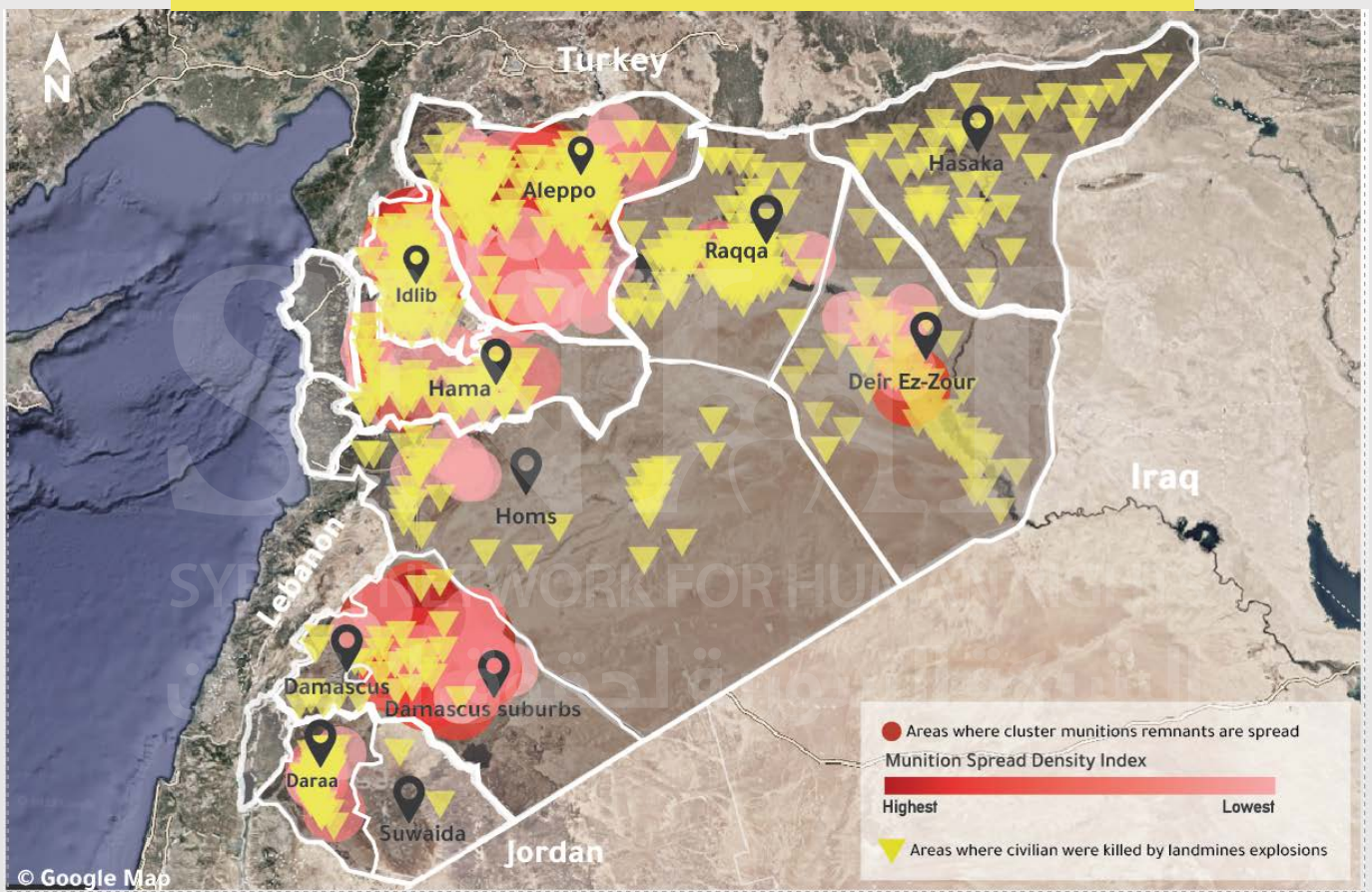


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**On the International Day
for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action:
Landmines Continue to Plague Large Areas of Syria
and Threaten the Lives of Millions**

**A total of 3,353 civilians
including 889 children, have been documented as killed
by anti-personnel landmines in Syria since 2011**



Tuesday 4 April 2023

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

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I. Brief Background

On December 8, 2005, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 60/97 declaring that April 4 of each year would be the [International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action](#). Antipersonnel landmines (APLs) are defined as a type of munition designed to be installed above or below the ground, which are triggered and detonated when either a person or a vehicle touches or approaches them. In line with this definition, cluster munition remnants that have not yet exploded are considered APLs, since they bear similar characteristics in that they may potentially explode at any moment should an object touch them. We talked at length about the nature of cluster munitions in our extensive report, '[Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations](#)' which was released on January 31, 2023, in which we stressed that cluster munition remnants are still scattered over wide areas of Syria's governorates, meaning that they remain a lethal threat to the lives of current and future generations of Syrians.

