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Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October 2022

**Repatriating Syrian Refugees from Their Asylum Countries
Endangers Their Lives: Syria is Still Unsafe for Refugees' Return**

Saturday 05 November 2022

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 analyzes 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 August 2022, 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. Brief on October's Most Notable Developments

Bombings and military operations

In October, Syrian regime forces continued with their artillery attacks targeting Idlib in northwestern Syria. The bombardment seems to have been concentrated on the villages and towns of Jabal al-Zawiya in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate and in western Aleppo governorate, and Sahl al-Ghab in western Hama governorate. These areas are all close to the contact lines with armed opposition factions. In addition, a number of towns and villages in the western suburbs of Aleppo and southern suburbs of Idlib, which are distant from contact lines, were the target of land attacks by Syrian regime forces. One of those attacks, on October 10, [killed a child and wounded his mother](#) in al-Abzemou town, western Aleppo. Another attack on the same day that targeted an IDP camp, located in [Kafr Karmin village](#) in western Aleppo, resulted in moderate damages to multiple tents, with dozens of families fleeing the area. We also recorded the Syrian regime's targeting of a number of villages and towns in the area close to contact lines with anti-armor missiles. One of these attacks, on October 6, [killed a civilian](#) and wounded others when Syrian regime force fired a guided missile at a lumberyard near al-Zaitouna village in the Jabal al-Turkman area of northern Latakia governorate. Furthermore, [two children](#) were wounded on October 20 in another attack by Syrian regime forces who fired a guided missile at a car full of civilians returning from olive picking in agricultural lands, located in Majdaliya village in southern Idlib.



Damages to a civilian car in Majdaliya village, Idlib in the aftermath of an attack by Syrian regime forces using an anti-armor missile, October 20, 2022

In October, the areas controlled by the Syrian National Army (SNA) in the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo were the target of land attacks that involved the use of artillery and guided anti-armor missile by Syrian regime forces and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The attacks were concentrated in the contact lines and the nearby areas on the outskirts of the cities of Izaz, Marea, al-Bab, and Jarablos, causing a human death toll.

Russian forces also continued with their aerial attacks in October. As previously, the attacks took place in the northwestern areas of Syria, where both civilian and military areas were targeted, mostly in the Ariha area of southern Idlib, as well as in villages and towns in the southern and western suburbs of Idlib. An aerial attack on October 11 targeting al-Shkhieb village, western Idlib, caused [massive destruction to a chicken farm](#).

October also saw intensive rounds of infighting among SNA factions in the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo, that also involved Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The clashes began following al-Failaq al-Thaleh's takeover of the strongholds of Ferqat al-Hamza, also known as 'al-Hamzat' (a SNA faction) in al-Bab city on October 11. HTS took advantage of the infighting to carry out a wide-ranging offensive in the hopes of taking territories from armed opposition factions, primarily targeting al-Failaq al-Thaleth (the Third Division) and the al-Jabha al-Wataniya Lel Tahrir and Bina (the National Front for Liberation), two SNA factions. SNHR released [a statement](#) on October 18, in which it warned of the potential ramifications of HTS's expansion and its provision of any support for the group.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also continued with their land attacks on the northern and eastern suburbs of Aleppo in October. An attack on October 6 resulted in the killing of [two civilians](#) in artillery shelling by SDF personnel, who fired three shells which landed on a bank of the Euphrates River, near Jarablos city to the east of Aleppo. On October 18, SDF artillery fired a guided missile that targeted a civilian car carrying workers at al-Hamran crossing that separates the territories of the SNA and SDF in the suburbs of Jarablos, wounding six workers and moderately damaging the car. The area around Kuwait al-Rahma, located in Jabal al-Ahlam area in the suburbs of Afrin city, was also subjected to SDF attacks throughout the month involving rocket launchers and mortar shells, which spread fear among the residents, many of whom opted to flee to safer areas.

In mid-October, the villages of Sh'aitat, eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, saw clashes among a number of tribes spurred by personal vendettas. These clashes, involving the use of light and medium weapons, resulted in the death of five civilians and the burning of multiple houses. Currently, the security situation in the area is volatile, with tribes having access to weapons, while the SDF fails to act to put an end to the clashes that break out on a daily basis.

As for bombings, we recorded a number of IED bombings in October, which took place in the governorates of Homs, Daraa, and Hasaka. Notably, an IED planted under a car in Talbisa city, Homs [killed the head of the municipality](#) on October 17.

More civilians were [killed by landmines in October](#) across multiple areas in Syria. Those deaths were concentrated in the governorates of Hama, Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, Deir Ez-Zour, and Hasaka. In October, five civilians, including two children, were killed by landmines, increasing the 2022 death toll from landmines to 117 civilians, including 61 children and nine women.

Meanwhile, [assassinations of civilians](#) by unidentified gunmen continued in October. These assassinations took place in multiple Syrian governorates, mostly in the governorates of Daraa, Hama, Deir Ez-Zour, Hasaka, and Aleppo.

On October 21, [SANA](#), Syrian Arab News Agency (the Syrian regime's official news agency), reported that the Israeli Air Force had targeted multiple points in the vicinity of Damascus city, causing material damages. On October 24, [another Israeli attack](#) was carried out, also targeting multiple points near Damascus city, and causing material damages. A third Israeli attack followed on October 27, targeting ["some points in the vicinity of Damascus city"](#) according to the news agency. On the other hand, the Israel-based [Alma](#) Research and Education Center noted that the third attack targeted advanced weapons in the Sayyidah Zaynab area, in Damascus city.

