addition to ballistic missiles and chemical weapons.

The emergence of several other parties during the Syrian conflict has further increased both the importance and the complexity of documenting the victims killed in Syria.

The killing of civilians in Syria has continued for the twelfth consecutive year, as it has done continuously ever since the initial outbreak of the popular uprising for democracy in Syria in March 2011, resulting in casualty figures that are among the highest worldwide; this underlines the fact that Syria is still the most dangerous nation in the world for civilians, and remains an exceptionally insecure and perilous environment is wholly unsuitable for the return of refugees.

This report catalogues the death toll of victims at the hands of the parties actively engaged in the Syrian conflict. It should be noted that accurately ascribing responsibility sometimes requires more time and investigation than usual, especially in the case of joint attacks. We also face additional challenges in assigning responsibility for attacks in some incidents of ground-based bombardment, especially those in which the bombardment originates from an area adjacent to the one targeted, which is controlled by a different party. In such cases, SNHR tries to thoroughly investigate each incident, in order to conclusively identify the party responsible for the bombardment.

Despite these efforts, however, there are cases in which we are unable to definitively assign culpability for a particular killing to one of two possible parties due to the area's proximity to the lines of engagement, the use of similar weapons, or other reasons. In such cases, the incident is classified under the category 'other parties' until such time as we have gathered sufficient evidence to conclusively assign responsibility for the violation to one of the two parties.

The parties to the conflict documented by SNHR as having as committed extrajudicial killings in this report are:

1. Main parties:

- Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, Shiite foreign militias)¹
- Russian forces
- Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)

2. Other parties

While we at the SNHR are keen to accurately ascribe responsibility for incidents to the relevant parties, we exclude two types of attacks from the process of assigning responsibility, namely anti-personnel landmines, and remote explosions, including suicide or forced suicide attacks. We discussed this issue previously in [detailed reports](#).

As for the anonymous victims whose names we have not yet been able to determine or regarding whom we have so far been unable to find any identifying information or any picture or video footage, these cases are catalogued in a separate archive until any information confirming these victims' identity is received which would enable their cases to be transferred to the victims' archive, with their names and other details registered accordingly.

Through use of SNHR's extensive database, we can catalogue the victims according to the governorate where they were killed, as well as by their governorate of origin. However, we choose in our monthly report to document the death toll of victims according to the governorate in which they were killed, rather than by their place of origin.

In this report, we record only the death toll of civilians whose deaths we were able to document during the last month. SNHR does not document the deaths of fighters and militants killed during the conflict, while 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 SNHR in documenting the victims can be found at this link.²

1. We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is that of a totalitarian dictatorship where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the regime's security apparatus. As a result, 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, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic/family rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade merely for show. The Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides. The Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security office, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the president assisted by the heads of the security branches.

While we are aware that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government', we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

2. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), Syrian Network for Human Rights Methodology http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/english/SNHR_Methodology_en.pdf

This report draws upon the constant 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. The SNHR also provides [a special form](#) that can be completed by victims' relatives with victims' names and personal information so that the Victims Documentation Department can follow up on the information provided, verify its accuracy and then include it in the database.

We note that the death toll of victims detailed on SNHR's database includes extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the controlling forces which occurred as a violation of either international human rights law or international humanitarian law or both, but does not include cases of natural deaths or those which occurred due to disputes between members of society or other such issues.

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

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual severity and magnitude of the violations documented. Also, it doesn't include any analysis of the profound social, economic, and psychological ramifications.

II. The Syrian Regime Has Failed to Register Hundreds of Thousands of Citizens It Killed Since March 2011 in the Death Records of the Civil Registry

Although hundreds of thousands of Syrian citizens have been killed, 'disappeared' or gone missing since the early days of the popular rising in March 2011, they have not been officially registered as dead by the relevant official state authority, namely the Civil Registry Department. The Syrian regime unconscionably controls the issuance of death certificates, which are not made available to victims' families, whether they were killed at the hands of the Syrian regime or by other parties, or to the families of the missing and forcibly disappeared. In fact, the regime only allows death certificates to be issued for those who meet the narrow criteria set by the regime and its security services. In many previous reports, we have discussed the phenomenon of the regime's forcing victims' families to sign false statements written by the security authorities beforehand, stating falsely that 'armed terrorist gangs', rather than the regime, killed their loved ones, if they wish to obtain a death certificate. The Syrian regime has not only failed to launch any investigations into the causes of death for hundreds of thousands of Syrians but has also failed to hold to account even one member of its security or military forces for their involvement in these killings

In order to obtain a death certificate, the Syrian regime relies on three things:

- Medical reports prepared by regime personnel, citing a false cause of death, such as a heart attack for those forcibly disappeared in its detention centers, or claiming falsely that the victim died as a result of injuries from war munitions.
- Statements from the local neighborhood headman or 'Mukhtar' and any witnesses, who are asked to confirm the death.
- Acknowledgement from the victims' families, who often urgently need to obtain a death certificate; for this reason, family members understandably feel they have no choice but to remain silent about the true cause of their loved ones' deaths and the identity of those responsible for them.

