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No Fewer than Eight Massacres Documented in Syria in November 2018

Including Six at the Hands of
International Coalition Forces



SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Thursday, December 6, 2018

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

Since the popular uprising for freedom started in Syria in March 2011, SNHR has taken it upon itself to record a wide range of violations that are being perpetrated daily against the Syrian people, such as killing, enforced-disappearance, arbitrary arrest, destruction, indiscriminate bombardment, and torture as SNHR shed light on the most notable violations it recorded that were committed by the parties to the conflict in Syria in hundreds of reports. The Syrian regime, and its militias, were the only perpetrators of violations at the start of the popular uprising, and they remain the main perpetrators, as the Syrian regime is responsible for the majority of violations. Subsequently, other parties emerged gradually such as the armed opposition, extremist Islamic groups, Democratic Union Party forces, international coalition forces, and Russian forces.

The first two years of the popular uprising saw the largest portion of ethnic and sectarian cleansing massacres, where the Syrian regime and its militias were responsible for the majority of these massacres. In mid-2013, Syrian regime forces started relying heavily on warplanes and they were also used later by international coalition forces and Russian forces. The wide use of aerial bombardment doubled the numbers of victims and caused huge destruction to the infrastructure, as one or two new massacres at least are recorded almost every day.

The Syrian regime used improvised weapons, such as barrel bombs, to bomb the areas that are out of its control while Russian forces used more deadly weapons, relying more on bunker-buster missiles, incendiary ammunitions, and cluster munitions.

Also, we have recorded in our database tens of massacres that were perpetrated by extremist Islamic groups and factions from the armed opposition. In addition, we've monitored



massacres by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which are backed by the international coalition forces' air force, where we have recorded a significant rise in the rate of massacres perpetrated by the coalition (international coalition - SDF) since the end of 2016.

Methodology

This report records the massacres perpetrated by the parties to the conflict in Syria in November that SNHR team was able to document. This report also sheds light on the most notable massacres. We have the details of the complete incidents stored in SNHR's database. The term "massacre" refers to any attack that resulted in the killing of five peaceful individuals or more in the same attack.

This report draws upon the ongoing monitoring of news and development by SNHR team, and on an extensive network of relations with tens of various sources that have been built over the course of our work. When we receive information, or hear some news about a violation via the internet or media outlets, we work on following on this news and try to verify and collect evidences and data. In some cases, the researcher is able to visit the incident location at the soonest. However, this is a rarity in light of the incredibly high security risks, and given the frequency of daily incidents and the limited human and material resources. Therefore, the possibility to access evidences vary from one case to another, and, hence, the degree of its classification. Usually, what we do, at SNHR, in such cases is relying on accounts from survivors who experienced the violation firsthand, where we try to access those directly, and, to a second degree, who saw or filmed the violation.

This report contains two accounts that we've collected through speaking directly to eyewitnesses, and are not cited from any open sources. We have explained the purpose of these interviews for the eyewitnesses who gave us permission to use the information they provided without offering or giving them any incentives. Also, SNHR tried to spare the eyewitnesses the agony of remembering the violation as much as possible, and gave insurances to conceal the identity of any witness who preferred to use an alias.

All of the attacks included in this report have targeted civilian areas. We didn't identify any military presence or armories during the attacks or even before it. Additionally, the forces that attacked civilians didn't put out a warning prior to their attacks as the international humanitarian law requires.



SNHR has analyzed videos and pictures that were posted online, or were sent by local activists via e-mail, Skype, or social media. Some of the videos showed victims of attacks in which missiles and mines were used, while most victims were children and women. We always make sure to store this data with its respective source. Nonetheless, we can't claim that we have documented all cases in light of the ban and pursuit by Syrian regime forces as well as other armed groups.

Please see SNHR methodology for [documenting victims](#).

This report only represents the bare minimum of the actual magnitude and severity of the violation that occurred. It also doesn't cover the social, economic, and mental ramifications.