Living Conditions in Syria

Syria's economic, service, and living conditions continued their ongoing decline throughout October in all regions of Syria. The Syrian regime-held areas are still suffering from exponential inflation. On October 12, the Syrian regime's Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection published a [list of prices](#) for basic goods and supplies, increasing the prices of 16 foodstuffs, including sunflower oil, now priced at 14,000 S.P. per liter, after the same ministry priced it as 12,600 S.P. back in [August](#). The same official list also saw a price hike for sugar I, with one kilogram of sugar rising to 4,600 S.P., a significant increase from its former price of 3,900 S.P., which was dictated in August. On October 13, the pro-regime newspaper [al-Watan](#) cited Abdul Aziz al-M'aqli, head of the Consumer Protection Association, who commented on the price increase: "The abrupt price hike in this way is emblematic of unbridled mayhem, and the lack of any real regulations, especially since prices were increased not too long ago."

Matters were not very different in northwestern Syria, where civilians are still grappling with the thoroughly worsening economic and living conditions, not the least of which are the price increase on all foodstuffs, basic supplies, and fuel. The continued decline in the value of the Turkish Lira is also negatively affecting the prices of food and supplies. As the Turkish Lira's purchasing power continues waning, unemployment and poverty levels are rising, especially in areas housing IDP camps. Furthermore, wages are going down, while the service and health sectors are going through a funding crisis amid an increasing failure to respond to the humanitarian needs.

HTS continued enforcing its restrictive policies in its territories, especially media workers. On October 1, the General Directorate of Media, which is affiliated with the group's Syrian Salvation Government, informed Orient TV reporters who are operating in areas under its control that their institution is no longer allowed to operate in any of HTS's territories, justifying this decision with their objections to Orient's editorial policies. On October 4, we released a [statement condemning](#) HTS's decision.

In northeastern Syria, the living situation is also deteriorating, with price increases for food supplies and fuel due to the declining value of the SP. Meanwhile, Allouk Pumping Situation¹, which pumps water into the neighborhoods of Hasaka city, resumed its operation on October 20, following a month-long shut-down due to a technical failure. These frequent shutdowns threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of people amid a cholera breakout.

On October 20, a number of demonstrations broke out in al-Sh'aitat area and Nahiyal al-Kasra, lasting for five days. The protests called for improving the living conditions, raising teachers' wages, and cancelling the decision by the SDF's Education Commission that banned niqab in the schools within SDF's areas of control.

Cholera breakout

In his [daily press briefing](#) held in New York on October 18, Stéphane Dujarric, the Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, noted that a total of 15,823 suspected cases of cholera had been recorded in Syria as of October 14, with 807 cases confirmed. Additionally, Dujarric added, 68 deaths caused by cholera had been reported across Syria. Dujarric also revealed that the UN's humanitarian partners are grappling with shortages in supplies of medical goods to fight the disease, including medicines, water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies.

¹ The station is the primary source of drinking water for Hasaka city and its western suburbs, as well as Tal Tamr and its villages. The station contains 34 wells and a main collecting area. The station pumps water for a length of 67 km into the Hemma water tanks in western Hasaka.

On October 24, Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, released [a statement](#), in which he stressed that “The fast pace of the cholera outbreak in Syria and Lebanon is alarming and the risks of the disease further spreading to other countries in the region call for immediate action. Urgent support is needed to respond and contain the spread of the disease.”

On October 25, the Security Council held a briefing on Syria, in which Reena Ghelani, the OCHA’s Director of Operations and Advocacy, [stressed](#) that the rapid spread of the cholera outbreak is only being exacerbated by the severe shortage of water in the country. “More than 24,000 suspected cholera cases have been reported,” she revealed, adding, “and cases have been confirmed now in all 14 governorates. At least 80 people have died so far. This is a tragedy, but it should not come as a surprise.”

On October 27, the [Save the Children organization](#) noted that around 35% of cholera cases in Syria are in children below the ages of 10. The organization stressed that the cholera epidemic could have a negative impact on pregnant women and children below the age of five years old who are already suffering from other ailments, malnutrition, and lack of access to adequate health care.

According to the latest figures released by the Syrian regime on the cholera cases and deaths, there are now 1,097 cases of cholera and 46 deaths. [SANA reported](#) on October 29 that cholera cases are distributed across Syria as follows: “Aleppo: 658, Deir Ez-Zour 194, Hasaka 75, Raqqa 48, Latakia 46, Suwayda 24, Damascus 24, Hama 11, Homs 11, Daraa 5, Damascus suburbs 6, Tartus 4, Quneitra 1.” It further stated that deaths are distributed as follows: “Aleppo 39, Hasaka 4, Deir Ez-Zour 2, Damascus 1.”

In Northwestern Syria, on the other hand, the [Early Warning, Alert and Response Network \(EWARN\)](#) said that 216 cases and four deaths had been recorded as of October 31.

Enforced displacement

IDPs in the northwestern region of Syria are still facing grueling living and humanitarian conditions, especially with a worsening economic situation and mounting needs. In Northern Aleppo, the IDP camps were affected by the clashes that pitted HTS and SNA factions against al-Failaq al-Thaleth, another SNA faction. We have documented the displacement of almost 13,000 people from the area, where no fewer than 12 IDP camps were directly affected by the military operations. We also document an incident on October 14, where a fire that broke out in the [Kurten IDP camp](#) in Afrin city, northern Aleppo as a result of the clashes between HTS and the SNA’s al-Failaq al-Thaleth completely destroyed six tents and partially damaged 25 others.