Through our exhaustive monitoring and investigation process, we have been able to document **three methods used by the Syrian regime to register the deaths of a limited number of its victims who were killed, or forcibly disappeared then subsequently killed**, which we detailed in a report we issued on August 19, 2022, entitled ['The Syrian Regime, Through Its Security Services and State Institutions, Controls the Incidents of Registering the Deaths of Victims Killed/'Disappeared' in the Armed Conflict Since March 2011'](#).

It is worth noting that the vast majority of victims' families are unable to obtain death certificates for their loved ones from the Syrian regime, for fear of linking their name with that of a person who was detained by the regime and killed under torture, which implies that their deceased family member had been a dissident who had opposed the Syrian regime, or had been registered as a 'terrorist' if he or she had been wanted by the security services. Additionally, many victims' families have been forcibly displaced outside the areas controlled by the Syrian regime.

On August 10, 2022, the Minister of Justice in the Syrian regime government issued [Circular No. 22](#) specifying the procedures for the conduct of proceedings related to registering deaths at 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 also gave security clearance to judicial authorities to register death cases, increasing the security services' intrusion. We issued a [report](#) in which we analyzed the constitutional and legal violations contained in this circular's text and the consequences thereof.

III. Brief on the Most Notable Incidents of Killing in October

- In October, we documented the killing of 161 civilians, including 34 children and 44 women. Below are a number of observations regarding the events that marked this month:

A. Syrian regime forces

- In October, Syrian regime forces killed 23 children, nine women, and two individuals due to torture. We also documented two massacres by regime forces this month, in which 11 civilians, including six children and three women, were killed. The highest percentage of victims was concentrated in northwestern Syria, with Idlib governorate seeing the highest number of victims documented killed by regime forces in October. In total, 67 percent of October's victims were killed by regime forces in Idlib governorate, followed by Aleppo governorate with 18 percent. Since the beginning of September, northern Syria has been the target of a military escalation by Syrian-Russian alliance forces who have been targeting densely populated civilian areas with indiscriminate attacks that fail to distinguish between civilian populated areas and military targets. On October 5, regime forces further intensified their ground indiscriminate attacks on northwestern Syria, which is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), with these attacks reaching unprecedented levels since the start of 2023. In this escalated and ongoing offensive, Syrian regime forces have, since the beginning, used a wide range of munitions, including heat-seeking rockets, incendiary ammunition, and cluster munitions. The regime attacks have been concentrated in Idlib city and its western, southern, eastern, and rural surrounding areas, as well as areas of western rural Aleppo governorate and western rural Hama. SNHR recently released [an extensive report](#) on the military escalation taking place in these areas.

On Thursday, October 5, 2023, Syrian regime forces used a rocket launcher to target multiple neighborhoods in Darat Ezza city in western rural Aleppo governorate; this was followed by another attack by Syrian regime artillery forces who fired a number of mortar shells. The two attacks [killed three civilians](#) in the city, including one child, and injured another 13; including six children, two women, and a Civil Defense rescue worker (White Helmet), while a number of residential buildings were destroyed to varying degrees. Moreover, the building and interior furnishing of Ali bin Abe Taleb Mosque and Ali bin Abe Talem School (formerly al-Shamaliya School) were moderately damaged, with a number of shells landing nearby. Another rocket that landed in the popular market in the middle of the city partially destroyed and damaged shops and market facilities to varying degrees, while a gas station was also damaged in the attack.

- We documented the death of one victim in a cluster munitions attack on Termanein town in northern rural Idlib by regime forces. This brings the total number of victims killed in cluster munitions attacks in Syria to 1,054 civilians, including 394 children and 219 women since the first documented use of this internationally outlawed weapon in July 2012, up until November 2023. The victim, identified as [Sami Abdul Fattah Bakrou](#), died of wound sustained on Friday, October 6, 2023, when Syrian regime forces used rocket launchers to target Termanein town with rockets [carrying Smerch 9M55k cluster submunitions](#) carrying N2359 or N2109 bomblets that landed near a private medical complex in the town, known as al-Nour Medical Complex. Eight other civilians, including one boy and one woman, were also injured in the attack.