APLs are classified as prohibited weapons under international law. Usually, military forces plant landmines for the primary objective of thwarting the advance of their foes towards certain areas. As such, landmines are used to fortify and protect territories. Needless to say, the nature of landmines necessitates that their location must remain concealed in order to inflict the greatest human and material losses upon the enemy. Once planted, however, landmines' locations are difficult to pinpoint, especially for civilians; this, coupled with the fact that warring forces usually plant landmines in different areas, makes them clearly indiscriminate weapons. Additionally, even after a particular conflict has ended, it takes usually decades to completely remove the landmines deployed, making them lethal indiscriminate weapons that do not distinguish between civilians and fighters.

Due to all these factors, the use of landmines has been largely restricted under international humanitarian law since its establishment. Indeed, various rules of customary international humanitarian law specifically address the use of landmines.¹ Moreover, Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons,² which came into effect on December 3, 1998, detail the rules of using landmines without going as far as prohibiting their use outright.

1. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Rule 81](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Rule 82](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), [Rule 83](#) of the customary international humanitarian law.

2. Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1996/05/19960503%2001-38%20AM/Ch_XXVI_02_bp.pdf

Nonetheless, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), along with a number of NGOs, have exerted great efforts towards completely prohibiting the use of landmines, stating that they violate the most fundamental principles of the laws of warfare. These efforts led to the creation of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention (the Ottawa Convention)³ that came into effect in March 1999. The overwhelming majority of nations worldwide, 164 in all states⁴ have now ratified the Ottawa Convention. As such, the prohibition of the use of landmines is classified as an international custom that is binding to all states involved in and parties to a conflict, whether or not they ratified the Convention.

Released in September 2022, the most recent report by our partners at the [International Campaign to Ban Landmines - Cluster Munition Coalition \(ICBL-CMC\)](#) noted that the Syrian regime has been planting landmines in border areas since the end of 2011. In its previous report, released in November 2021, the ICBL-CMC noted that the deaths caused by landmines documented in Syria for the previous year had been the highest number ever documented for a single year since the group began monitoring deaths caused by landmines in 1999.

[As a member of this international coalition, the Syrian Network for Human Rights \(SNHR\)](#) has been recording the use of cluster munitions and APLs for 12 years to date, and regularly supplies the ICBL-CMC with data documented by our teams on the ground in Syria. In fact, we believe there are dozens of minefields that are yet to be discovered in Syria. As a member of the ICBL-CMC, SNHR reiterates its commitment to work towards a world free of the use of landmines and cluster munitions.

This report aims to shed light on the use of APLs in Syria and the resultant casualties. The report outlines many of the areas where we documented incidents of APLs explosions that resulted in casualties, as well as carefully noting the areas where cluster munition remnants have been scattered, so local residents can avoid these areas. This report also includes an updated death toll of the fatalities resulting from landmine explosions between March 2011 and the Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on April 4, 2023.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, says:

“Pinpointing the locations of minefields in Syria required massive efforts. It is our hope that the maps we’ve included in this report can be useful, so civilians can avoid traveling through or working in those lands, while controlling forces should put fences those areas and seriously work on removing landmines. Donor states should also pay more attention to this crucial issue.”

3. United Nations, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction of 1997 <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/1997-convention-prohibition-anti-personnel-mines-and-their-destruction>

4. United Nations. (n.d.). Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Retrieved April 4, 2023, from <https://bit.ly/3Kb7gVI>

II. Methodology

For the past 12 years, SNHR has been documenting the use of APLs, including the explosions of cluster munition remnants, and the resultant casualties. While the Syrian regime had used landmines before 2011, the use of landmines increased exponentially and massively after the start of the popular uprising in March 2011, which subsequently turned into an internal armed conflict. Since the end of 2011, the Syrian regime has planted landmines on the borderlines with Lebanon and Turkey. According to our monitoring, many of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces have used APLs (although we recorded no instances of the US-led international coalition forces and Russian forces using landmines). On the other hand, however, only two parties have used cluster munition remnants, namely the Syrian regime and Russian forces. At SNHR, we have dedicated an entire and exhaustively detailed database to this issue which documents the time and place of incidents and the casualties resulting from landmine explosions. As we mentioned earlier, we believe there are still at least dozens of landmines that have yet to be discovered in Syria.

We, at SNHR, try to attribute culpability in any killing to the responsible party to the best of our abilities. We can say that we have been able to do so successfully in the overwhelming majority of the data we documented; we abstain, however, from assigning responsibility in two types of cases, namely:

- The use of APLs (including cluster munition remnants)
- [Remote bombings](#), including suicide and forced suicide bombings.

