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The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in September 2021

Syria Is an Unsafe Country for the Return of Refugees, As Confirmed by the Reports of the UN Commission of Inquiry and Amnesty International

Monday 4 October 2021

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. Introduction and Methodology:

Syria has seen an unprecedented number of violations since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in March 2011. Extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture and enforced disappearances are the violations most frequently perpetrated against Syrian citizens. While the Syrian regime and its affiliated militias were the sole perpetrators of these violations for the first seven months or so of the uprising, other parties subsequently joined in, also violating the rights of Syrian citizens. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has continued to document every incident that its team members are able to verify, with these violations escalating very dramatically in 2012 and 2013, prompting us to expand our publication of periodic monthly reports recording and highlighting the continued suffering of the Syrian people, which subsequently grew to eight reports on different issues issued at the beginning of each month. In the course of our work, SNHR has compiled a massive database cataloguing hundreds of thousands of incidents, each of which involves a pattern of violations that we have been able to document.

By the end of 2018, with a reduction in the level of violence compared to previous years, we changed our previous strategy and now compile our reports into a single monthly report featuring the most prominent violations in Syria which we have been able to document in the preceding month.

This month's report focuses on the human rights situation in Syria, which SNHR documented in September 2021, and catalogues the death toll of civilian victims whom we documented killed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria during this period, as well as the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearance. The report also highlights attacks on civilian objects, which SNHR's team was able to document during this period. To find out more about our working [methodology](#) in documenting and archiving data, please visit the following link that explains this in detail.

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

II. Summary of the Most Notable Events in September 2021:

In regard to bombardment and military operations:

September saw the continuation of military operations by Syrian-Russian alliance forces in Idlib region in northwest Syria for the fourth consecutive month, with these operations concentrated in the Jabal al Zaweya area and its surroundings, with SNHR issuing a [report](#) on this military campaign. [Syrian regime forces continued their ground](#) attacks on the contact lines on the outskirts of the towns of al Bara, Kansafra, al Fattira, Beneen, Sarja and Shnan in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib. We also recorded artillery shelling by Syrian regime forces on the center of [Idlib city](#) on September 7, for the first time during this campaign, which resulted in casualties.

Russian air attacks on Jabal al Zaweya area also continued for the second consecutive month, targeting areas near the lines of contact in Jabal al Zaweya and Darat Ezza in the western suburbs of Aleppo, although these strikes did not result in any casualties. Russian forces also launched several raids on military areas used as camps by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham in the wooded areas of Ein Shib, al Sheikh Bahr and Ahrash Hamama, west of Idlib city. These strikes focused on poultry farms that were being used as military headquarters, in addition to the al Kbaina hills area in the northern suburbs of Latakia, which are military areas and contact lines.

On September 8, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, expressed in a [press conference](#) that: "[The UN is deeply concerned about ongoing hostilities and their impact on civilians.](#)"

We observed a Russian military escalation on the suburbs of Afrin city in Aleppo governorate, which is under the control of Syrian National Army factions, in the last week of September. The most severe of these attacks was the raid that targeted a school used as a camp by the Syrian National Army in Brad village on September 25, causing the death of dozens of fighters.

Syrian-Russian alliance forces' bombardment was countered by shelling by armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, in addition to Turkish forces in the southern suburbs of Idlib, through ground attacks with artillery and missile launchers, with this shelling concentrated on the military positions housing Syrian regime forces on the fronts of the southern suburbs of Idlib, the western suburbs of Hama and the northern suburbs of Aleppo. We also recorded several strikes targeting SDF positions north of Aleppo.

On September 1, Adnan al Msalma, the spokesperson for the Civilian Negotiating Committee in Daraa city, announced that [an agreement](#) had been reached with Russia and the regime's security committee that would put an end to the military escalation in Daraa city. This agreement quickly collapsed two days later, however, according to the spokesperson's statement on his Facebook account, due to new, impossible requests, submitted by the regime's security committee and Russia, most notably their insistence on the surrender of all weapons, the deployment of additional military points and a home inspection campaign, after which the Negotiating Committee demanded the displacement of the people to Jordan or Turkey. On September 4, Syrian regime forces again bombed the besieged neighborhoods of Daraa city.

On the evening of September 5, a new agreement was reached between the Negotiating Committee of Daraa city with the Syrian regime, under Russian auspices, to end the escalation in the city, which entered into force the next day. The agreement included several terms, most notably the settlement of the wanted persons' status, the deployment of nine military points inside the neighborhoods of Daraa al Balad and Tareeq al Sadd neighborhood, the withdrawal of the military reinforcements of Syrian regime forces from the vicinity of Daraa city, and the lifting of the siege completely from the area after implementing the terms of the agreement, without addressing the issue of detainees and forcibly disappeared persons from Daraa governorate, who have been detained or disappeared by the Syrian regime.

As for the villages and towns of the western suburbs of Daraa, these witnessed five agreements between September 12 and 26, which were between dignitaries from the areas and the Syrian regime's security committee, under Russian auspices, for the towns of al Yadouda, al Mzayreeb, Tal Shehab and the villages of Hawd Yarmouk area (which includes the towns of Saham al Joulan, Tseel, Heet, al Shajara, al Qsair, Abdin, Naf'a, Jmala, Beit Ara, Kwiya) and Tafas city, with all of these agreements being similar to the agreement on Daraa city. We will issue a detailed report on this subject at a later date.

Meanwhile, the Badiya of al Mayadeen in the southern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour witnessed hit-and-run clashes between Syrian regime forces and affiliated militias on one side, and ISIS on the other, at intermittent intervals during the month of September, without any change in the positions of control.