Also in October, we recorded one civilian death caused by the explosion of cluster munition remnants, bringing the total number of victims documented killed by the explosion of cluster submunitions dropped by Syrian-Russian alliance forces to 385 civilians, including 124 children and 32 women, since the first documented use of this weapon in July 2012 up until November 2023. The victim, identified as 19-year-old [Ahmad Hani Qanat](#), died on Saturday, October 21, 2023, of wounds sustained in the explosion of a cluster bomblet left by previous shelling by Syrian-Russian alliance forces. Ahmad, who was from Daraa al-Balad area in Daraa city, accidentally detonated the bomb while harvesting olives in al-Khawwabi agricultural area in southern Daraa city. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, October 22, 2023, Syrian regime forces stationed in Jourien town in western Hama carried out a ground attack in which they fired an artillery shell at the northwestern outskirts of Qarqour village. The shell struck a tent set up there by a family next to their house, as an alternative residence following the devastating February 6 earthquakes that hit northwestern Syria. The shell struck the tent while six children, four girls and two boys, were playing around a swing in front of it, killing all of them, with the force of the blast dismembering some of their bodies. SNHR released a special report outlining the findings of [an investigation](#) conducted by SNHR into this massacre. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

Visual analysis

of the strike site of an artillery attack by Syrian regime forces on Qarqour village in western rural Hama governorate that resulted in a massacre, in which six civilians were killed on October 22, 2023



As documented by SNHR

October 26, 2023

B. Russian forces

Russian forces, with their regime counterparts, have also been involved in bombarding multiple areas in northwestern Syria as part of the recent escalation by regime forces since October 5, 2023. In total, bombardment by Russian attacks killed nine civilians, including four children and four women, in Idlib governorate in the month of October, bringing the number of victims killed by Russian forces since the start of 2023 to 20 civilians, including six children and five women. Six of the victims killed by Russian forces in October were killed in one massacre, where fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian targeted al-Masbah Camp, also known as Ahl Saraqeb Camp, for internally displaced persons (IDPs), located in agricultural lands on the southwestern outskirts of al-Hamama town in the rural areas of Jisr al-Shoghour in western rural Idlib, killing six civilians – two children, one unborn fetus, and three women.

On Friday, October 13, 2023, a woman, identified as [Hanaa al-Rihawi](#) from Ariha city in southern rural Idlib governorate, was killed in an airstrike carried out by fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian that fired multiple missiles at Bazza village in al-Arba'ien area in southern rural Idlib governorate. One of the missiles struck Hanaa's house, killing her and completely destroying her home. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

C. Other parties

In October, we documented the killing of 86 civilians, including six children and 31 women at the hands of other parties. Deaths at the hands of other parties accounted for approximately 53 percent of October's death toll. Those deaths are distributed as follows:

1. Landmines of unidentified sources

We documented the deaths of two civilians, one of them a child, caused by the explosion of landmines of unidentified sources, increasing the number of deaths caused by landmine explosions since the beginning of 2023 to 101 civilians, including 25 children and eight women.

On Saturday, October 7, 2023, a child, identified as [Ahmad Faris al-Amin](#), was killed by the explosion of a landmine whose source we have not yet been able to identify on the bank of the Euphrates River in al-Tayyana town in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The area was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

2- Gunshot of unidentified source

We documented the killing of 18 civilians who were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in October. Of these 18, 10 were killed in Daraa governorate. Most of these shootings are carried out by masked gunmen on motorbikes who shoot their victim and immediately flee the scene. As we have documented, these kinds of incidents have seen a marked increase in Daraa governorate since the settlement agreement was struck in 2019. Deir Ez-Zour governorate accounted for the remaining eight victims killed by unidentified gunmen in the month of October.

On Monday, October 2, 2023, [Jamal al-Salt](#), a player for the Abu Hamam Volleyball Club, was shot dead by gunmen we have not yet been able to identify from a passing motorbike in a street in his hometown of Abu Hamam in eastern Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The area was under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

3- Bombings by unidentified parties

We documented the deaths of 60 civilians, including four children and 29 women, caused by the explosion of war remnants and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Fifty-six of these 60 civilians, including three children and 29 women, were killed in Homs governorate on Thursday, October 5, 2023, in a bombing at the Syrian regime's Military College in northwestern Homs city during a graduation ceremony for a new batch of military officers where hundreds of graduating students and their families were in attendance.

On Friday, October 6, 2023, three civilians, identified as 39-year-old Anas Ibrahim al-Kour, 34-year-old Bassil Abdul Karim al-Msalma, and a five-year-old boy named Udai Mohammad al-Kour, all from the Daraa al-Balad area in Daraa governorate, [were killed by the explosion of an IED](#) whose source we have not yet been able to identify on the road between Daraa al-Balad area and an agricultural area known as al-Shayyah in southern Daraa governorate. Anas and Bassil were former opposition fighters, who both received settlement cards in July 2018 when Syrian regime forces took over the governorate. They had completely retired from military life since then and had been working as merchants. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

4- Israeli forces

In October, the Israeli Air Force bombed multiple targets in Syria, including the Damascus and Aleppo international airports. The two airports were targeted in a total of six attacks this month (Aleppo Airport was targeted four times, while Damascus Airport was targeted twice). On Sunday, October 22, 2023, at around 05:25, Israeli forces carried out an airstrike from the direction of the Mediterranean Sea to the west of Latakia and Quneitra targeting the two airports of Damascus and Aleppo. The airstrikes killed two civilians who worked at the Meteorology Department in Damascus Airport, in addition to damaging the two airports' runways, which rendered the two airports out of commission.