Meanwhile, around 130 IDP tents were damaged by a [rainstorm](#) that hit around seven camps in the area.



Meanwhile, [SANA](#) published pictures showing civilians returning to Ma'aret al-Nu'man city in the southern suburbs of Idlib on October 15. "Over 800 families returned to Ma'aret al-Nu'man city, Idlib suburbs," the report reads, "after terrorism was eradicated from the city and basic services were secured." However, some of the residents who returned earlier in October told SNHR that the city is destroyed, and that it was the target of mass lootings, which left it uninhabitable. The residents added that they had to pay a sum of 5,000 and obtain permission from the Political Security branch in Hama before they were allowed to return. According to the residents, the coordination committee notified the city's residents, as well as the residents of nearby Syrian regime-held nearby towns in the area surrounding the city, to travel to the city, in order to appear in pictures and videos filmed for the media. The residents were threatened with negative consequences should they refuse, whether they were government employees or ordinary civilians. It should be noted, in this context, that it has been a strategy of the Syrian regime's to promote the repatriation of refugees and IDPs in order to give the appearance of accelerating the early recovery processes in the hopes of receiving funds.



Photo taken by local residents at the start of October 2022 highlighting the heavy destruction to the al-Umayy Mosque "al-Masjid al-Kabir" in Ma'aret al-Nu'man city

In northeastern Syria, meanwhile, IDPs have been grappling with the cholera outbreak there amid a severe shortage of drinking water.

Internationally, some governments have carried out missions to repatriate their nationals in northeastern Syria. For instance, the [UK's Guardian](#) newspaper reported on October 2 that the Australian government has been preparing a mission to "rescue" tens of Australian women and children who remain in camps in northeastern Syria. The report stated that the people in question, over 20 Australian women and 40 children, who are the widows, sons, and daughters of ISIS fighters who died, are currently trapped in al-Hol and Roj camps in northeastern Syria. On the following day, October 3, [a joint statement](#) was released by a number of humanitarian organizations, hailing the Australian government's intention to repatriate Australian children with their mothers. The statement was released by Save the Children Australia, the Australian Council for International Development, UNICEF Australia, Plan International, CARE Australia, Amnesty International, and Islamic Relief Aid Australia, and the Human Rights Law Centre. On October 29, [Reuters](#) reported that the Australian government has repatriated 13 Australian children and four women from al-Ruh camp in northeastern Syria.

On October 5, Annalena Baerbock, Germany Foreign Minister, released an [official statement](#), revealing that Germany has repatriated seven children, four women, and one teenager from al-Ruh camp in northeastern Syria. On a related note, [Save the Children](#) released a statement on October 6, calling on other states to take similar actions and repatriate their nationals. The statement also stressed that killings in the camp had increased by 250% in the second quarter of the year. As it stands, al-Hul and Ruh IDP camps house around 11,000 children and women amid a cholera breakout and rising violence levels in the two camps.

On October 20, the Russian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs noted in an [official statement](#) on the ministry's website that the country has repatriated 40 children and 15 women who hold French nationality from camps in northeastern Syria. Meanwhile, [Russia Today](#) news agency also reported that the Russian authorities repatriated had 38 Russian children, 15 girls and 23 boys, from northeastern Syria on October 20.

On October 25, the [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation \(CBC\)](#) said that Canadian authorities have repatriated two Canadian women and a number of children from al-Ruj camp, northeastern Syria.

On the subject of Syrian refugees, [Associated Press \(AP\)](#) reported on October 15 that 92 asylum seekers had been forced by Turkish authorities to cross into Greece, according to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also known as Frontex, and the Greek police. According to sources, the Greek police found the refugees naked, with some of them having "bodily injuries." The report says that most of the 92 refugees were Syrians and Afghans. On October 16, the [UNHCR](#) tweeted about the incident, calling for a "full investigation into the incident."

In Lebanon, UNICEF notified the refugee camp supervisors in Aarsal, Lebanon, in mid-September, through two mediator Lebanese organizations, that, starting from October 1, the daily allocated amount of water per capita would be reduced from 27 liter/day to 7.5 liter/day. UNICEF also notified the camps that the amount of water removed from septic tanks in the camp would be reduced from 19 liter/day to two. In response, SNHR released a [statement](#), urging the international community to put an end to the suffering of thousands of refugees living in the camp in the wake of the decision. On October 6, Lebanon's National News Agency [published a](#) statement by two parliamentary members who confirmed that the decision to reduce water allocations for this month had been reversed.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's [National News Agency](#) reported on October 5 that a fire broke out in al-Wafaq al-Umani camp for Syrian refugees, which is located near the town of Aarsal. A total of 93 of the 200 tents in the camp were burned. In addition, the fire caused damage to the sewage system in the camp that "now poses a ecological threat to everyone should it not be fixed in due time."

As in Syria, the cholera breakout has spread among Syrian refugees in Lebanon. On October 19, Firass Abiad, Lebanon's Minister of Public Health, held [a press conference](#), in which he revealed that the overwhelming majority of cholera cases in Lebanon have been among refugees as the virus is rapidly spreading.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese government is still pushing to return Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Syria. On October 12, the now-former Lebanese President Michael Naim Oun said that Lebanon is planning to start sending Syrians back “in batches”, according to Lebanon’s [National News Agency](#). On the next day, Abbas Ibrahim, general director of Lebanon’s General Directorate of General Security, said in an [interview](#) with al-Jadeed TV channel that the first batch of Syrian refugees is set to return pending “security and judicial permissions” from the Syrian regime regarding the 1,500 Syrian refugees scheduled to be returned. On October 13, [Alhurra](#) website cited Dalal Harb, UNHCR Communication Officer and Spokesperson, who said, “The UNHCR is not currently facilitating or encouraging a large-scale voluntary return for refugees from Lebanon to Syria.” Amnesty International, meanwhile, released a [statement](#) on October 14, in which the human rights group warned that “In enthusiastically facilitating these returns, the Lebanese authorities are knowingly putting Syrian refugees at risk of suffering from heinous abuse and persecution upon their return to Syria.”