We have been unable, in most cases, to determine the party that planted an individual landmine that subsequently exploded and as such to determine the party responsible for the resulting death and/or injury. There are challenges and difficulties that are unique to the process of assigning culpability in the deaths and injuries resulting from APL explosions, besides the typical challenges we usually face in the general process of documentation, which are detailed in [our methodology](#). Those unique challenges include:

- Most parties to the conflict use this weapon.
- Various different parties and forces have been in control of areas where landmines are located over time. None of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria have disclosed maps showing the locations where they planted landmines.

We also face immense and specific challenges especially in the process of assigning responsibility in incidents involving deaths or injuries caused by cluster submunitions that did not explode at the time of the initial attack. In fact, cluster munitions stand out in this context because they have only been used by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces according to our database. Furthermore, approximately 10 to 40 percent of cluster submunitions do not explode at the time of the attack, but might subsequently do so at any moment once triggered. As such, they effectively turn into landmines, adding further challenges to those we outlined in our methodology, most notably:

- We have recorded the use of many types of cluster munitions by both the Syrian regime and Russian forces.
- Many areas in Syria have been targeted in more than one attack involving the use of cluster munitions. In fact, one area can be the target of dozens of attacks of this type. In such cases, it is difficult to ascertain which munition originates from which attack.
- One area can be targeted in an attack by the Syrian regime, which leaves cluster submunitions scattered there, with the same area later being targeted in an attack by Russian forces, also leaving cluster submunitions.

In such cases when the attack in question results in deaths or injuries from the explosion of the cluster submunitions, we assign responsibility to the Syrian-Russian alliance.

This report includes an updated death toll of the killings resulting from landmine explosion between March 2011 and the Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action on April 4, 2023, where it outlines the civilian death toll; including children, women, medical personnel, media workers, and Civil Defense Personnel. Additionally, this report includes some of the most notable incidents (that have not been included [in our previous report](#)). Those cases reflect some of the most notable incidents we recorded on our databases.

The report draws primarily upon SNHR's database. The report incorporates a hybrid methodology grounded in a statistical methodology which we have relied upon to create graphs illustrating the running count of the toll of victims killed in attacks involving the use of landmines and their distribution by year and also by governorate, before analyzing the resulting data through a process of statistical analysis.

However, in compiling the report, we have also adopted a descriptive chronological methodology to provide a summary of the use of APLs in Syria in the context of the conflict, since limiting the method used to analytical methodology alone might be insufficient to properly reflect the magnitude of and the threat posed by these violations if this evidence was presented in isolation from the context of the incidents themselves. We have spoken in detail about the use of cluster munitions in our extensive report, '[Cluster Munitions Remnants are an Open-Ended Threat to the Lives of Syria's Future Generations](#)'.

Lastly, SNHR used an analytical descriptive methodology in creating the maps included in this report showing the areas where, we believe, landmines are dispersed or the areas that contain landmines, in addition to maps that show where cluster submunitions have been scattered. Those areas are consequently still contaminated by APLs that pose a serious threat to civilians' lives.

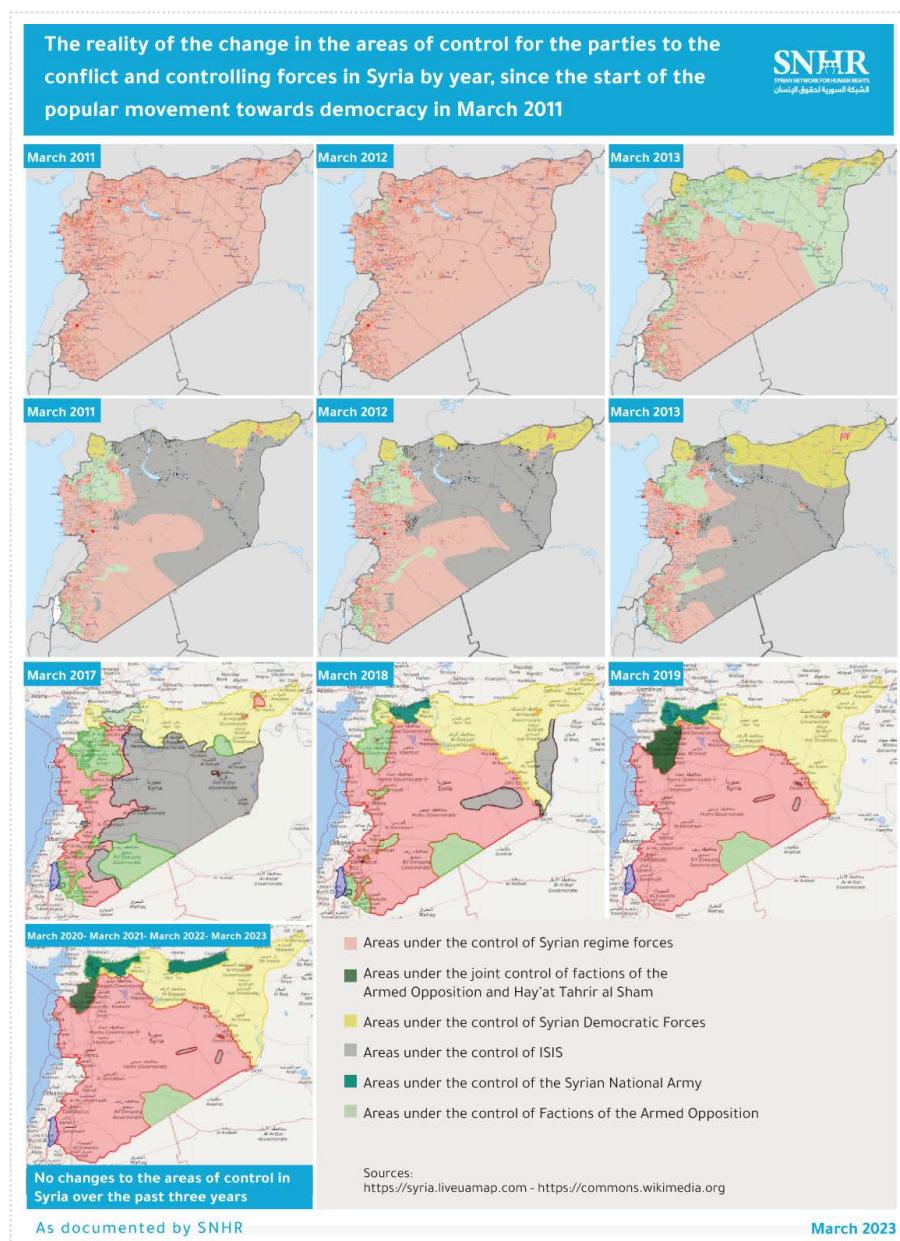
SNHR's database offers users the ability to sort victims according to the governorate where they died, as well as by their governorate of origin. In this report, however, we distribute the death toll according to the governorate where each victim's death took place, rather than by their governorate of origin, in order to quantify the loss of lives caused by cluster munitions in every governorate.