In September, we observed an escalation in the frequency of clashes between the component factions of the Syrian National Army in the northern suburbs of Aleppo against the background of regional or factional rivalries, the mobilization of military convoys within civilian areas, and the clashes with machine guns, causing a state of paralysis in areas already experiencing security tensions and a state of panic among civilians.

Also in September, [clashes continued](#) between Syrian National Army forces and Syrian Democratic Forces in the villages of Ein Eisa district in the northern suburbs of Raqqqa, which are under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces, without any change in the distribution of zones of control. We note that this area has witnessed intermittent clashes between the two parties since 2019.

The Badiya of al Boukamal city witnessed several air raids by warplanes of unknown sources that targeted several headquarters of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards militia, at several occasions throughout the month. These raids resulted in the deaths of many militiamen and the destruction of several IRGC headquarters buildings.

In terms of bombings, over the course of September, we monitored several bombings with explosive devices and motorcycle bombs in the areas of al Bab and Jarablos and in the vicinity of Afrin city in the suburbs of Aleppo, which left dozens of civilian casualties and injuries, and caused damage to civilian facilities. Ras al Ein city in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka also witnessed bombings that caused material damage to infrastructure.

September also saw [continuing civilian](#) deaths [due to landmine explosions](#) in [different governorates](#) and [regions](#) of Syria. SNHR [documented](#) many [landmine explosions](#), which [resulted](#) in the deaths of 10 civilians, including eight children, bringing the civilian death toll caused by landmines since the beginning of 2021 to 142, including 58 children and 22 women.

September also witnessed assassinations of civilians in the villages and towns of the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour by unidentified gunmen believed to be affiliated with ISIS.

On September 3, the Israeli forces bombed the vicinity of Damascus city with missiles, but no casualties were reported, according to the [Syrian Arab News Agency](#) (SANA).

In regard to arrests and enforced disappearances:

Syrian regime forces continued in September to persecute and arrest individuals who had concluded settlements of their security status with the Syrian regime in areas that had previously concluded settlement agreements with the regime; these arrests have been concentrated in Damascus Suburbs and Daraa governorates. We recorded a number of arrests carried out by the Criminal Security branches in Homs, Aleppo and Damascus, targeting civilians, including university students, under the pretext of their communicating with external media organizations and talking about the deteriorating living conditions in the areas under the control of the Syrian regime. We also monitored arrests at various checkpoints run by Syrian regime forces, targeting civilians, including several women, on various charges. We documented arrests targeting a number of civilian traders and merchants, in connection with their stopping their commercial activities and attempting to leave the country, with these detainees charged with carrying out acts that would harm the 'prestige' of the Syrian state. These arrests were concentrated in Aleppo city. We also documented arrests targeting Palestinian refugees by members of Liwa al Quds, an unofficial militia affiliated with the Syrian regime, in raids on their places of residence in al Neirab Camp for Palestinians in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate.

Meanwhile, Syrian Democratic Forces continued enforcing the group's policies of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in September, with the number increasing this month as SDF continued carrying out campaigns of mass raids and arrests, targeting civilians on the supposed pretext of fighting ISIS cells, with some of these campaigns backed by US-led coalition helicopters. We also documented arrests targeting students, teachers and members of the Christian Syriac Orthodox Creed Council, over their criticism of and refusal to adopt the educational curriculum imposed by the SDF in its areas of control. These arrests were concentrated in Hasaka governorate and Ein Arab city in the suburbs of Aleppo governorate. In addition to these cases, we documented a number of arrests targeting members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, over their participation in an anti-SDF protest criticizing the poor living and service conditions and arrests in the areas controlled by SDF. These arrests were concentrated in al Qameshli city in the suburbs of Hasaka governorate. We also recorded Syrian Democratic Forces again kidnapping children with the aim of taking them to its training and recruitment camps and forcibly conscripting them, preventing their families from communicating with them, and failing to disclose their fate.

September also saw Hay'at Tahrir al Sham detaining civilians, including media activists and politicians, with these arrests concentrated in Idlib governorate; most of these arrests occurred due to the detainees expressing opinions critical of the HTS's management of areas under its control. We also documented arrests carried out by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham personnel in Kafrayya town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, in connection with a protest against the Turkistan Islamic Party in front of the Turkistan Islamic Party's court building, in al Fou'a town, after the party ordered a number of displaced persons to leave their homes in order to seize control of them. We also documented Turkistan Party personnel arresting elderly civilians for refusing to leave the houses that the party wants to seize.

All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army also continued carrying out arbitrary detentions and kidnappings in September, most of which were carried out on a mass scale, targeting individuals coming from areas controlled by the Syrian regime. In addition, we documented detentions carried out under an ethnic pretext, with these incidents being concentrated in areas under the Armed Opposition/ Syrian National Army's control in Aleppo governorate. In addition to these cases, we also documented the kidnapping of a civilian by personnel affiliated with the Syrian National Army's 20th Division, known as Soqoor al Sonna, with the kidnapped man being brutally tortured while he was completely stripped naked, and forced to apologize to those torturing him as they filmed these debased acts, before being released. We issued [a statement](#) on the incident.

Regarding living conditions:

September witnessed an unprecedented deterioration in the living conditions of citizens in areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, in light of the increase in the prices of basic materials and the decrease in the exchange rate of the Syrian pound against foreign currencies. In terms of electricity, the number of hours of rationing in some areas reached twenty hours a day, which was reflected in the impossibility of obtaining water (due to the lack of power to pumping stations), forcing citizens to buy it at prices that exceed their financial ability, in addition to enduring further problems, previously reported by local pro-regime media, due to the absence of [infant formula](#) on [the market](#) and the unavailability of many types of medicines in pharmacies.