On October 25, the Access Center for Human Rights ([ACHR](#))² said that Syrian refugees have faced numerous push factors compelling them to return to Syria in the last few years, including being denied legal papers. “Consequently,” the paper released by the center reads, “these push-factors might cloud their judgments and decisions regarding returns.”

On October 26, [France Press](#) reported that a batch of Syrian refugees left Lebanon, returning to Syria as part of the Lebanese government’s plan to return Syrian refugees, which is being carried out in coordination with the Syrian regime. The agency reported that 750 Syrian refugees had returned to Syria. On the same day, [SANA](#) reported that a batch of Syrian refugees has crossed into Syria via the al-Dabousia border crossing. When asked about the Lebanon-run repatriation of Syrian refugees to Syria at [a press conference](#) on October 26, Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, responded, “Well, this ongoing repatriation is not facilitating... is not being organized by UNHCR... So, UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation, but they are not directly involved in this.”

Political and human rights situation

On September 29, the Syrian regime’s Idlib Governorate Administration announced three public auctions to invest in agricultural lands in the suburbs of Idlib governorate. This comes as the Syrian regime continues its practices in seizing lands owned by IDPs and refugees, then attempting to cover up its seizures by announcing “public auctions”. On October 20, SNHR released [a report](#), stressing that the seizure of the properties of hundreds of thousands of Syrian regime dissidents perpetuates the process of evacuation and enforced displacement, and is an attempt at demographic reengineering that essentially impedes the return of refugees and IDPs.

² ACHR is a non-profit, non-government human rights organization headquartered in Beirut and Paris. It was founded in 2017, in Lebanon, and was re-established in Paris, in 2020.

On October 1, an article in National Interest magazine, which is owned by the US think tank, the [Center for National Interest](#)³, stated that the Assad regime is “an affront for Western values, a threat to U.S. global influence, and an imminent danger to American national security.” In the article, the author grounds his argument in the Assad regime’s relative impunity that has shielded it as it committed war crimes, warning that this sends a dangerous signal to the international community. The author also highlighted the Assad regime’s close relationship with the “terrorist organization” Hezbollah, noting that it had deployed thousands of fighters in support of the Syrian regime. In this way, the article argues, the Syrian regime has funneled Iranian weapons to Hezbollah.

On October 4, [UNICEF](#) released a report about the cholera outbreak in Syria, which noted that by September 9, the medical data showed 10,039 suspected cases of cholera in 13 of Syria’s 14 governorates. Of these, 22 cases were detected in overcrowded IDP camps. The report also stressed the need for an urgent emergency response to the ongoing cholera outbreak.

On October 4, Jordan’s [Anti-Narcotics Department reported that](#) it has thwarted two different attempts to smuggle narcotics via the Jaber border crossing in Syria, seizing a combined total of 854,000 narcotic pills in the two operations. On October 10, a military source reported that the Jordanian Armed Forces had stopped another attempt to smuggle 818,000 Captagon pills from Syria, [as per](#) the same department. On October 28, the [Anti-Narcotic Department](#) reported it has thwarted another attempt to smuggle large amounts of drugs from Syria. The smugglers were trying to smuggle “287 kaf⁴ of cannabis [and] 259,120 Captagon pills”.

On October 4, the UN Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMV) [published](#) its findings on the Plurinational state of Bolivia, Syria, and Venezuela in the aftermath of Session 35 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, with the findings containing the CMV’s “main concerns and recommendations on the implementation” of the Convention. In relation to Syria, the committee expressed concern that migrant workers in Syria face a host of severe difficulties and rights violations due to the armed conflict, as well as the political, economic, and social instability, not to mention the existence of foreign armed forces and non-states armed groups. SNHR has submitted a report to the committee, detailing the Syrian regime’s violations of many of the articles of the Convention, as well as many relevant human rights. Furthermore, SNHR took part in Session 35, during which SNHR Director Fadel Abdul Ghany explained that migrant workers in Syria cannot have any legal or judicial rights as long as the legislative and judicial authorities are co-opted by the security branches of the executive branch. SNHR released [a statement](#) addressing the matter on September 19.

³ The Center for National Interest is a Washington-based think tank concerned with public policy. It was founded by President Richard Nixon on January 20, 1994.