D. (SDF)

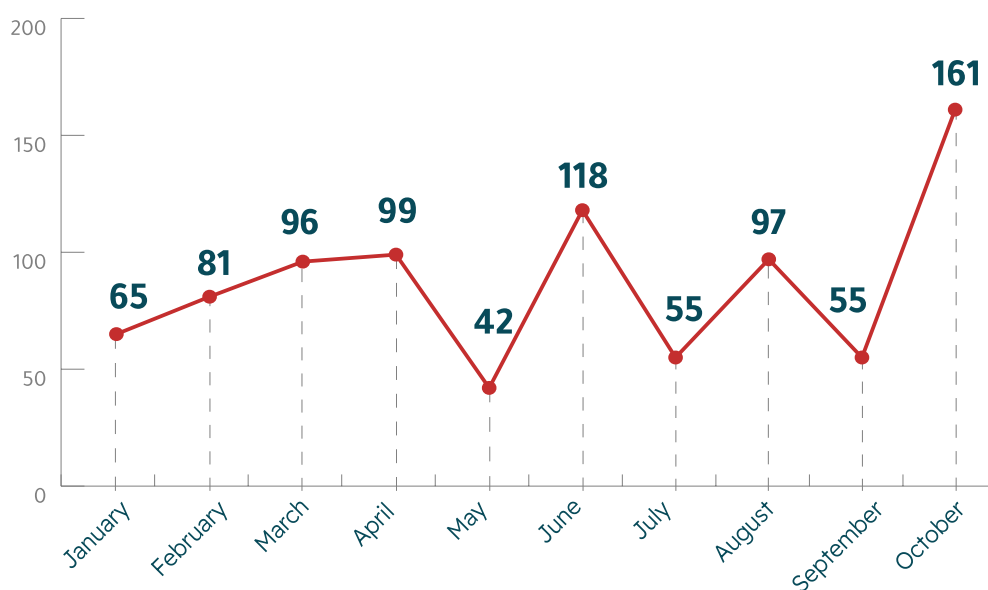
In October, the SDF killed five civilians, almost all of them in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, where four civilians, including one child, were shot dead by SDF personnel.

On Thursday, October 12, 2023, a child, identified as [Faris Nabil al-Khadr](#), was shot dead by SDF personnel in Abu Hamam town in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The SDF personnel indiscriminately opened fire following the explosion of a landmine that struck an SDF military patrol, killing one SDF member. The SDF's gunfire also injured Faris's father. The area was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

IV. Civilian Death Toll

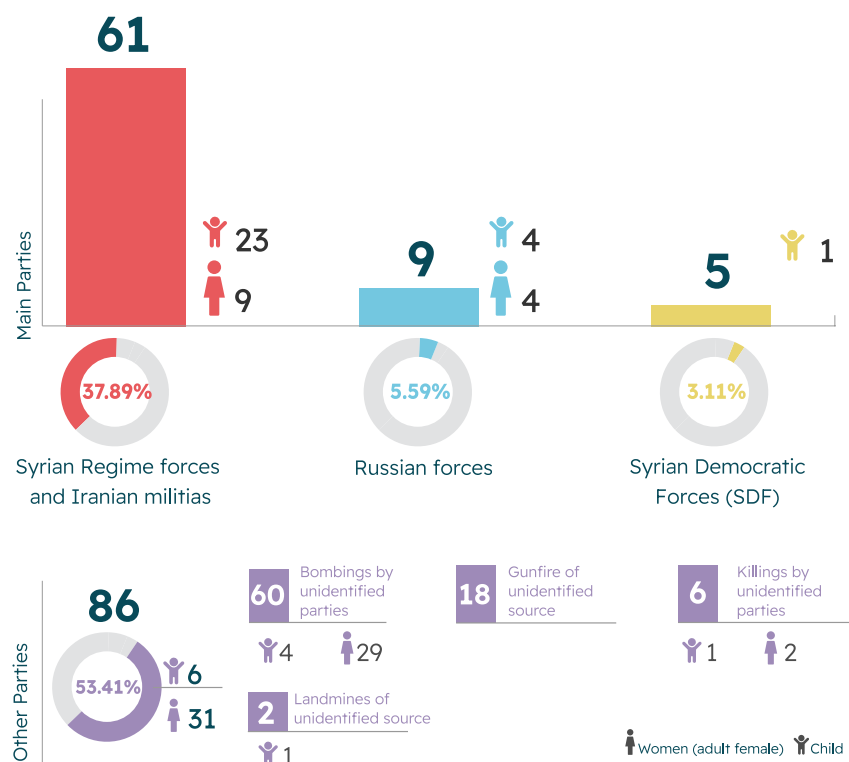
In October, SNHR documented the killing of 161 civilians, including 34 children and 44 women (adult female) at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. October's death toll brings the total number of civilian victims killed by the different parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since the beginning of 2023 up until the start of November to 869 civilians in total.