II. November Outline:

November saw an increase in the number of massacres compared to the previous three months, with the second half of the month seeing an escalation in the bombing by Syrian regime forces in the Idlib de-escalation zone. We also noted a continued escalation of attacks by the international coalition forces in the areas controlled by the ISIS in Deir Ez-Zour governorate for the second consecutive month.

The massacres committed in November resulted in the death of 54 children (60 percent of the total civilian casualties), including 39 children killed in Deir Ez-Zour by international coalition forces.

III. Executive Summary

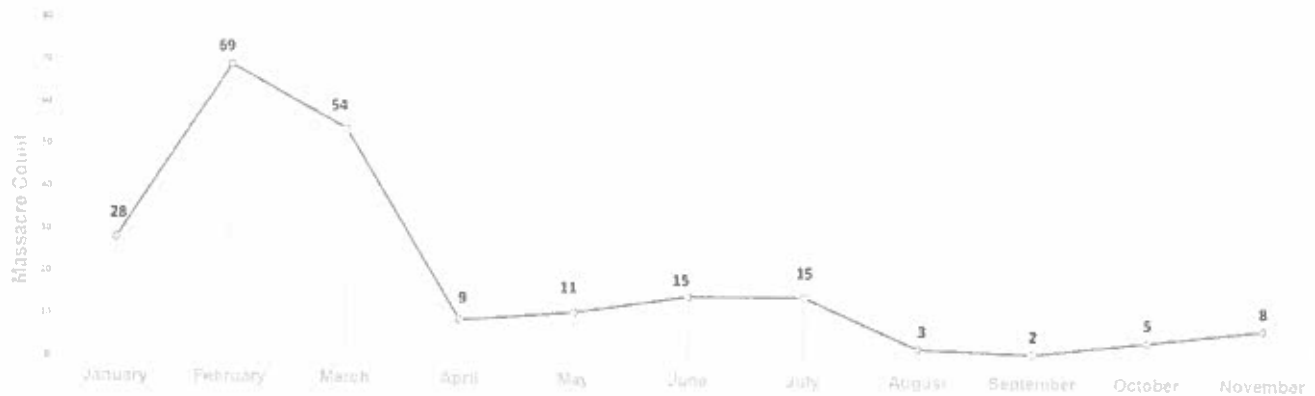
A. Toll of massacres since the start of 2018

SNHR documented eight massacres at the hands of the parties to the conflict in Syria between the start of 2018 and December of the same year. Massacres are distributed by month as follows:





No less than 219 massacres in Syria since the start of 2018



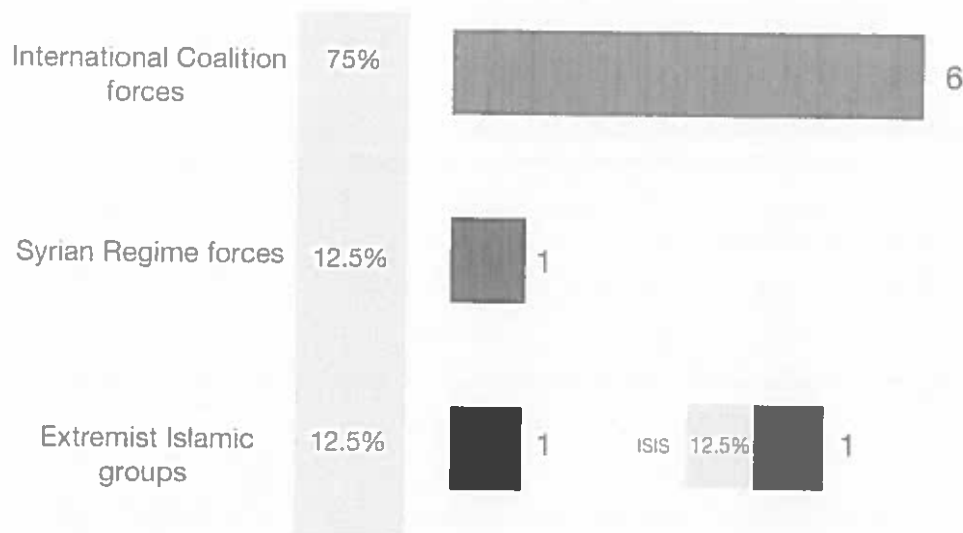
December 1, 2018

As documented by SNHR

B. Massacres in November

SNHR has documented no fewer than eight massacres in November, distributed as follows:

No less than 8 massacres in Syria in November 2018



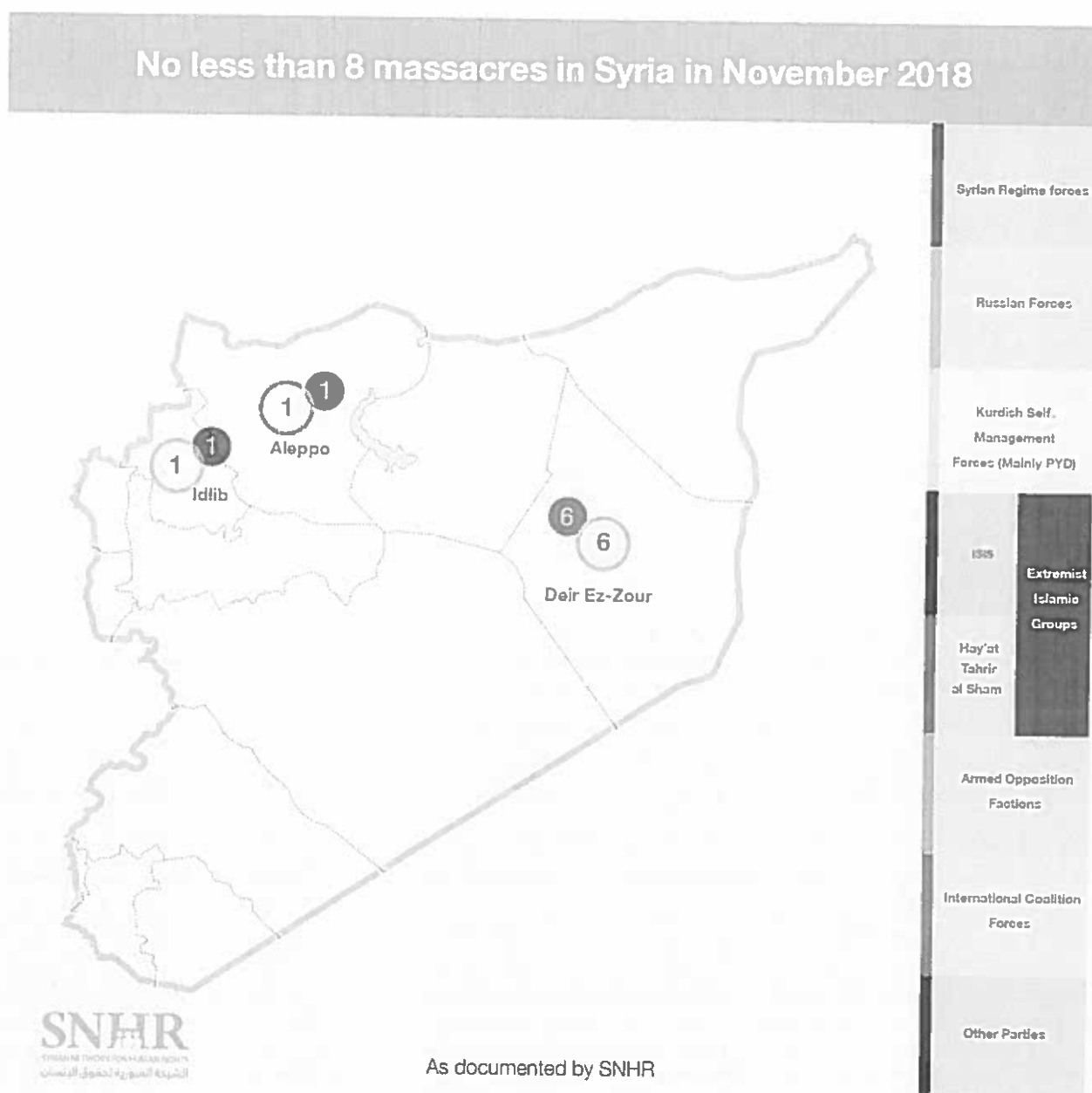
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- A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): 1
- B. Extremist Islamic groups:
 - ISIS (the self-proclaimed Islamic State): 1
- C- International coalition forces