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

III. Most Notable Types of Landmines We Recorded in the Syrian Conflict

The armed conflict in Syria is one of the world's worst conflicts in terms of disregarding the rules of international law, particularly when it comes to the Syrian regime⁵ that owns tens of thousands of landmines. Still, the low cost and ease of manufacturing landmines have also enabled other parties to the conflict to use these munitions excessively without showing any concern for removing them or even disclosing their locations, which is glaringly evident in the governorates that saw clashes and changes of the controlling SNHR has been able to catalogue many of the types of explosive ammunitions that are designed to be

The maps below show how military control changed over the years in Syria since March 2011:



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 where power is concentrated in the hands of a small circle of individuals, namely the President of the Republic and the heads of the security apparatus. Conversely, the ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, play a restricted, largely ceremonial role, which is limited to implementing precisely what the ruling regime orders, with no real decision-making power or active role of their own. Syria is under autocratic/family rule, with no independent decision-making structure. Rather, the government is an empty façade created merely for show. The Minister of Interior receives orders from the security branches over which he supposedly presides. The Minister of Justice cannot even summon a low-ranking security office, let alone a security branch head. Syria is ruled by the president assisted by the heads of the security branches.

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

triggered when an individual touches or approaches them. As such, all of these, including booby traps, are classified as APLs. However, no other single model of landmine has been used as frequently as the Russian-made PMN-2 which the Syrian regime possesses and uses in large amounts, not to mention the cluster munition remnants that did not explode.

- **A Russian-made PMN-2 landmine**

The following video shows a PMN-2 landmine. The individual shown in the video is saying that the landmine has been disarmed, along with some 50 other landmines, in a border area with Turkey near al-Hassaniya village in the Jesr al-Shoghour area in Idlib suburbs. This video first appeared in early 2012.

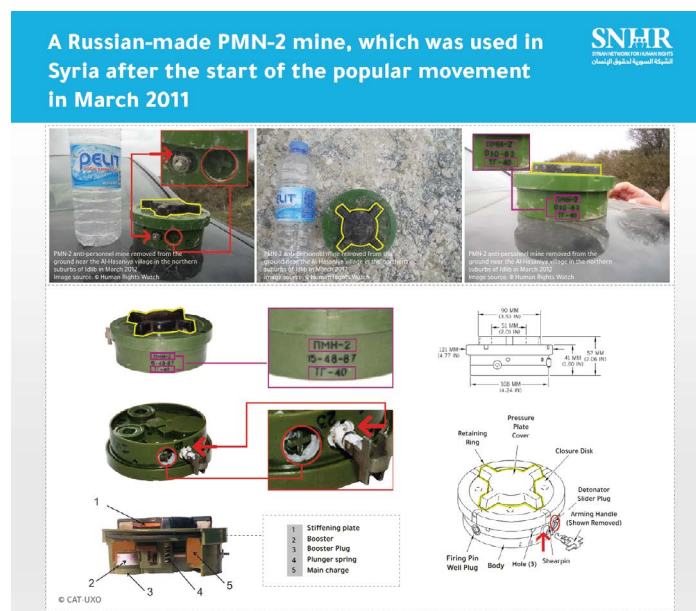


The Russian-made PMN-2 (IIMH-2) landmine is an antipersonnel (AP), highly explosive (HE) landmine that is designed to injure or kill. The landmine is triggered when an object weighing five kilograms or more puts pressure on it. PMN-2 landmines have a complex internal mechanism containing a late trigger system and an excess pressure resistance system. The latency window is estimated at 30-300 seconds. PMN-2 landmines cannot be stopped or deactivated once they are triggered.