This year's civilian deaths at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed by month as follows:



As the chart shows, October saw a significant rise in the number of civilian deaths, giving it the highest monthly death toll so far this year, accounting for approximately 18 percent of all deaths in 2023, followed by June with approximately 14 percent. By contrast, May saw the lowest monthly death toll so far this year, with approximately five percent of the total.

The civilian deaths we documented in the month of October are distributed according to the parties to the conflict and controlling forces as follows



A. Main parties:

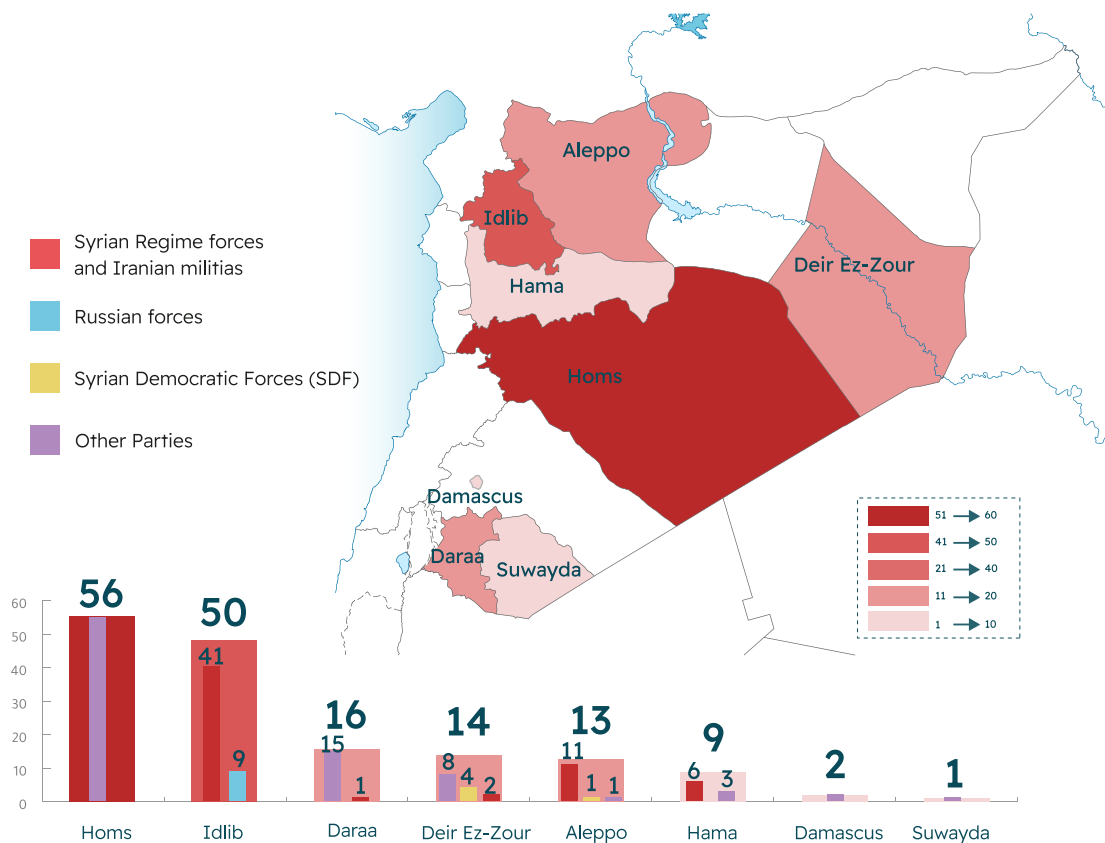
- **Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias):**
We documented the killing of 61 civilians, including 23 children and nine women, at the hands of Syrian regime forces.
- **Russian forces:**
We documented the killing of nine civilians, including four children and four women at the hands of Russian forces.
- **(SDF)**
We documented the killing of five civilians, including one victim, at the hands of the SDF.

B. Other parties:

We documented the killing of 86 civilians, including six children and 31 women at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines whose source we have been unable to identify: Two civilians, including one child.
- Gunfire whose source we have been unable to identify: 18 civilians.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify: 60 civilians, including four children and 29 women.
- Killings by parties we have been unable to identify: Six civilians, including one child and two women.

October's civilian deaths at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria are distributed across Syria's governorates as follows:



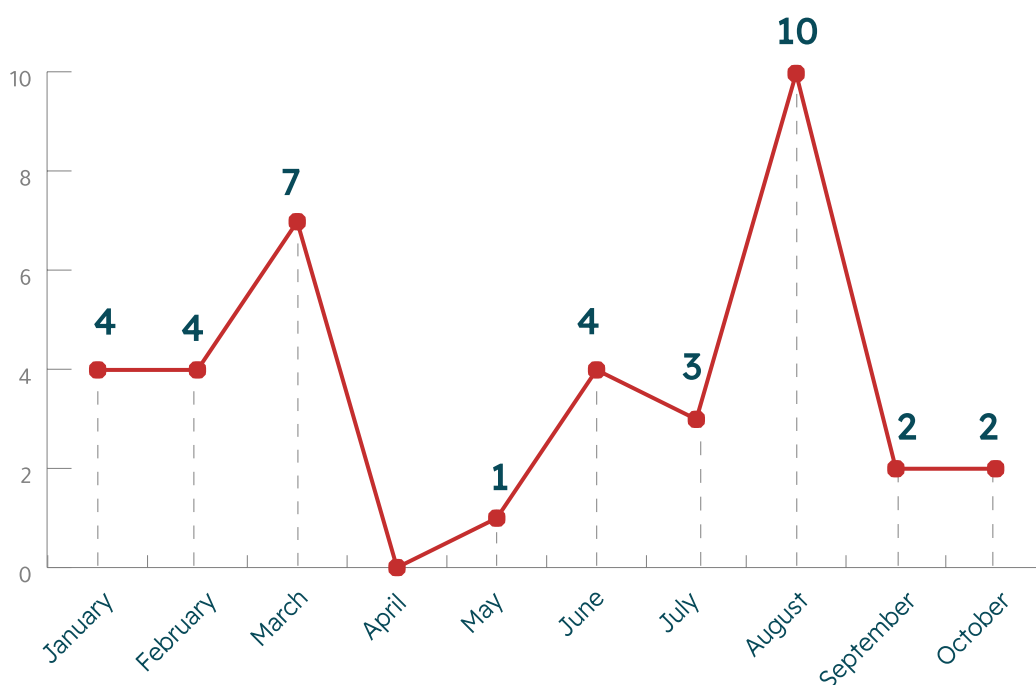
As the graph shows, Homs and Idlib governorates saw approximately 66 percent of all victims killed in October. More particularly, Homs governorate saw the highest number of deaths documented this month, accounting for approximately 35 percent of all victims documented in October, with all the victims killed in the governorate being killed by other parties, followed by Idlib governorate with approximately 30 percent, with all victims killed in the governorate being killed at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

V. Death Toll of Victims Who Died Due to Torture, and Victims Amongst Media, Medical and Civil Defense Personnel

A. Toll of victims who died due to torture

In October, SNHR documented the deaths of two individuals due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria, bringing the total number of victims documented as having died due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since the beginning of 2023, up until the beginning of November to 37 victims.

Victims whom we documented as having died due to torture since the beginning of 2023 are distributed as follows:



As the chart shows, Syrian regime forces are responsible for the deaths of approximately 47 percent of all victims documented as dying due to torture at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria since the beginning of 2023. August saw the highest monthly number of victims documented as dying due to torture so far this year, accounting for approximately 27 percent of all this year's victims to date.

The victims who died due to torture in October are distributed according to the parties to the conflict and controlling forces as follows:

A. Main parties:

- Syrian regime forces: Two victim.

Below are the most notable cases:

Mohammad al-Awwad al-Bou'ali, from Mahkan town in eastern rural Deir Ez-Zour governorate, was arrested in 2019. He has been classified as forcibly disappeared ever since, with the Syrian regime denying any knowledge of his whereabouts and refusing to allow anyone, even a lawyer, to visit him. On October 22, 2023, his family learned he died in Sednaya Military Prison in Rural Damascus governorate in 2021. We can confirm that Mohammad was in good health at the time of his arrest, indicating a strong probability that he died due to torture and medical negligence in a regime detention center. SNHR can also confirm that Syrian regime forces have not yet returned his dead body to his family.



👁 Abdul Rahman al-Hanini

B. Death toll of medical personnel

SNHR documented no deaths among medical personnel in October 2023.

C. Death toll of media workers

SNHR documented no deaths among media workers in October 2023.

D. Death Toll of Civil Defense personnel

We documented no deaths among Civil Defense personnel in October 2023.

VI. Most Notable Massacres

In October, SNHR documented four massacres at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria. This increases the total number of massacres documented since the beginning of this year to 19, distributed as follows::

A. Main parties:

- Syrian regime forces and pro-regime militias: Four massacres.
- Russian forces: One massacre.

B. Other parties:

- Killings by parties we have been unable to identify: Four Massacres.
- Landmines whose source we have been unable to identify: Three massacres.
- Gunfire whose source we have been unable to identify: Two massacres.
- Bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify: Four massacres.
- Jordanian forces: One massacre.

A total of 73 civilians, including 12 children and 35 women, were killed in the massacres documented in October.

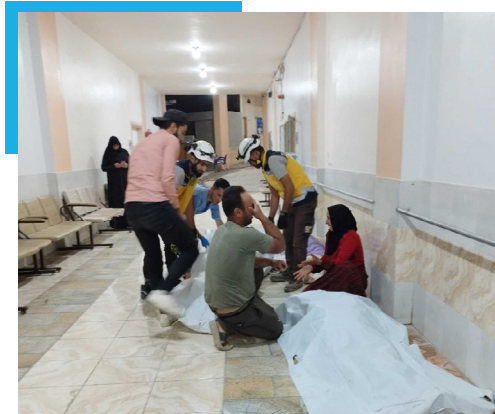
Below is a summary of the most notable massacres:

On Thursday, October 5, 2023, [an explosion](#) whose source we have not been able to identify at the Syrian regime's Military College in Homs governorate caused a massacre in which [84 individuals](#), including three children and [29 women](#), were [killed](#), with 28 of the victims being military servicemen. The explosion took place during a graduation ceremony where hundreds of graduating students and their families were in attendance. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.