On September 21, the Syrian Telecommunications Company operating in areas under the control of the Syrian regime announced [in a post on its official page on Facebook](#) that an increase in the prices of internet and telecommunications services would be implemented as of the beginning of October, which sparked discontent among subscribers in light of the poor quality of service provided and the interruption of Internet service for long hours due to the electrical rationing.

The prices of basic food items, vegetables and fuel in northwest Syria are also witnessing a significant increase, affected by fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Turkish lira and the monopolies imposed by traders, constituting a heavy burden on citizens already struggling on low incomes, in an area with widespread unemployment, a total lack of job opportunities and low wages.

In September, we monitored announcements from the Syrian regime's security committees of new public auctions of displaced people's property, complementing the policy these regime bodies followed last year, the details of which we documented in our report ["Public Auctions of Forcibly Displaced People's Lands Are Another Syrian Regime Method to Seize Its Opponents' Property in a Widespread and Deliberate Manner"](#), with [the security committees](#) in [the areas](#) of [Idlib suburbs](#) (Saraqeb and Abu al Dohour districts) and [Qal'at al Madiq area](#) in the northern suburbs of Hama announcing public auctions for investment in agricultural lands planted with pistachios and olives, and unplanted lands suitable for growing grains. The majority of the lands offered at auction are owned by displaced people now living in northern Syria in areas outside the control of the Syrian regime, with some of the other owners of these lands being refugees in neighboring countries. In the second half of September, photos of tables containing information on these auctions spread on social media, with this information including the names of farmers whose agricultural lands were offered for public auction; we contacted a number of farmers and landowners whose names were mentioned who confirmed to us that their lands had indeed been confiscated and that while this confiscation does not include the transfer of land ownership through official documents, these auctions deprived them of benefiting from their agricultural crops and revenues.

In the eastern region, specifically in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, the Governorate Directorate in Deir Ez-Zour affiliated with Syrian regime forces issued in September, over several days, lists of [agricultural lands](#), most of which are in [the cities](#) and [towns](#) of Mouhasan, al Qouriya, al Mayadeen, al Ashara, Swaidan Shamiya and Sbaikhan, the area of which is estimated at more than 7,000 hectares and is owned by citizens displaced from their villages and towns west of the Euphrates River in Deir Ez-Zour, who are wanted by the Syrian regime; these lands will be confiscated by the Farmers Union in the governorate, which will supervise them in order to invest and rent them to other farmers in the area. It should be noted that, during the past two years, the Syrian regime has formed several local committees that coordinate between it and the Farmers Union to carry out studies and conduct censuses of the population and of agricultural lands in villages and towns west of the Euphrates River; we will issue a detailed report on these auctions at a later date.

The areas controlled by Syrian Democratic Forces are also witnessing an increase in the prices of basic foodstuffs, which is further intensifying the deterioration of the living conditions there.

On September 24, several demonstrations took place in the cities and towns of al Malekiya, Ma'bada, al Jawadiya, al Qahtaniya, al Qameshli, Amouda, al Derbasiya and Tal Tamer in the northern suburbs of Hasaka, protesting against the increase in the prices of fuel and bread, and the imposition of fines on citizens; the demonstrators in al Qameshli city were beaten and insulted by members of the Syrian Democratic Forces' Revolutionary Youth group, who also destroyed a camera and mobile phone belonging to Diana Muhammad, a correspondent with the Aso News Network in al Qameshli city, while she was covering the demonstration.

In regard to the COVID-19 pandemic:

September also saw a significant increase in documented infections and deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic across Syria, now reaching the highest rate since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The Syrian regime's [Ministry of Health](#) officially announced 6,290 cases of COVID-19 infection and 234 deaths in September, bringing the official total announced to 34,205 cases of infection with 2,247 deaths, as of September 30.

We believe that the statistics published by the Syrian regime government do not represent the reality, as citizens in several governorates told us that their areas are witnessing dozens of funerals every day for people who suffered from symptoms of COVID-19 coronavirus infection, and that most of them were unable to find empty beds in hospitals for treatment.

In northwestern Syria, more infections and deaths due to coronavirus were recorded in September, with [the Early Warning Alert and Response Network \(EWARN\)](#) announcing the documentation of 34,682 infections and 438 deaths related to COVID-19 for the month, the highest monthly record since the emergence of the pandemic with a daily 1,156 infections; this brought the total number of infections and deaths announced by EWARN as of September 30, to 72,552 cases of infection and 1,198 deaths.

In September, a steady and unprecedented rise was recorded in the death toll due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the isolation centers announcing that they were full and had exceeded their absorptive capacity. This deprived hundreds of infective people from receiving treatment; the deteriorating economic conditions and the scarcity of oxygen cylinders mean that deaths have increased, and [a number of humanitarian organizations](#) have issued warnings of the medical sector's inability to deal with the pandemic.

On September 10, the Salvation Government in northwestern Syria [announced](#) the postponement of the opening date for public and private schools, institutes and kindergartens, and the closure of all popular markets, swimming pools, playgrounds, wedding halls and amusement parks for a week, subject to extension, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus.

On September 15, the International Rescue Committee warned in a [press release](#) of the deteriorating health conditions in northwest Syria as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and called for commitment to the ceasefire, the protection of civilians, and action to tackle the shortage of health supplies to address the pandemic.