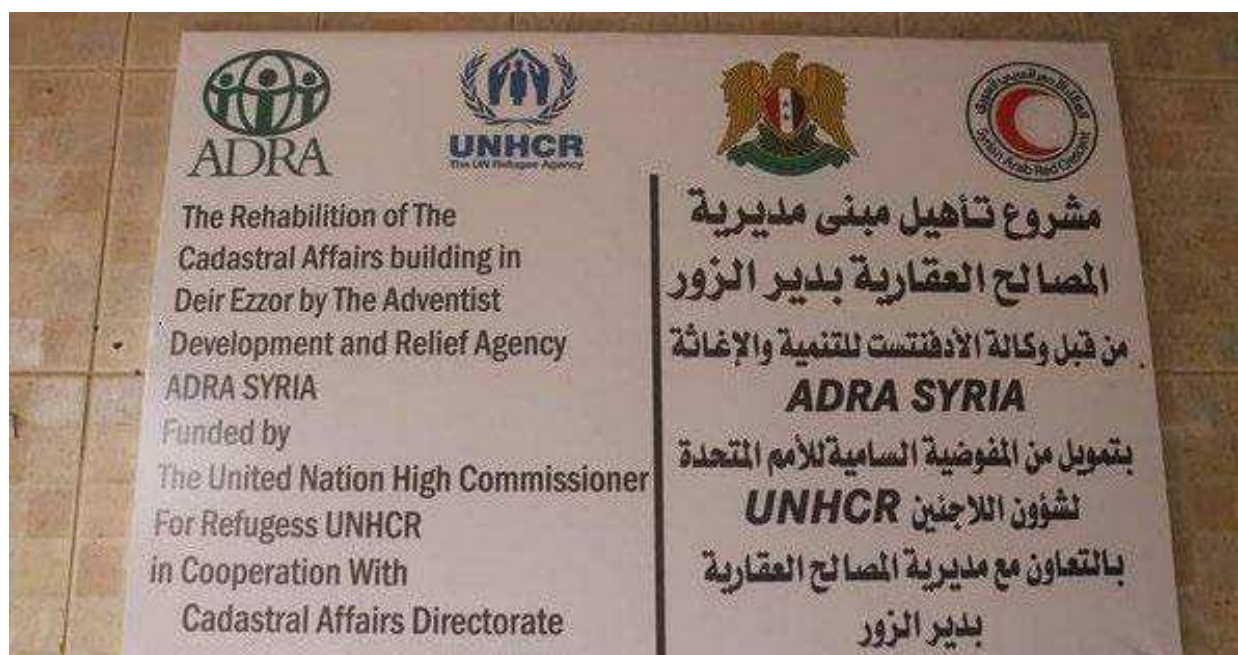
⁴ One “kaf” of cannabis roughly equals 200g

On October 7, the UN Human Rights Council adopted Resolution [A/HRC/51/26](#) in its 51st session. A total of 25 states [voted in favor](#) of the resolution, while 16 states abstained from voting, and Armenia, Bolivia, China, Cuba, Eritrea, and Venezuela voted against. The Resolution demands that the "Syrian regime meet its responsibility to protect the Syrian population and to respect and protect the human rights of all persons within its jurisdiction, including persons in detention and their families." The Resolution stresses that the Syrian regime is the party "first and foremost" responsible for "the situation of the tens of thousands of individuals forcibly disappeared and those missing and detained in the Syrian Arab Republic." On October 10, SNHR released a [statement](#) that welcomed the Resolution.

On October 10, the [UN warned](#) that Syria will face one of the harshest winter seasons this year due to shortages of fuel and energy, and the worsening social and economic conditions in the country. Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, stressed that about 6 million people in Syria will need humanitarian assistance to cope with the harsh winter, marking a 33% increase from last year.

On October 12, the White House announced on its [website](#) that US President Joe Biden has decided to "continue" the national emergency declared to address the situation in Syria as relates to the "unusual and extraordinary" threat it poses to US national and foreign policy. The national emergency gives the US administration the authority to seize the properties of and impose sanctions on individuals proven to bear a responsibility for the instability in Syria. This include disqualifying them from being granted US visas or fund loans.

In mid-October, the Syrian regime revealed the existence of a UNHCR-funded project to rehabilitate the real estate service directorate in Deir Ez-Zour city. SNHR condemns the provision of any financial or logistic support for any of the entities owned by or affiliated with the Syrian regime, noting that most of those funds will go towards committing the most heinous human rights violations, all for the sake of maintaining the regime in power.



UNHCR funds a project to rehabilitate the real estate directorate building in
Deir Ez-Zor - October 2022

On October 17, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network released a [statement](#) to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, in which it noted that the way in which poverty has spread in Syria has significantly impacted the Syrian population's ability to secure everyday needs and basic goods, particularly in light of the sharp and unprecedented rise in prices. The statement stresses that 90% of Syrians are now living under the poverty line amid unprecedented price rises of 800% in the last two years alone. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the statement added, has spread to almost all Syrian governorates, especially the northern regions which house millions of IDPs who are suffering more than other groups in Syrian society in light of the greater poverty and food insecurity. On the same day, the [OCHA Syria](#) posted a tweet, noting that "food prices in Syria have increased by over 500 per cent in the last two years, and around 12 million Syrians are now food insecure. That is more than half the population and 51 percent more than in 2019."

On October 19, a delegation from the Palestinian 'Islamic Resistance Movement' (Hamas) presided over by Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas politburo member and senior official, visited Syria to revive relationships with the Syrian regime, with the delegation meeting with regime head Bashar al-Assad. We released a [statement](#) on October 21, stressing that restoring any form of relationship with the Syrian regime is supporting the Syrian regime, as the statement outlined the most notable human rights violations against Palestinians by the Syrian regime since March 2011.

On October 20, the AP published [an investigative report](#) focusing on Akjemal Magtymova, the WHO representative in Syria. The report revealed that Magtymova had mismanaged millions of dollars of donor funds, and given gifts to Syrian regime officials, including gold coins and cars. The report further revealed that AP had obtained over 100 confidential documents, messages and other materials which prove that Magtymova was involved in abusive behavior that included pressuring WHO employees to sign contracts with senior Syrian regime officials. In addition, the report noted that Magtymova sat in on secret meetings with the Russian military, which potentially breaches the WHO's impartiality as a UN organization.