👁 Families and military servicemen following the graduation ceremony at the Syrian regime's Military College before the bombing took place - October 5, 2023

In the first hours of Thursday's dawn, October 5, 2023, [five civilians](#), including three women at least (a mother and [four](#) of her adult children - two males and two females), all from the same family [were killed](#) in a bombardment by Syrian regime forces who fired two heat-seeking missiles that targeted a house inhabited by an IDP family in al-Wasata village in Kafrnouran town in western rural Aleppo governorate, killing the family and injuring another woman. The area where the residence was located is a small farm containing a number of civilian residences, which is exposed to regime-held areas. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



👁 Bodies of victims killed in a massacre by Syrian regime forces who fired two heat-seeking rockets at a house, killing an IDP family, in al-Wasata village in western rural Aleppo - October 5, 2023

On Tuesday, October 24, 2023, [six civilians](#) - [two children](#), three women, and an unborn child - were [killed](#), while five others, including three children, were injured, in [airstrikes](#) by fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian at around 12:17. The airstrike targeted al-Masbah IDPs Camp, also known as Ahl Saraqeb IDPs Camp, in the agricultural lands on the southwestern outskirts of al-Hamama village in the rural areas of Jisr al-Shoghour in western rural Idlib, with two concrete-block buildings being targeted in a private camp directly adjacent to the main camp, along with a number of surrounding tents. Additionally, the building was partially destroyed, with more than seven tents being totally destroyed. It should be noted that the area houses a number of camps spread across the agricultural land surrounding the town, including Ahl al-Iz Camp and al-Karout Camp, with these camps being located about a kilometer away from each other. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



👁 The bodies of the victims killed in an airstrike by Russian warplanes that targeted Ahl Saraqeb Camp near al-Hamama town - October 24, 2023

VII. What is SNHR Doing About the Extrajudicial Killing Issue?

Since 2011, SNHR has been developing complex programs to archive and categorize the victims' data, which the team collects and verifies, enabling us to catalogue the victims according to their gender, age, the date and place of death, method of killing, type of weapon used, and perpetrator party, and to make comparisons between these parties. We can also distribute the death toll according to the governorate in which the death occurred, and according to the governorate from which the victim originated, in order to show the extent of the loss suffered by the people of that governorate, enabling us to accurately ascertain the highest rates of violence documented in the case of each violation. SNHR's Victim Documentation Department team constantly updates the network's comprehensive database, with all the data added to the SNHR's database being retained securely, and several backup copies being stored in different locations.

Since 2011, we have also been exceptionally concerned with the documentation of incidents involving the killing of children and women; there is hardly any statistic recorded on our database that does not include victims in either category and usually in both, due to the vulnerability of these groups in the community, and because they give an indication of the rate of targeting of civilians. We later added other civilian groups which have played a key role in the popular uprising and later in the armed conflict, such as media, medical, and humanitarian aid personnel, and Civil Defense rescue workers.

For nearly 12 years, we have issued [daily death tolls of victims](#), as well as [daily news reports](#) on killing incidents. We also issue a [monthly report](#) detailing the death toll of victims, whose deaths were documented in Syria during the previous month, amongst civilians, as well as of those who died [due to torture](#), in addition to issuing a biannual report and annual report, as well as dozens of other special reports [documenting the total death toll](#) or the death toll at the hands of one of the parties to the conflict in particular, in addition to a [monthly report](#) and special and periodic reports documenting the [massacres](#) committed on Syrian soil.

We have also turned the victims' database into a map and interactive charts accessible on our website, which categorize the victims by governorate, gender, age group, the party responsible for their deaths, and other criteria. There are also charts detailing the death toll of victims killed at the hands of all parties to the conflict, as well as others giving information on specific groups, such as specifically detailing the death toll among women and children victims, with all of these being updated regularly.

SNHR also periodically submits special forms to the United Nations [Special Rapporteur](#) on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as to the Special Rapporteur on torture, submitting cases of killings on which we were able to document all of the available data, having obtained the consent of each victim's family members before submitting them.