The following map shows the distribution of November's massacres across Syrian governorates by the parties to the conflict



According to the victim documentation team at SNHR, the massacres documented this month resulted in the deaths of 86 civilians, including 51 children and 19 women (adult female). This means that 82 percent of all victims were women and children, a significantly high percentage, and an indication that civilian residents were specifically targeted in most of these massacres.

Death toll of these massacres is distributed by the perpetrator party as follows:

A. Syrian regime forces: Nine civilians, including seven children (four males and three females), and two women.

B. Extremist Islamic groups:

- ISIS: Five children (three males and two females)

C. International coalition forces: 72 civilians, including 39 children and 17 women.

IV. Details of the Most Notable Massacres in November

A. Syrian regime forces (army, security, local militias, and Shiite foreign militias): Idlib governorate:

Jarjanaz town, Saturday, November 24, 2018:

Jarjanaz town, which is administratively a part of Ma'aret al Noman situated to the east of the town, is located in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate. It has a population of around 30,000, including some 5,000 displaced people from the suburbs of Idlib and the eastern suburbs of Hama. The town is under the joint control of armed opposition factions and Hay'at Tahrir al Sham.

On March 31, 2012, Syrian regime forces carried out raids on Jarjanaz during a military campaign launched from Wadi Al-Daif camp, before retreating from it two days later. The town also saw heavy ground and aerial bombardments over the past years. In late 2017, military operations by forces of the Syrian-Russian alliance against the eastern region of Idlib forced all residents of the town to flee to areas in Ma'aret an-Nu'man and the northern suburbs of Idlib, following heavy shelling and massacres perpetrated in the town. However, most of the families returned to the town recently.

On Saturday, November 24, 2018, Syrian regime forces stationed at Abu Dali village in Idlib governorate northeastern suburbs, used missile launchers to fire a number of missiles, three of which landed adjacent to al Khansaa School, next to the Teacher Training Institute, in the southern parts of Jarjanaz, during school hours. The shelling resulted in the death of nine civilians (seven children - four males and three females, all school students - and two women), in addition to the injury of one Civil Defense rescue worker, who was at the site to rescue victims.



Location of Syrian regime ground offensive in Jarjanaz town, eastern Idlib suburbs, which resulted in a massacre in November 24, 2018.



As documented by SNHR



SNHR contacted Mustafa Hamdo al Dghaim¹, a teacher at the Teacher Training Institute in the town of Jarjanaz, who told us that a rocket landed with a very loud explosion in the residential neighborhood about 800 meters away from the institute, while Mustafa was lecturing in one of the halls adjacent to al Khansaa School: **“We sent all the students of the Institute, the majority of whom are residents of the surrounding villages in the region, down to the ground floor, then a second strike followed. The sound of the explosion was stronger and closer to the institute. Here, several cars arrived to inspect the bombing site when a third explosion was heard in the same area. After the shelling stopped, I left the institute, and I saw wounded people about 30 meters from the institute. I was told that the medical teams moved the bodies of three women and three students, who were killed by the shelling after they left the school after the first missile fell.**

Mustafa added that the main damage was caused by the second and third missiles at a location near the school: **“I have not witnessed such missiles before. The explosion was stronger than the artillery strikes, and their effects were too large and unfamiliar,”** he said.

Abdul Sattar al Taweel², the director of the Telmennes Civil Defense Center, told us that Syrian regime forces targeted the southern neighborhood of the Jarjanaz town with four heavy missiles fired from a missile launcher: **“The Civil Defense was directed to the site of the shelling because that was where the casualties and injuries had fallen. We arrived at the site right after the shelling, and we moved the dead bodies of three children and two women, and a number of the injured to hospitals and medical points near the town “.** He added that a missile fell near the civil defense team while the team was conducting its search and rescue operations, which injured a member of the civil defense with shrapnel from the missile, and fragments hit a pickup-style vehicle belonging to the team. Abdul Sattar said that the four missiles fell in a row, around 50 meters apart from each other.