On September 29, Doctors Without Borders said in [a post on its official Facebook page](#), quoting the head of the MSF mission in Syria, Mr. Francisco Villar, that “the situation is serious in northwest Syria. COVID-19 is spreading rapidly, and health facilities are on the verge of collapse. More oxygen, corona test kits, and medical supplies are needed to keep hospitals running.”

As of September 30, a total of 27,845 coronavirus infection cases, including 932 deaths, had been announced by the [Health Authority](#) in the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria. We note that 7,356 cases of infection and 144 deaths were recorded in September.

As a result of the high rate of infections and deaths, especially in Deir Ez-Zour governorate, the Deir Ez-Zour Civil Council of the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria issued a decision on September 25 [imposing a complete](#) curfew in the areas under its control in the governorate from September 26 to October 1, then the [Executive Council](#) of the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria issued Resolution 321 of September 30, requiring a complete curfew in all areas under its control as part of measures to address the pandemic.

In regard to asylum, displacement and forced displacement:

On September 7, the [World Food Program](#) informed humanitarian organizations operating in northwestern Syria, via e-mail, that the size of the food rations had been reduced by one bottle of oil and one bag of bulgur from each portion, making the family share (consisting of five people) four liters of oil, 5.7 kg of bulgur, 5 kg of sugar, 15 kg of wheat flour, 7.5 kg of rice, 6 kg of red lentils, 6 kg of chickpeas and 1 kg of salt, as of October 2021, as the contents of the food basket were reduced. We note that this was not the first time that this measure has been taken, which negatively affected the beneficiaries as they depend on these baskets to secure food.

On September 17, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated [in a report](#) that the number of people in need of urgent assistance in order to face the winter season is about 2 million displaced people in Syria, and that 180,000 families need cash assistance to secure their basic needs. The UNHCR indicated that its operations for this year have so far received only 39% of the total funding required for Syria.

On September 25, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov claimed in a press conference held in New York following his participation in the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, that his country's use of force in [northwestern](#) Syria in conformity with the requirements contained in UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which provides for an uncompromising struggle against terrorism in Syria, adding that "unless specific measures are taken to unblock humanitarian aid deliveries through Damascus, his country will put an end to the cross-border aid delivery."

On September 5, the [Executive Council](#) of the Self-Management Authority of Northern and Eastern Syria handed over a number of children and women from ISIS families to a delegation from the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

On September 15, Syrian Democratic Forces allowed the eighteenth group¹ of IDPs to date, consisting of approximately 324 people from Raqqa governorate, to leave al Hawl Camp² and return to their villages and towns. We also monitored the continuation of killings in the camp, as in September, [we documented](#) the [deaths](#) of four civilians, including two women, at the hands of unknown gunmen, believed to be affiliated with ISIS cells. Since the beginning of 2021, we have documented the deaths of 69 civilians, including 10 children and 22 women, in al Hawl Camp at the hands of unidentified gunmen.

On September 19, the Washington Post reported that more than 70 people have been killed by ISIS militants in al Hawl Camp, [adding](#) that despite the security operations launched by Syrian Democratic Forces in al Hawl Camp in search of ISIS cells, this did not make a difference on the ground, with ISIS continuing to carry out assassinations against anyone who opposes its ideas.

On September 23, Save the Children [said](#) in a report that 62 children died of various causes in al Hawl Camp so far this year, i.e. approximately two children every week. The organization called on foreign governments that have citizens in the al Hawl and al Rouj camps to assume responsibility towards them, and to repatriate the children and their families to their countries of origin.

¹ Following the decision 146 issued by Syrian Democratic Forces' Self-Management Authority on October 10, 2020, allowing Syrians in the camp to leave after completing the necessary procedures

² A camp located east of Hasaka city, near the Iraqi-Syrian border, which houses nearly 60,000 people

On September 10, Amnesty International [called](#) on the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to stop plans to transfer refugees from al Rukban camp to areas controlled by Syrian regime forces, which would expose the returnees to the risk of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, and torture.

In Lebanon, the Director of Lebanese Public Security Major General Abbas Ibrahim confirmed, [in an interview with “The Cradle” website](#), that the Syrian regime arrested Syrian refugees upon their return from Lebanon to their country. Abbas added that embassies and international organizations assured them that Syrian regime forces had arrested and tortured refugees returning from Lebanon, and that the Syrian regime denied this when the Lebanese authorities contacted it.

On the political and human rights level:

On September 6, Amnesty International issued [a report entitled](#) “You’re going to your death”, which talked about numerous violations against refugees returning to areas under the control of the Syrian regime, noting that they were subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, enforced disappearance, extortion, and even cases of child rape. The report documented 66 cases, nearly half of whom were women and children, concluding that Syria is an unsafe country for the return of refugees, and recommending that all the world’s countries should not return Syrian refugees. The Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to this report by sharing data with Amnesty International, as well as sharing cases and context for many of the incidents mentioned in the report, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights being cited in it 7 times.

On September 13, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of [Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#) issued its thirtieth report on the situation in northwestern Syria, Ras al Ein and Tal Abyad. The report showed the deteriorating living conditions there, and stated that nine out of ten workers live below the poverty line.