It should be noted that the United Nations has relied on SNHR 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 also has signed a [Memorandum of Understanding with Humanitarian Outcomes on contributing to its Aid Worker Security Database \(AWSDB\)](#) project, which stipulated the establishment of a joint coordination and cooperation mechanism aimed at documenting and archiving violations and violence affecting aid workers. SNHR has also partnered with numerous United Nations bodies, in addition to various states' governments, to provide them with statistics from our databases, in order to serve the justice process, and ultimately to ensure the accountability and prosecution of criminals. SNHR is also used as a trustworthy source by numerous Arab and international news agencies and many international human rights organizations.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- The evidence we have collected regarding incidents involving deaths indicates that the attacks documented in this report were deliberately directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes of extrajudicial killings, including fatal torture. 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.
- A large proportion of the Syrians killed died as a result of landmine explosions, with none of the perpetrator forces involved in the Syrian conflict issuing maps revealing the locations where landmines were planted. This indicates a chilling total indifference by all parties to the lives of civilians, particularly children.
- The Syrian regime has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 2139 and 2042 on the release of detainees, as well as resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by Syrian Democratic Forces is considered a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with the crimes of indiscriminate killing amounting to war crimes.
- The use of remote bombings to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal mindset intent on deliberately inflicting the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva VI Convention, Articles 27, 31, and 32.
- We have documented cases of extrajudicial killings committed by various controlling forces against the populations under their control, which constitute serious violation of international human rights law.

Recommendations

UN Security Council

- The Security Council should take additional steps following the adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly demands that all parties should, *“...Immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons, including through shelling and aerial bombardment.”*
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those involved in perpetrating crimes against humanity and war crimes should be held accountable.
- Members of the Security Council must stop using their veto to protect the Syrian regime, which has committed hundreds of thousands of violations over the past ten years, many of which constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- Establish security and peace in Syria and implement the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ norm (R2P) in order to preserve Syrians’ lives, heritage, and cultural artifacts from being destroyed, looted, and ruined.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide humanitarian and food aid and medical assistance in areas where the fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced persons’ camps, and follow up with those states that have pledged the necessary contributions.
- Seriously work to achieve a political transition under the Geneva Communiqué and Security Council Resolution No. 2254, to ensure the stability and territorial integrity of Syria, and enable the dignified and safe return of refugees and IDPs.
- Allocate a significant amount of money for clearing mines left over by the Syrian conflict from the United Nations Mine Action Service, particularly in areas prepared to carry out this task with transparency and integrity.

International Community

- In light of the split within the UN Security Council and its utter incapability, action should be taken at the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people and increase support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be applied 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 (R2P) in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICR2P) after all political channels through the Arab League’s plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan’s plan were exhausted, with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana talks that followed proved equally fruitless. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the norm of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The UN Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.

- Refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, or quickly establish a tribunal dedicated to trying crimes against humanity and war crimes to end the cycle of impunity that has now spanned 12 years in Syria.
- 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.
- Work to launch projects to create maps revealing the locations of landmines and cluster munitions in all Syrian governorates. This would facilitate the process of clearing them and educating the population about their locations.
- Support the political transition process and impose pressure to compel the parties to implement the political transition within a period of no more than six months so that most of the violations end and millions of displaced people can safely return to their homes without fear.
- Stop any forcible return of Syrian refugees, since the situation in Syria continues to be extremely unsafe, and put pressure on the Syrian regime to achieve a political transition that would ensure the automatic return of millions of refugees.

UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR)

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the violations mentioned in this report and previous reports and should shed greater light on the issue of the continuing killing in Syria.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch extensive 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.
- Work on identifying the responsibility of individuals within the Syrian regime who are involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, publish their names to expose them to international public condemnation, and end all dealings with them at every political and economic level.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

- Collect further evidence about the crimes documented in this report, and provide an exchange of experiences with Syrian organizations working in the field of documentation, data collection and analysis.

The United Nations Special Envoy for Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of these crimes and of the 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 transitional governing body.
- Call for rapid implementation of democratic political change that restores victims' rights and embodies the principles of transitional justice.
- There is no sense in pursuing any political process in light of the continued bombing of hospitals and UN aid, and the pursuit of a zero-security military solution by the Syrian regime and its allies, and the UN Envoy must acknowledge this.
- Clearly assign responsibility to the party responsible for the death of the political process, and disclose to the Syrian people the timing of the end of the political transition process.

Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets.
- End the acts of torture that have caused the deaths of thousands of Syrian citizens in detention centers.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the regime planted landmines, especially in civilian areas or near residential communities.

Russian regime

- 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.
- 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.

The Coalition (US-led coalition and SDF)

- 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.
- The SDF should form a special committee to investigate incidents of violations committed by SDF forces, disclose the details of their findings and apologize for them, hold those responsible accountable, and compensate the victims and affected.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the SDF has planted landmines, especially in civilian sites or near residential communities.

All Armed Opposition factions/SNA

- 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.
- Launch investigations into the human rights violations that have taken place, hold those responsible accountable and make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people.
- Provide detailed maps of the locations where the Armed Opposition factions/Syrian National Army planted landmines, especially civilian sites or near residential communities.

Humanitarian organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons, primarily widows and orphans.
- Exert efforts in landmine clearance operations in parallel with relief operations whenever the opportunity arises.

Acknowledgment

We extend our most heartfelt gratitude to the victims' families and friends, and to eyewitnesses and local activists, for their significant and valued contributions to this report.



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