B. Extremist Islamic groups

- ISIS:

Aleppo governorate:

Tal al Hawa village, Saturday, November 24, 2018

A landmine planted by ISIS in Tal al Hawa village in Al-Ra'ie town in the northern suburbs of Aleppo governorate before they withdrew from it, exploded, resulting in the deaths of five children (three males and two females) from one family. The village was under the control of armed opposition factions at the time of the incident.

¹ Via WhatsApp in November 24, 2018

² Via WhatsApp in November 24, 2018



C. International coalition forces:

Deir Ez-Zour governorate:

In Hajin city, two massacres committed by international coalition forces:

Hajin city is located in Deir Ez-Zour eastern suburbs, about 110 km away from the center of Deir Ez-Zour, and is one of the largest cities in the region. It has a population of about 50,000 and is currently under the control of ISIS, being the largest urban settlement still under ISIS control in terms of size.

In late 2012, armed opposition factions took control of the city, which remained under their control until mid-2014, when they withdrew following fighting against ISIS that ended with the latter seizing control of it until today.

The city saw military campaigns by Syrian regime forces after it broke free of the regime's control up until ISIS seized control of the area, when international coalition forces aircraft launched air raids on the city in support of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on the ground under the pretext of eradicating ISIS.

The recent military campaign by the coalition forces (the international coalition forces and the SDF), launched five months ago, killed dozens of civilians and caused major destruction in the city, forcing most of its residents to move to neighboring areas that aren't controlled by ISIS.

Al Sousa town:

Al Sousa town is administratively a part of al Boukamal region in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, and is located about 130 km from the center of Deir Ez-Zour. It has a population of about 30,000 people.

In late 2012, armed opposition factions took control of the town, which remained under their control until mid-2014, when ISIS launched an offensive against the area that resulted in its seizing control of the town until the time of this writing.

The town saw military campaigns launched by Syrian regime forces after it broke free of regime control up until ISIS took control of the region, when international coalition forces aircraft launched raids on the town in support of the SDF forces on the ground on the pretext of eradicating ISIS.

The recent military campaign by the alliance forces (SDF and international coalition forces), launched five months ago, has killed dozens of civilians and forced most of the residents to flee to neighboring areas that aren't under the control of ISIS.

On Thursday, November 15, 2018, at around 05.30, wing-fixed international coalition war-planes fired a number of missiles at al Boubadran neighborhood in the town, which resulted in the death of 18 civilians, including 14 children (nine females and five males), and three women, all of whom were members of one family of IDPs who had been displaced from al Bagouz, which is administratively a part of al Boukamal.



Abu Hasan village:

Abu al Hasan village - known as the village of al Baq'an Jazeera - is administratively a part of Hajin city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour. It has a population of about 7,000.

In late 2012, armed opposition factions took control of the village, which remained under their control until mid-2014, when ISIS launched an offensive against the area that resulted in its seizing control of the town until the time of this writing.

The recent military campaign by the alliance forces (SDF and international coalition forces), launched five months ago, has killed dozens of civilians and forced most of the residents to flee to neighboring areas that aren't under the control of ISIS.

Saturday, November 17, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at the village, which resulted in the death of 21 civilians, most of whom were members of one family, including 12 children and three women.

Two massacres committed in al Sh'afa city by international coalition forces:

Al Sh'afa city is administratively a part of al Boukamal area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, and is located about 120 km away from the center of the area. It has a population of about 40,000 people.

In late 2012, armed opposition factions took control of the city, which remained under their control until mid-2014, when they withdrew after fighting against ISIS, which ended with the latter seizing control of the city until today.

The city saw aerial bombardment campaigns by Syrian regime and Russian-allied aircraft from the period after it broke free of regime control up until ISIS imposed control of the region. Thereafter, aircraft of the international coalition forces launched airstrikes against the village in support of SDF ground forces under the pretext of eradicating ISIS.