On October 21, the UN OCHA released [a situation report](#) on the northwestern regions of Syria. The report highlights an 82% funding gap that puts the lives of 2.5 million people at risk, as winter nears. The report also reveals that 19,545 new cases of internal displacement in northwestern Syria were documented in September, mostly due to the worsening economic situation. This marks the highest level recorded so far in 2022, the report notes.

On October 22, the UN OCHA posted [a tweet](#) revealing that the eighth cross-line convoy had entered the northwestern region from Syrian regime-held areas in Aleppo, pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions 2585 and 2642 "which calls for both cross-line and cross-border humanitarian assistance." The 18-truck convoy carried food baskets, medications, non-food supplies, special supplies, children's food supplies, education equipment, and health supplies. This was the third convoy to be deployed following Resolution 2642 (July 2022).



On October 24, [Human Rights Watch \(HRW\)](#) released a report revealing that Turkish authorities had arrested, detained, and deported hundreds of Syrian refugee men and children in an arbitrary manner between February and July 2022, including children unaccompanied by their families. The report stressed that this constitutes a violation of international law. Additionally, HRW said that Turkey being depicted as a safe third country is inconsistent with its deporting Syrian refugees to northern Syria on this scale.

On October 25, the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) said that organization's Missing Migrants Project has documented no fewer than 5,684 deaths on immigration routes to and within Europe since 2021 started. Syrians were among those identified as dead.

On October 25, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, reported in [a briefing](#) to the Security Council on chemical weapons in Syria that gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies identified in the declaration submitted by the Syrian regime to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) about its chemical weapons stockpile remain unsolved. She also highlighted the lack of progress since the Security Council last convened vis-à-vis the outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations by the Syrian regime despite the Declaration Assessment Team's efforts.

On October 26, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic](#), declared in a briefing to the UN General Assembly: “Families have the right to know the fate of their loved ones, and they need our support in this. The time to act is now.” He also stressed that the missing persons issue is one of the greatest tragedies in the Syrian conflict. Furthermore, he called for establishing a mechanism to clarify the fate of tens of thousands of citizens who have gone missing during the conflict that has now continued for almost 12 years.

Accountability and advocacy

On October 3, SNHR, represented by its executive director Fadel Abdul Ghany, participated in [an event](#) on the sidelines of the 101st session of the OPCW’s Executive Council, entitled, “Reviewing the Facts: Documenting Syria’s Expansive Chemical Weapons Use”. The event focused on discussion of the history and scale of chemical weapons use in Syria and its impact on the victims, as well as the efforts being made to document and investigate those attacks. On October 6, SNHR released a [statement](#) about its involvement in the event.

On October 19, [Reuters](#) reported that the French cement company Lafarge had pleaded guilty in Brooklyn Federal Court in the USA to a charge that it made payments to groups designated as terrorist by the US, including ISIS, in order to maintain its operations in Syria. According to Reuters, US persecutors said that Lafarge and its subsidiary in Syria, Lafarge Cement Syria, paid approximately \$5.92 million to ISIS and al-Nusra Front through intermediaries between 2013 and 2014. The payments were made in exchange for allowing the company’s employees, suppliers, and customers to pass through checkpoints run by said groups.

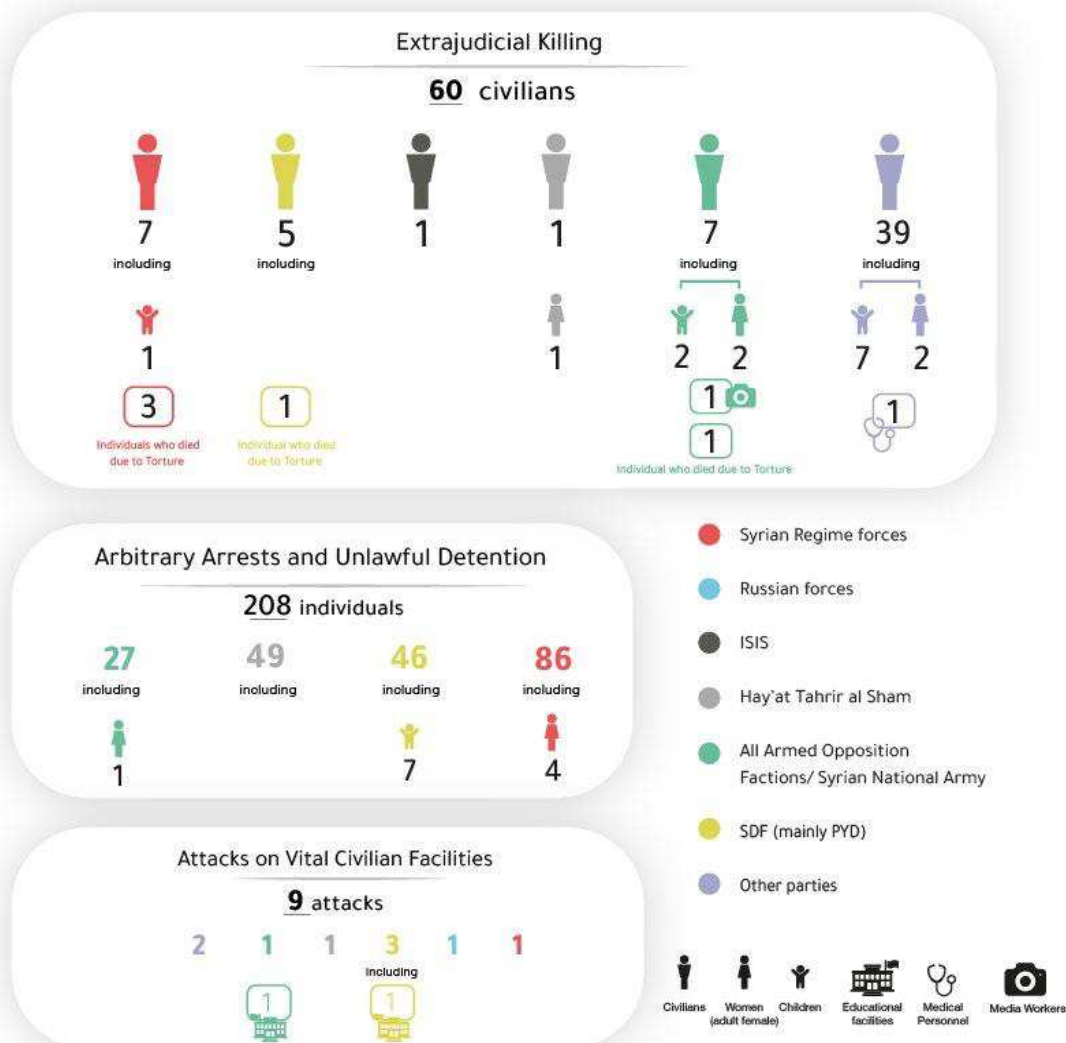
On October 24, SNHR released [a statement](#), noting that SNHR was the second most-cited source in the German Federal Foreign Office (AA) report on the security situation in Syria for the year 2021, being cited six times. It should be noted that Germany’s [Federal Office for Migration and Refugees \(BAMF\)](#) uses this report as a supporting measurement in its decisions on asylum seekers and deportation.