On September 14, the report issued by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) warned of the continuation of violations in Syria, and accused Syrian regime forces of launching attacks on northwest Syria, referring specifically to the bombing of the al Atareb Hospital, the bombing of the Jabal al Zaweya area and the displacement of thousands of its people. [The report](#) also stressed the continuation of arbitrary arrests, and cited cases of killing under torture and enforced disappearance by the Syrian regime, in addition to speaking about the Syrian regime’s looting of housing and property, and mentioning the looting of lands through public auctions, as well as the regime forces’ continuing looting of

property under the pretext of supposedly fighting terrorism. The report also referred to the Syrian regime's obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery, and other egregious violations, as well as talking about the violations practiced by Hay'at Tahrir al Sham, the Syrian National Army and Syrian Democratic Forces, and stressed that Syria is not safe for the return of refugees, and it is not safe for IDPs. The Syrian Network for Human Rights contributed to this report as much as possible; although we had hoped that the violations of the Russian forces would also be referred to and that incidents in which they clearly violated international humanitarian law would be included, this did not happen.

On September 15, Martin Griffiths, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, said [in a briefing](#) to the Security Council that, "An estimated 13.4 million people across Syria require humanitarian assistance; a 21 per cent increase compared to the year before and the highest since 2017; he commented, "The lived reality is even more dire than figures can describe".

On September 15, The International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC) released its twelfth [annual report](#) on monitoring the use of cluster weapons worldwide, which concluded that Syria is the only country in the world to have experienced continued use of these weapons since 2012, revealing that the highest number of casualties documented to date in Syria was seen in 2020, with the record for this year (2020) in Syria alone representing more than half (52%) of all such casualties worldwide. The report also indicates that 44% of all these casualties were children and 24% were female; this confirms the seriousness of the remnants of these munitions and again underlines that Syria is an unsafe country for its residents, and a fortiori is not a safe place for the return of refugees or IDPs. The report explains that the Syrian regime is by far the main party responsible for using cluster munitions, adding that Russian and Syrian regime forces use many of the same aircraft and weapons and frequently carry out operations together. We note that the Syrian Network for Human Rights is a member of this international coalition and its main source of data for Syria, with SNHR issuing [a statement on this report](#).

On September 24, the [United Nations High](#) Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, announced that 350,209 people have been identified killed in the conflict in Syria between March 2011 to March 2021, including 26,727 women and 27,126 children, noting that the largest number of killings was recorded in Aleppo governorate, followed by Damascus Suburbs, Homs, Idlib, then Hama. This was in an oral update delivered to the Human Rights Council during the meetings of the forty-eighth session of the Council in Geneva. We welcome the return of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to work on the analysis of victims of the conflict in Syria, and observe that [the Syrian Network for Human Rights](#) is a primary source of victim data in all statistical analyzes issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On September 28, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, announced [in his briefing](#) to the UN Security Council that Syria's Constitutional Committee's Small Drafting Body will convene in Geneva as of 18 October, noting that the Syrian people desperately need a Syrian-led and owned political process to deliver.

On September 28, the British Guardian newspaper [said](#) that the Syrian regime is blackmailing Syrian citizens who are outside Syria to force them to pay a mandatory military service allowance, in order to collect huge sums of money to support its treasury.

On the course of advocacy and the pursuit of accountability:

On September 20, the [American Broadcasting Corporation](#) (ABC) reported that a Dutch court convicted two Syrian brothers of holding senior roles in the Jabhat al Nusra extremist group in Syria between 2011 and 2014, the first time Dutch judges have convicted a suspect of leadership in a Syrian extremist organization. One brother was sentenced to 15 years and nine months, the other to 11 years and nine months.

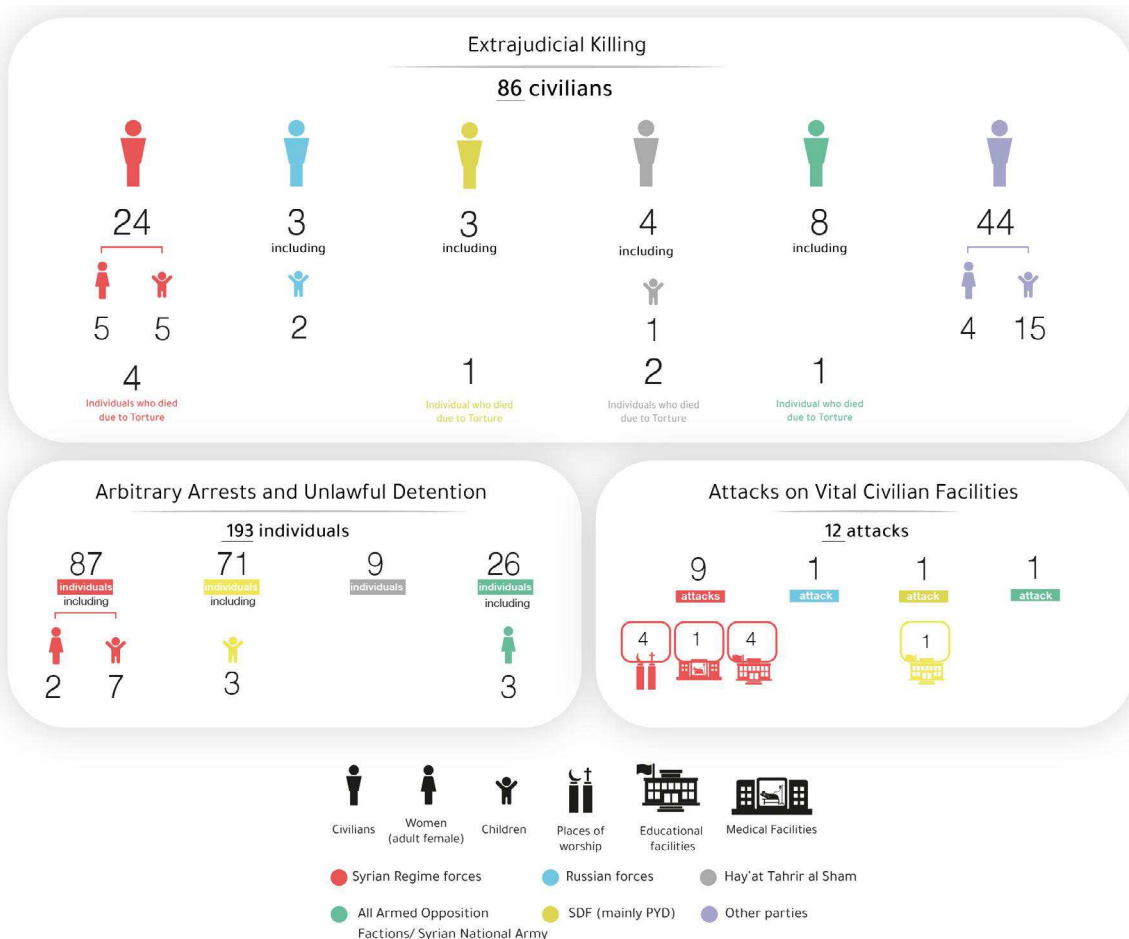
On September 21, the Syrian Network for Human Rights participated in a forum entitled 'The Assad Regime: Between Policy Variables and the Constants of Human Rights Condemnations', held by the Harmoon Center for Contemporary Studies. Discussions at the forum focused on changes seen in international policy towards the Syrian regime and attempts to normalize relations with it, even in tandem with the continued international and UN condemnation of human rights violations committed by the Syrian regime, as well as the policy of the Syrian regime in continuing to carry out arrests, enforced disappearances and torture, even in the absence of military operations against it. We issued a [statement](#) about this participation.