The recent military campaign by the alliance forces (SDF and international coalition forces), launched five months ago, has killed dozens of civilians and forced most of the residents to flee to neighboring areas that aren't under the control of ISIS.

On Thursday, November 22, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at the city, which resulted in the deaths of six civilians, including four children and one woman, all of whom were members of one family of IPDs displaced from al Qaryatein in Homs governorate eastern suburbs.

On Thursday, November 29, 2018, fixed-wing international coalition warplanes fired a number of missiles at al Yarmouk Women's Hospital in the 'Twenty-Four' neighborhood, which resulted in the deaths of 10 civilians, including three children and five women; these are the deaths we have been able to document until the time of this writing.





V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Syrian regime and Russian forces

- The Syrian-Russian alliance has, beyond any doubt, violated Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2254 which both state that indiscriminate attacks must be ceased. Also, the Syrian and Russian regimes have violated Article 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute through acts of willful killing which constitute war crimes.
- We can confirm that the incidents of bombardment mentioned in this report targeted defenseless civilians. Therefore, Syrian and Russian forces have violated the rules of international human rights law which guarantee the right to life. Additionally, these violations were perpetrated in a non-international armed conflict which means they amount to war crimes, fulfilling all the criteria for this categorization.



- The attacks mentioned in this report that were carried out by the Syrian and Russian regimes, are considered a violation of customary international law as the shells were fired at populated areas rather than specific military objects.
- Aerial bombardment caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civil facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that this damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.
- The magnitude and frequency of the massacres, the exaggerated use of power, the indiscriminate manner of the bombing, and the coordinated approach of these attacks leads to the conclusion that they must be based on high-level orders, and as such constitute a part of state policy.

The Coalition (international coalition and SDF)

The attacks by Coalition forces have caused collateral damages that involved loss of lives, injuries, or significant damages to civilian facilities. There are strong indicators suggesting that the damage was excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit.

Other forces

ISIS has perpetrated massacres, according to this report, that constitute war crimes. However, we don't believe that these massacres qualify as crimes against humanity, as with the Syrian regime and pro-regime forces who perpetrate massacres in a systematic and widespread manner.

Conclusions

Security Council

- The Security Council must take additional steps after resolution 2139 and 2254 were adopted, and no pledges to cease the indiscriminate bombing have been made. All parties to the conflict should respect these steps, and adhere to the rules of the international humanitarian law.
- The Syrian case should be referred to the International Criminal Court and all those who are responsible should be held accountable including the Russian regime whose involvement in war crimes has been proven.
- Expand sanctions to include the Syrian and Iranian regimes who are directly involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.



- List the militias who are fighting on the side of the Syrian government and had committed wide massacres - such as Iranian militias, the Lebanese group Hezbollah, other Shiite groups, the National Defense Army, and Shabiha, on the international list of terrorist groups.
- Abstain from considering the Syrian government an official side after it perpetrated crimes against humanity with regard to the relief aspect, and stop giving it the largest portion of financial and other aids as they are being delivered to the people who support the Syrian government instead of people who are truly in-need.

International community

- In light of the split of 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 that would protect them from daily killing and siege, while support for the relief efforts should be increased. 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 tens 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 been brought out as well as the Cessation of Hostilities statements and Astana agreements that followed. Therefore, steps under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations should be taken and 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 the 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 work on activating the principle of the universal jurisdiction.

OHCHR

The OHCHR should submit a report to the Human Rights Council and other organs of the United Nations on the incidents included in this report and the massacres that preceded, given that they are a glaring mark in a string of daily sporadic massacres of a smaller scope. Also, the OHCHR should work on implementing the recommendations in this report.



Commission of Inquiry (COI)

Launch investigations on the cases included in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM)

Address the cases mentioned in this report and past reports. SNHR is willing to cooperate and provide more evidences and data.

European Union and United States of America

Support the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism that was established in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 71/248, adopted on December 21, 2016. And establish local tribunals that enjoy a universal jurisdiction, and address the war crimes that were perpetrated in Syria.