PMN-2 landmines, which are planted in the ground, are triggered when an object presses the black rubber element on top of the landmine. Naturally, when it is triggered, the landmine explodes, with the shrapnel hitting the victim, and the noise capable of causing a hearing impairment for anyone within a radius of five meters. Furthermore, secondary shrapnel fragments are scattered within a radius of 25-100 meters. PMN-2 landmines, which are circular and made of plastic, have a diameter of 121 millimeters, a height of 52 millimeters, a weight of 0.450 kilograms, and an exploding weight of 0.115 kilograms. They are usually loaded with TNT or RDX TG-40.

PMN-2 landmines are planted by hand and have no anti-tampering mechanisms. They can be easily detected with a metal detector since they contain high percentages of metal in most circumstances. Disarming a PMN-2 landmine requires special equipment.

Visual guide that breaks down the components of the Russian-made PMN-2 landmine. They were observed in Syria after March 2011:



- **Cluster munition remnants**

SNHR has been able to catalogue dozens of types of cluster munitions. According to our estimations, no fewer than 20 types of cluster munitions have been used in Syria by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces.

Below are some samples of the most notable types of cluster submunitions that have been used widely in many Syrian governorates.

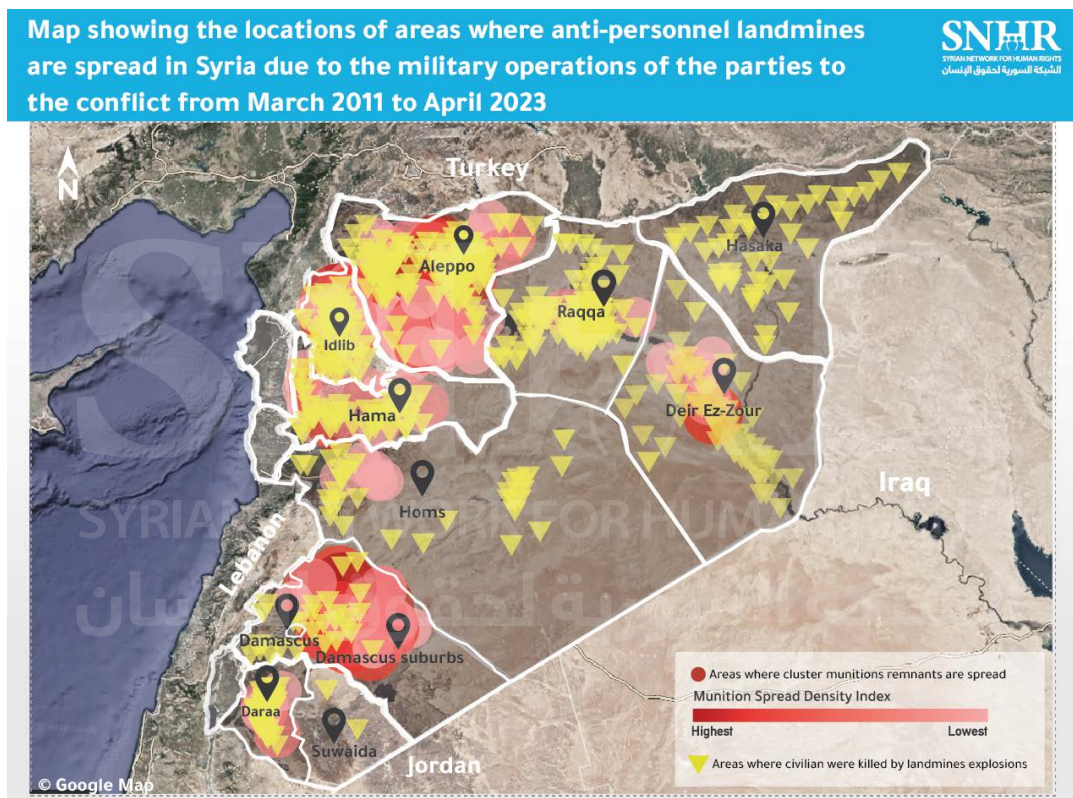


IV. Maps Showing the Approximate Locations of Where Anti-Personnel Landmines Have Been Dispersed in Many Syrian Governorates

Landmines have been planted across large areas of Syria lands. The areas that were previously under the control of ISIS are among of the most dangerous in this sense, especially the governorates of Hasaka, Deir Ez-Zour, and Raqqa. Not only did the group plant these mines in the vicinities of the villages and towns that were under their control to prevent people from leaving them, as well as to block other parties to the conflict, but ISIS planted landmines in the roads and residential neighborhoods before withdrawing from their areas of control, including even in buildings and inside items of furniture in homes. Today, the governorate of Raqqa is one of the world's most landmine-contaminated places.