The date of September 30 marked the sixth anniversary of the start of Russia's military intervention in Syria, with the Syrian Network for Human Rights issuing a [report](#) on this anniversary, in which it outlined the most notable violations committed by these forces and their contribution to the side of the Syrian regime in regaining control over 65% of the area of land that had escaped the regime's control.

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

III. The Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in September:

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations that were documented by the SNHR in September 2021 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.



A. Extrajudicial killing:

In September 2021, SNHR documented the deaths of 86 civilians, including 23 children and nine women (adult female), the largest percentage of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. We also documented eight individuals who died due to torture. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed in September at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The death toll of civilian victims was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria as follows:

A. The main parties:

- **Syrian Regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias)³ :** 24 civilians, including five children and five women.
- **Russian forces:** three civilians, including two children.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham⁴ :** Four civilians, including one child.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** Eight civilians.
- **Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (the Democratic Union Party):** Three civilians.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 44 civilians, including 15 children and four women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- Landmines of unknown source: 10 civilians, including eight children.
- Gunfire of unknown source: 15 civilians, including three children.
- Bombings whose perpetrators have not yet been identified: Five civilians, including three children.
- Killings by unknown persons: 10 civilians, including four women.
- Turkish border guards: Four civilians, including one child.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance:

In September 2021, SNHR documented at least 193 cases of arbitrary arrests, including 10 children and five women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The largest number of arrests was carried out by Syrian regime forces in the governorates of Daraa then Aleppo. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the record of cases of arrests and enforced disappearances which we documented in September at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

The record of cases of arbitrary arrests was distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** 87, including seven children and two women.
- **Hay'at Tahrir al Sham:** Nine.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** 26, including three women.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 71, including three children.

³ We generally use the term 'the Syrian regime' rather than 'the Syrian government', because the nature of the ruling power in Syria is a totalitarian dictatorship based on ruling the nation in an authoritarian fashion through a very limited group of individuals, primarily the President of the Republic and his selected leaders of the security services, while the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, without any decision-making power or active role; this means that the government's role is wholly subordinate and limited to serving the regime, with all the main powers being concentrated in the hands of the President of the Republic and the security services. Governance in Syria is wholly decided by the autocratic authority of the ruling family and there is no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade there for show; the Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he nominally presides which are in turn under the command of the President, while the Minister of Justice cannot summon a civilian-level security agent other than the head of a security branch; the security branches, along with the president, are the true power and the governing regime in Syria. Although we acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies use the term 'the Syrian government' in general, we believe that this is a completely inaccurate and misleading term in the Syrian context.

⁴ The United Nations has designated it as a terrorist organization

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities:

In September 2021, SNHR documented at least 12 incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, 10 of which were at the hands of Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Among these attacks, we documented five on educational facilities, one on a medical facility, and four on places of worship.