Russian regime

- Launch investigations regarding the incidents that resulted in civilian casualties, make the findings of these investigations public for the Syrian people, and hold the people involved accountable.
- Compensate all affected facilities and centers, and reconstruct and rehabilitate them. Also, compensate all the victims' families, who were killed by the current Russian regime, as well as the all the wounded.
- Immediately cease bombing hospitals, protected objects, and civilian areas, and respect the customary international humanitarian law.

The Coalition (international coalition forces and Syrian Democratic Forces)

- The states of the coalition have to unequivocally and truly acknowledge that some of the bombardment operations have resulted in the killing of innocent civilians. Instead of denying, these states should take speedy steps to launch serious investigations, and immediately compensate and apologize to the victims and those who were affected.
- The SDF-supporting states should apply pressure on these forces in order to compel them to cease all of their violations in all the areas and towns that are under their control.
- All forms of support, weapons and otherwise, should be ceased until SDF commit to the previous recommendations. This is primarily the supporting states' responsibility. Providing SDF with weapons and support while knowing that they can be used in war crimes or crimes against humanity can be seen as a contribution to these crimes.



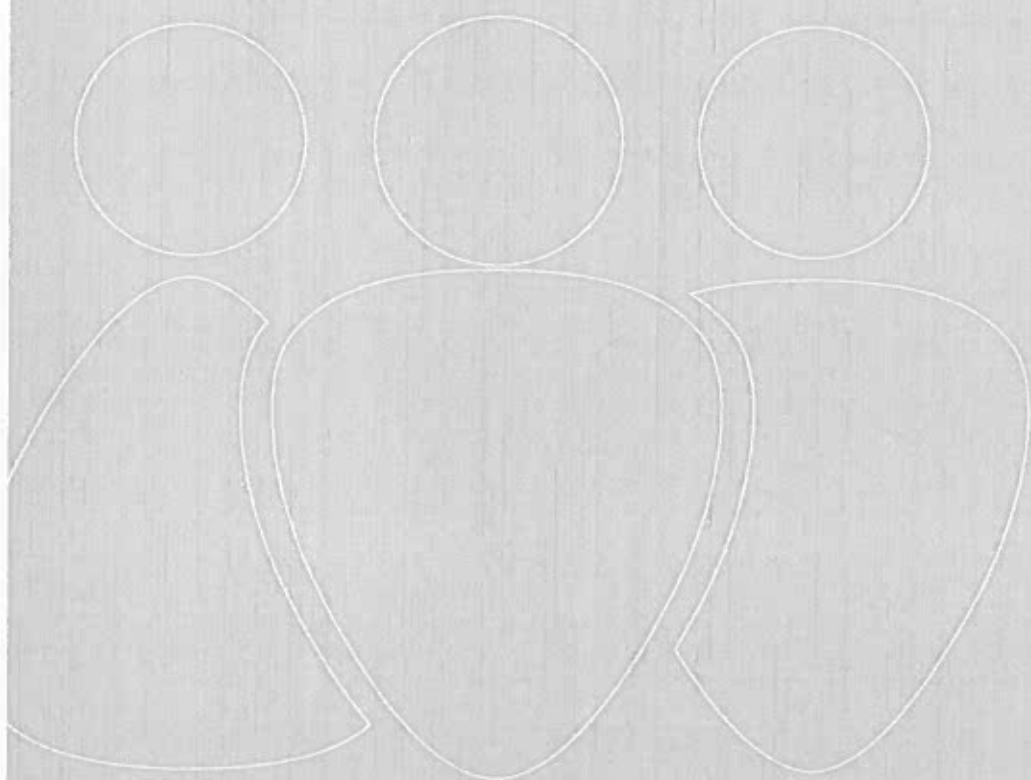
Armed opposition factions

Ensure the protection of civilians in all of their areas of control. Also, armed opposition factions should distinguish between civilians and military targets, and cease any indiscriminate attacks.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

Our thanks to the residents, victims' families, eyewitnesses, and local community activists who contributed effectively to this report. Also, our most heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and friends.





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