On October 24, US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, issued [a press release](#), in which it was revealed that three Syrian regime officers have been sanctioned for their involvement in the regime’s chemical weapons attacks on Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs, in August 2013. The attacks resulted in the death of at least 1,400 victims, mostly children. The statement named the three officers as “Brigadier General Adnan Aboud Hilweh, Major General Ghassan Ahmed Ghannam, and Major General Jawdat Saleebi Mawas.” The sanctions include declaring the officers and their immediate family members ineligible for entry into the US.

In October, SNHR 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, the UN Special Rapporteur on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism- Specific work on victims of terrorism, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, on four cases of enforced disappearance.

III. Most Notable Human Rights Violations in Syria in October

This report outlines the most notable human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria that were documented by the SNHR in October.



A. Extrajudicial killing

In October, SNHR documented the death of 60 civilians, including 10 children and five women (adult female), most of whom were killed at the hands of other parties. We also documented the death of one medical worker and one media worker, and seven individuals due to torture. We issued a report on the first of this month detailing the civilian victims documented killed 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)⁵:** seven civilians, including one child.
- **ISIS (Self-proclaimed the Islamic State):** one civilian.
- **HTS⁶ :** one woman.
- **All armed opposition factions/SNA:** seven civilians, including two children and two women.
- **Kurdish-led SDF (Democratic Union Party):** five civilians.

B. Other parties:

We documented the deaths of 39 civilians, including seven children and two women, at the hands of other parties, distributed as follows:

- **Landmines whose source we have not been able to identify:** five civilians, including two children.
- **Gunfire whose source we have been unable to identify:** 22 civilians, including two children and two women.
- **Bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify:** one civilian.
- **Killings by parties we have been unable to identify:** 11 civilians, including three children.

B. Arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance

In October 2022, SNHR documented at least 208 cases of arbitrary arrest, including seven children and five women (adult female), at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. Most of these arrests were carried out by Syrian regime forces in the governorates of Damascus suburbs, then Damascus, followed by Daraa. We issued a report on the second of this month detailing the cases of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearances which we documented in October at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria.

Cases of arbitrary arrests were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

- **Syrian regime forces:** 86, including four women.
- **HTS:** 49.
- **All Armed Opposition factions/SNA:** 27, including one woman.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces:** 46, including seven children.

⁵ 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 reality 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.

⁶ United Nations designated it a terrorist organization

C. Attacks on vital civilian facilities

In October 2022, SNHR documented at least nine incidents of attacks on vital civilian facilities, including five attacks in Aleppo governorate.

Among these attacks, we documented two on educational facilities and four on IDPs gathering/camps. These attacks were distributed according to the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces as follows:

A. The main parties:

- Syrian regime forces: One
- Russian forces: One
- HTS: One
- All armed opposition factions/SNA: 1
- SDF: 1

B. Other parties:

Two attacks, distributed as follows:

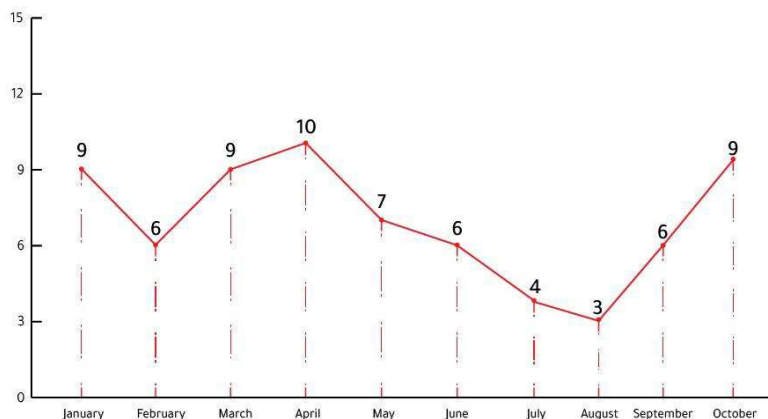
Bombings whose perpetrators we have been unable to identify: One.