Relying on SNHR's databases, including the one on the victims of landmines and cluster munitions, we have created a number of maps showing the approximate locations of areas which we believe have been contaminated with APLs in many of the Syrian governorates. The mines and unexploded munitions in these areas will pose a threat to the lives and movement of Syrian citizens, especially children, for years to come. We designed those maps in an attempt to assist the work of local Unexploded Ordnance teams working to defuse the mines, and to raise awareness among local residents and authorities of the need to take the necessary precautions to avoid new incidents.

Map showing areas contaminated with APLs in Syria as a result of the military operations in Syria between March 2011 and April 2023

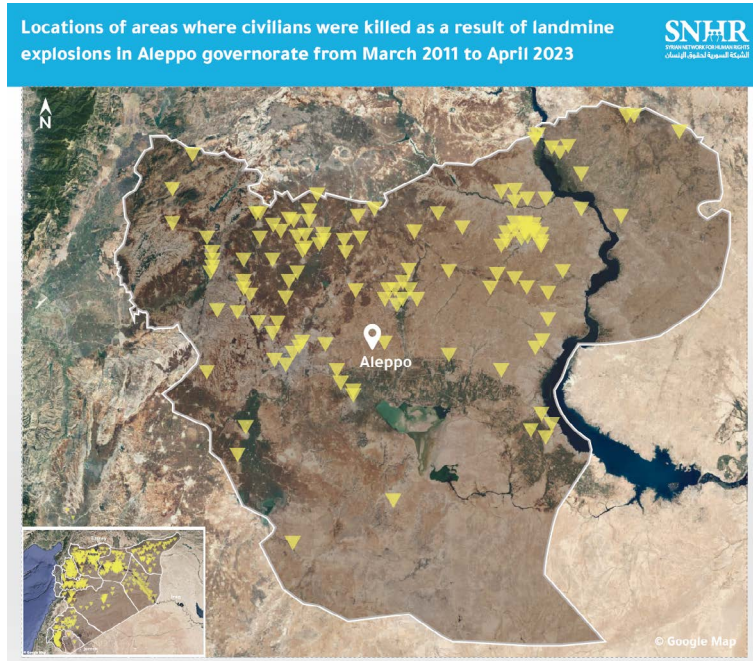


A. Maps showing the approximate location of areas that witnessed the killing of civilians by landmine explosions since March 2011

The maps below show the approximate location of areas that saw victims killed by landmine explosions. Due to the nature of the use of landmines, usually a large number of landmines are planted in one area, forming what is known as a minefield, or distributed in the form of two parallel lines, or booby-traps. As such, we suspect that extensive areas in the vicinity of each location marked on the map might be contaminated with landmines. It should be noted that, when creating those maps, we pinpointed one point for each neighborhood, town, or area, regardless of the number of deaths recorded in this area as a result of a landmine explosion in light of the massive number of victims. We tried, insofar as possible, to have the maps reflect the areas with the highest death toll. It is important to note that those maps contain only what we have been able to document, and, thus, they reflect the bare minimum of incidents or potential danger. Below are nine maps:

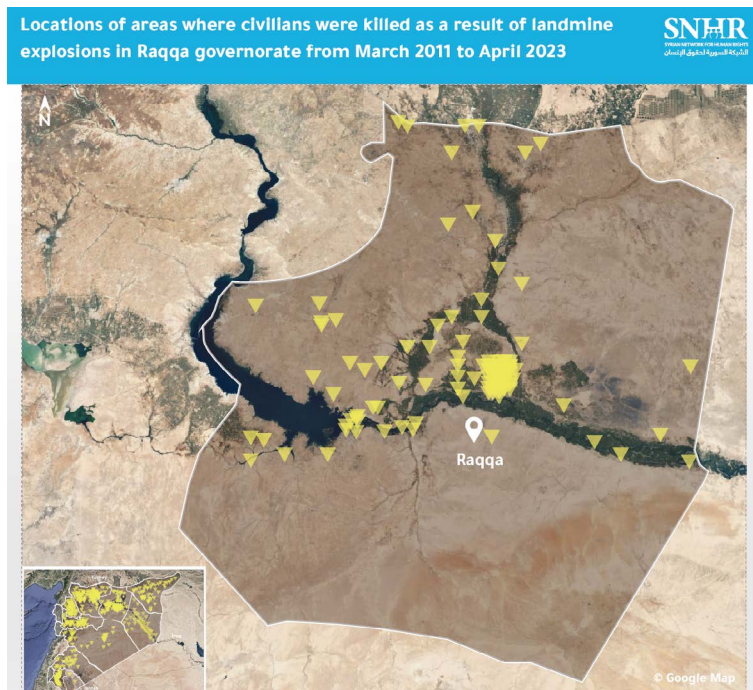
Aleppo

governorate

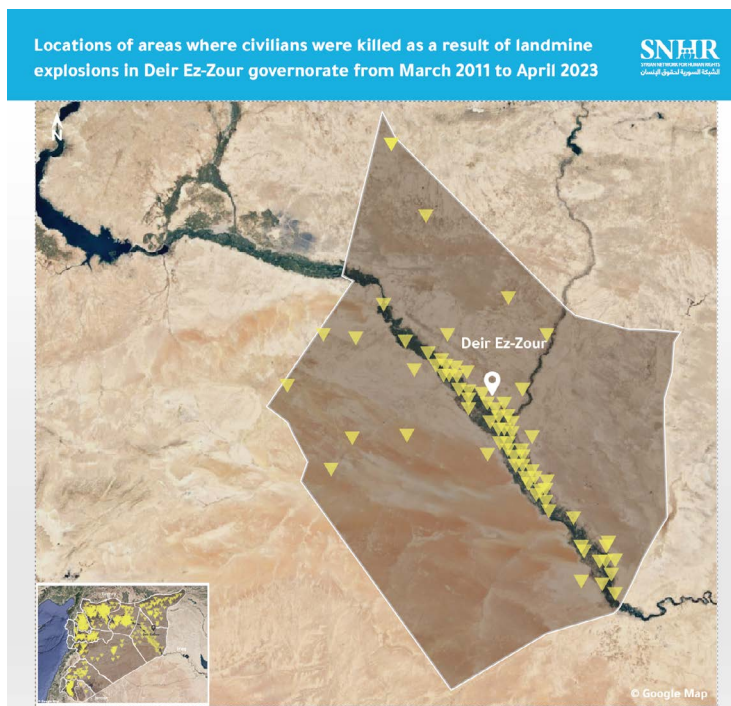


Raqqqa

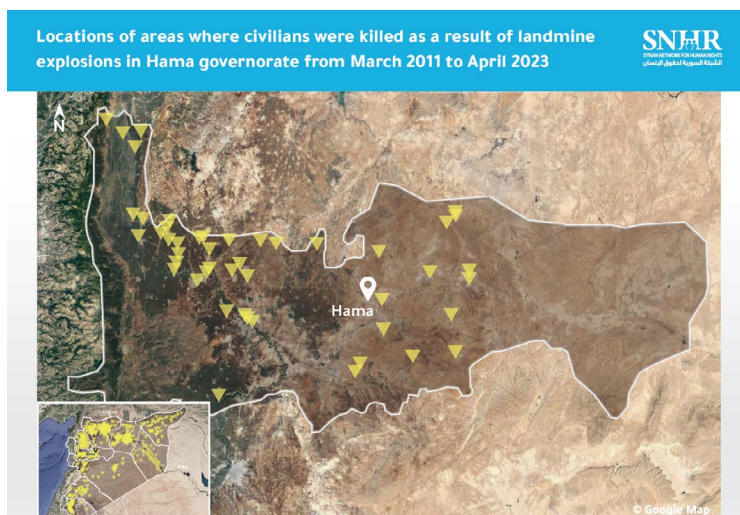
governorate



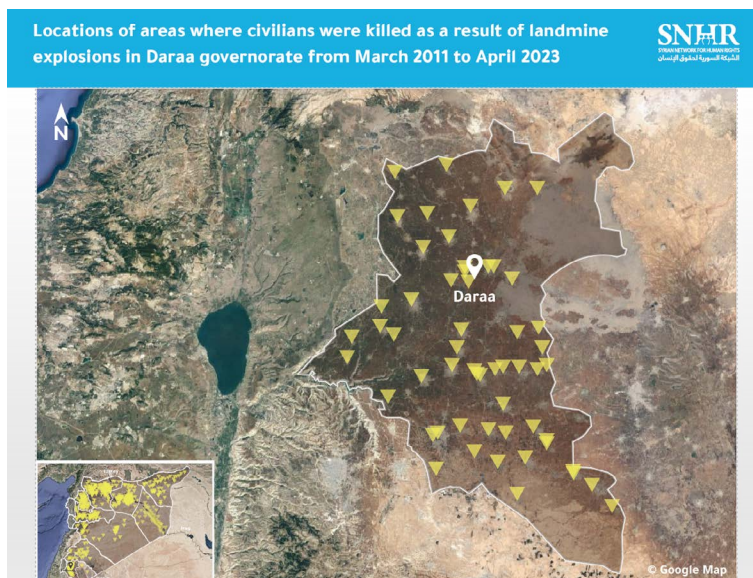
Deir Ez-Zour
governorate



Hama
governorate



Daraa
governorate

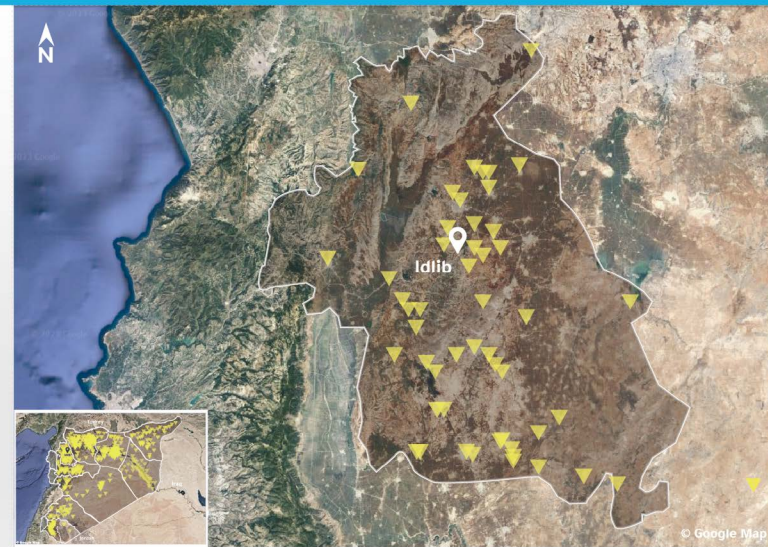


Idlib

governorate

Locations of areas where civilians were killed as a result of landmine explosions in Idlib governorate from March 2011 to April 2023