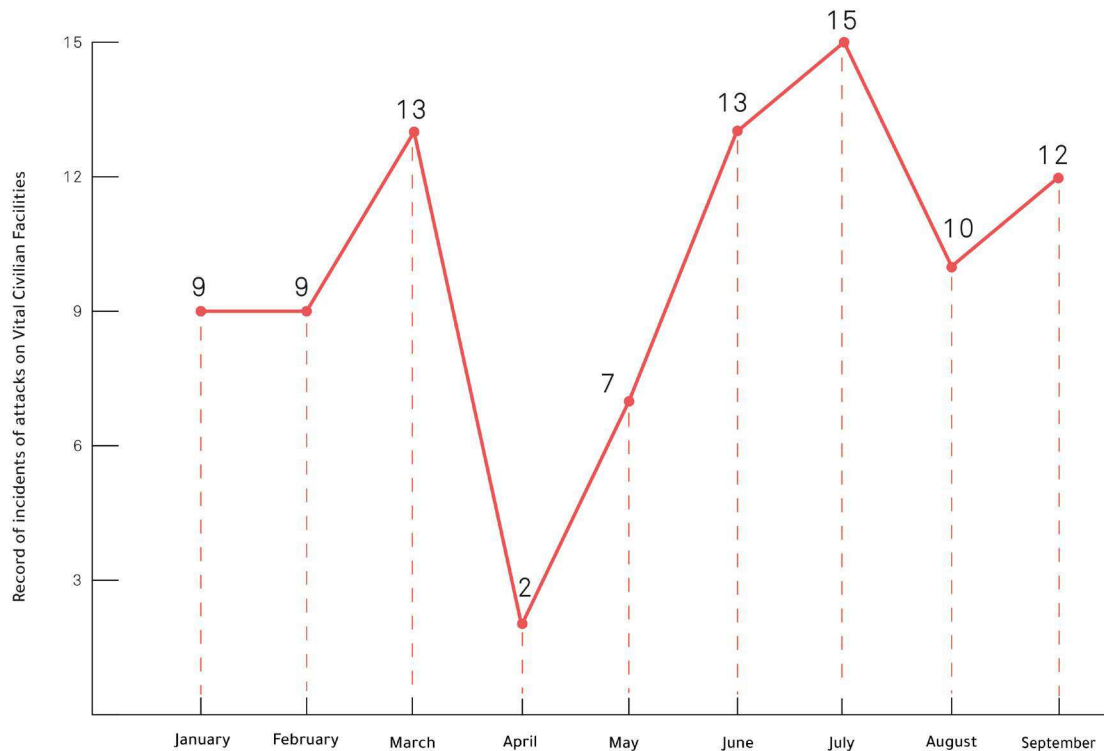
These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian Regime forces:** Nine, including one incident which are still under investigation, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for this attack being either Syrian regime forces or Russian Forces.
- **Russian forces:** One.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army:** One.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** One.

The record of attacks documented in September 2021 on vital civilian facilities was distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Perpetrator Party Attacked Facility	Syrian Regime forces	Russian forces	All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army	Syrian Democratic Forces
Places of Worship				
Mosques	4			
Vital Educational Facilities				
Schools	4			1
Vital Medical Facilities				
Medical Facilities	1			
Infrastructure				
Grain Silos			1	
IDP Camps				
IDP Camps		1		
Total	9	1	1	1

This shows that the record of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented since the start of 2021 up to October of the same year at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria has now reached 90 in total, distributed monthly as follows:



The chart above shows that September saw the fourth highest number of attacks on vital civilian facilities since the beginning of 2021, with this month accounting for 13.33% of the total, after July, March and June, respectively.

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

On Thursday, September 2, 2021, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a number of shells at Ein Larouz village in Jabal al Zaweya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. One of the shells fell near the Rasem al Omar complex, which contains two buildings, one a Preparatory School and one a Secondary School, within the same boundary wall, [partially damaging](#) its [perimeter fence](#), as well as [causing minor material damage](#) to its [furnishings](#). Ein Larouz village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, September 5, 2021, Syrian regime forces used a missile launcher to target [al Omari Mosque](#) in Daraa al Balad area in Daraa city, [partially damaging](#) its [structure](#), as [well as causing moderate material damage](#) to its [furnishings](#). The area is militarily subject to control by armed opposition fighters under the terms of a Russian local agreement with them.

On Tuesday, September 7, 2021, fixed-wing warplanes, which we believe were Russian, [fired missiles](#) that landed near Mariam IDP Camp in the southwestern outskirts of Ma'aret Misreen town in the northern suburbs of Idlib governorate, injuring a number of civilians, including children, [and causing moderate material damage](#) to [several tents](#). 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.



An attempt to retrieve an injured female child from under the rubble following a Russian air attack on Mariam IDP Camp, Idlib - September 7, 2021

On Wednesday, September 8, 2021, Jabal al Zaweya' medical center, which was known as the Mar'yan Medical center located in Mar'yan village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was subject to a ground attack with two shells whose source SNHR hasn't yet been able to identify as of this writing, with the primary parties suspected of responsibility for the attack being Russian or Syrian regime forces, since the shelling emanated from an area controlled by them. The investigation process is still underway to specifically identify the party responsible for the attack.

The attack resulted in casualties, as well as severely damaging [the medical center's structure](#), and [causing significant material damage](#) to [its equipment](#) and [supplies](#). As a result, the center was [put out of service](#). Mar'yan village was under the joint control of factions of the Armed Opposition and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham at the time of the incident.



On Saturday, September 25, 2021, Syrian regime forces fired a guided missile at the Ibrahim al Khalil Mosque in al Wasata area near al Atareb city in the western suburbs of Aleppo governorate, partially damaging the mosque's structure, as well as causing moderate material damage to its furnishings. 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.

On the evening of Saturday, September 25, 2021, Syrian National Army artillery forces fired a number of shells at Um al Keif village, which is administratively a part of Tal Tamer town in the northwestern suburbs of Hasaka governorate, with one of the shells landing near the building housing the village's silos, causing moderate material damage to the building's structure. Um al Keif village was under the control of Syrian Democratic Forces at the time of the incident.