Shells whose source we have been unable to identify: One.

Attacks on vital civil facilities documented in October 2022 were distributed according to the perpetrator parties as follows:

Perpetrator Party Facility Attacked	Syrian Regime Forces	Russian Forces	HTS	All Armed Opposition Factions/SNA	SDF	Other Parties	
						Gunshots by Unidentified Parties	Shells by Unidentified Parties
Vital Educational Facilities							
Schools				1	1		
Infrastructures							
Poultry Farms		1					
Headquarters for International Organizations					2		
IDP Gatherings/Camps							
Official Camps	1		1			1	1
Total:	1	1	1	1	3	1	1

As of November, a total of 69 attacks on vital civilian facilities have been documented since the start of 2022 at the hands of the parties to the conflict and the controlling forces in Syria. The attacks are distributed by month as follows



The table above shows that October saw the highest number of attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in the second half of 2022 to date. October accounted for 13% of all attacks on vital civilian facilities since the start of 2022.

Most notable attacks on vital civilian facilities documented in October:

On Monday, October 10, 2022, SDF personnel raided al-Tayyana al-Gharbiya School for Elementary Education in [al-Tayyana](#) village, which is affiliated with Nahiyat Theyban in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The raid took place during school hours, with the SDF kicking out the students and the teaching staff, and taking over the school. The SDF also put up fortifications, turning the school into a military stronghold within the village, which was under the control of SDF at the time of the incident.

On Monday evening, October 10, 2022, Syrian regime artillery forces fired a shell that landed near [Kafr Karmin](#) village, western suburbs of Aleppo governorate. The [shell landed near al-Bir IDP camp, moderately damaging a number of tents](#). The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, October 11, 2022, fixed-wing warplanes believed to be Russian dropped missiles on a poultry farm in al-Shkheib village, located near al-Z'aneya town, western suburbs of Idlib governorate. As a result, [hundreds of birds were killed, while the farm was heavily destroyed](#). The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the incident.



Destruction caused by a Russian aerial attack on a poultry farm in al-Shkheib village, Idlib - October 11, 2022

On Wednesday, October 12, 2022, HTS artillery forces fired shells at [Burj Abdallo](#), located to the south-east of Afrin city in northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate. Two of the shells landed on al-Meyah IDP camp in the village. One woman was killed, while members of her family were wounded. In addition, a number of tents were damaged to varying degrees. The village was under SNA control at the time of the incident. SNHR notes that the shelling was part of the clashes that pitted HTS and a number of SNA factions (most notably Ferqat al-Hamza and al-Sultan Suleiman Shah) against al-Failaq al-Thaileth and other SNA factions. On October 18, we released a [statement](#) summarizing the losses resulting from those clashes, and the potential dangers of HTS's expansion into SNA territories in northern and western Aleppo governorate.

On Thursday, October 13, 2022, artillery forces stationed at a site operated by Ahrar al-Sham (Freemen of the Levant) and al-Ferqat al-Hamza, two SNA factions, fired mortar shells at [al-Bab](#) city, eastern suburbs of Aleppo. One of the shells landed in front of al-Tarbiya al-Khasa School for Special-Needs Children, known as the Guidance Center. The school, located in the southern neighborhood, is affiliated with the 'Free' Education Directorate in al-Bab city. [The shelling killed a woman who was in her home near the school](#), as well as causing moderate damage to the school building. The city was under the control of SNA at the time of the incident.

SNHR notes that the school was located in a building that formerly housed al-Hekma Hospital in al-Bab city. It should be also noted that the shelling was part of the clashes that pitted HTS and a number of SNA factions (most notably Ferqat al-Hamza and al-Sultan Suleiman Shah) against al-Failaq al-Thaleth and other SNA factions. On October 18, we released a [statement](#) summarizing the losses resulting from those clashes, and the potential dangers of HTS's expansion into SNA territories in northern and western Aleppo governorate.

On Friday, October 14, 2022, a fire broke out in Kortak Camp, near [Mesh'ala](#) village in Kafrijanna area of Afrin city in the northwestern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, amid clashes that pitted HTS and SNA factions (most notably Ferqat al-Hamza and al-Sultan Suleiman Shah) against al-Failaq al-Thaleth and other SNA factions.

[In the fire, six tents were burnt completely, while 25 tents were damaged to varying degrees.](#) The area was under SNA control at the time of the incident.

SNHR was unable to identify which of the two sides was responsible for the damages as of this writing. On October 18, we released [a statement](#) summarizing the losses resulting from those clashes, and the potential dangers of HTS's expansion into SNA territories in northern and western Aleppo governorate.



D. Indiscriminate attacks and attacks using prohibited weapons

No indiscriminate attacks or attacks using prohibited weapons were documented by SNHR in October 2022

IV. Attachments

[60 Civilians, Including 10 Children, Five Women, and Five Victims Who Died due to Torture, Were Documented Killed in Syria, in October 2022](#)

[At Least 208 Arbitrary Arrests/Detentions Documented in Syria in October 2022, Including Seven Children and Five Women, Mostly at the Hands of Syrian Regime Forces](#)

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 IV 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/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

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to all family members, relatives and friends of the victims, as well as eyewitnesses and local activists whose contributions have enriched this report.



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