IV. Attachments:

[\(1\) Extrajudicial Killing Claims the Lives of 86 Civilians, Including 23 Children, Nine Women, and Eight Victims Due to Torture, in Syria in September 2021](#)

[\(2\) 193 Arbitrary Arrests/ Detentions Documented in Syria in September 2021, Including 10 Children and Five Women](#)

V. Conclusions and Recommendations:

Conclusions:

- The evidence we have gathered indicates that attacks continue to be directed against civilians and civilian objects. Syrian-Russian alliance forces have committed various crimes, including extrajudicial killings, arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. In addition, the indiscriminate bombardment and other attacks carried out caused the destruction of facilities and buildings. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the war crime of attacking civilians has been committed in many cases.
- The Syrian government has not only violated international humanitarian law and customary law, but has also breached a number of UN Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2139, resolution 2042 on the release of detainees, and resolution 2254, all without any accountability.
- We could find no record of any warnings being issued by the Syrian Regime or Russian forces prior to any attack under the requirements of international humanitarian law. This has been the case since the beginning of the popular uprising for freedom, providing another blatant demonstration of these forces' total disregard for the lives of civilians in Syria.
- The magnitude and frequency of the violations, the disproportionate use of military force, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks lead to the inescapable conclusion that these acts are wholly deliberate and based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.
- The indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment carried out by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces is considered to be a clear violation of international humanitarian law, with indiscriminate killings amounting to war crimes.
- Hay'at Tahrir al Sham has violated international humanitarian law, causing the death of many civilians, as well as damage to vital civilian facilities.
- All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army violated UN Security Council Resolution 2139 through carrying out attacks that are considered to violate customary international humanitarian law, causing civilian casualties or accidental injuries.
- All the attacks documented in this report, particularly bombings, caused massive collateral damage that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damage to civilian objects. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The use of explosive arms to target densely populated areas reflects a criminal and wholly deliberate mindset, with the perpetrators clearly intending to inflict the greatest possible number of deaths, which is a clear contravention of international human rights law and a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention (arts. 27, 31, 32).

Recommendations:**UN Security Council**

- The Security Council must take additional steps following its adoption of Resolution 2254, which clearly insists that “ all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such.”
- The Syrian issue should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible for violations should be held accountable, while Russia must stop using the veto, as it is a party to the Syrian conflict, and the UNSC states' veto power should be withheld when crimes against humanity and war crimes are committed.
- Ensure peace and security and implement the principle of responsibility to protect civilians' lives and to save the Syrian people's heritage and historical artifacts from destruction, looting and vandalism.
- The Security Council should adopt a resolution banning the use of cluster munitions and landmines in Syria, similar to the existing prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and include advice on how to safely remove the remnants of such dangerous weapons.
- The four other permanent member states should put pressure on the Russian government to end its support for the Syrian regime, which uses chemical weapons, and to expose its involvement in this regard.
- Request that all relevant United Nations agencies make greater efforts to provide food, medical and humanitarian assistance in areas where fighting has ceased, and in internally displaced person camps, and to follow-up with those States that have pledged voluntary contributions.

International Community

- In light of the split within the Security Council and its utter inability to take any effective action, action should be taken on the national and regional levels to form alliances to support the Syrian people by protecting them from daily killing and by lifting sieges, as well as by increasing support for relief efforts. Additionally, the principle of universal jurisdiction should be enacted in local courts regarding these crimes in order to conduct fair trials for all those who were involved.
- SNHR has repeatedly called for the implementation of the 'Responsibility to Protect' in dozens of studies and reports and as a member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect (ICRtoP) after all political channels through the Arab League's plan and then Mr. Kofi Annan's plan have proved fruitless, along with the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps should be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, while the norm of the 'Responsibility to Protect', which was established by the United Nations General Assembly, should be implemented. The Security Council is still hindering the protection of civilians in Syria.

- Renew pressure on the Security Council to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
- Work on fulfilling justice and achieving accountability in Syria through the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council and to activate the principle of universal jurisdiction.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

- The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents mentioned in this report and previous reports since these attacks were perpetrated by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces.

Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI)

- Launch investigations into the cases included in this report and previous reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide further evidence and data.
- Focus on the issue of landmines and cluster munitions within the next report.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

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

The United Nations Special Envoy to Syria

- Condemn the perpetrators of crimes and massacres, and those who were primarily responsible for dooming the de-escalation agreements.
- Re-sequence the peace process so that it can resume its natural course despite Russia's attempts to divert and distort it, empowering the Constitutional Committee prior to the establishment of a transitional governing body.

The Syrian regime

- Stop indiscriminate shelling and targeting of residential areas, hospitals, schools and markets, and end the use of outlawed weapons and barrel bombs.
- Ensure compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and customary humanitarian law.

The Russian regime

- Launch investigations into the incidents included in this report, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold those responsible accountable.
- Compensate all the damaged centers and facilities, rebuild and rehabilitate them, and compensate all the families of victims who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as all the wounded.

- Completely cease the bombing of hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect customary international law.
- As a guarantor party in Astana talks, the Russian regime must stop thwarting de-escalation agreements, and apply pressure on the Syrian regime in order to end all indiscriminate attacks and to allow unconditional passage of humanitarian aid to besieged areas.

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

- The states supporting the SDF should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns under their control.
- Syrian Democratic Forces must immediately stop conscripting children, hold the officers involved in such violations accountable, and pledge to return all children who have been arrested for conscription immediately.

All Armed Opposition factions/ Syrian National Army

- The Armed Opposition/ the Syrian National Army must ensure the protection of civilians in all areas under their control. These forces should also take care to distinguish between civilians and military targets and cease any indiscriminate attacks.
- Take punitive action against those who commit violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian Organizations

- Develop urgent operational plans to secure decent shelter for internally displaced persons.
- Provide protected facilities and vehicles, such as medical facilities, schools, and ambulances, with distinctive signs that can be distinguished from long distances.

Acknowledgments

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www.snhr.org - info@sn4hr.org