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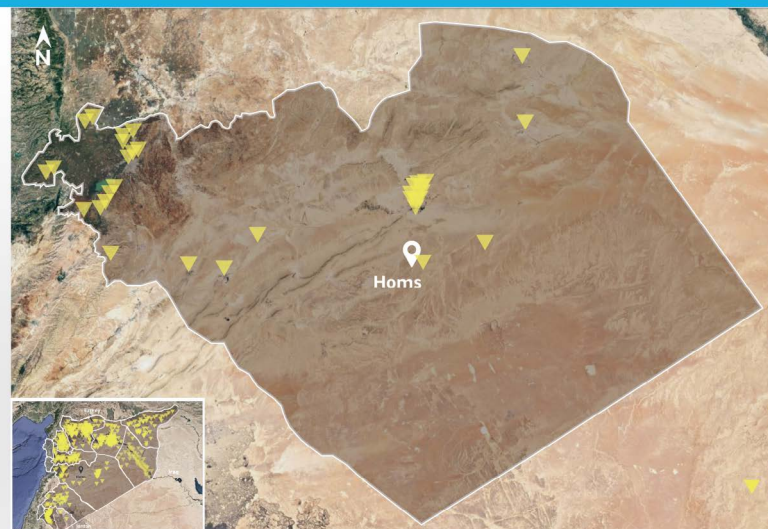


Hasaka

governorate

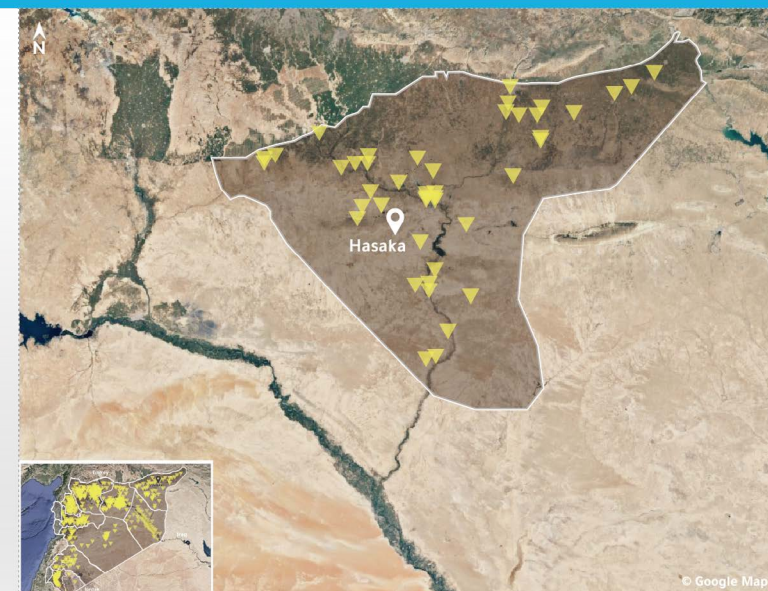
Locations of areas where civilians were killed as a result of landmine explosions in Homs governorate from March 2011 to April 2023

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Locations of areas where civilians were killed as a result of landmine explosions in Hasaka governorate from March 2011 to April 2023

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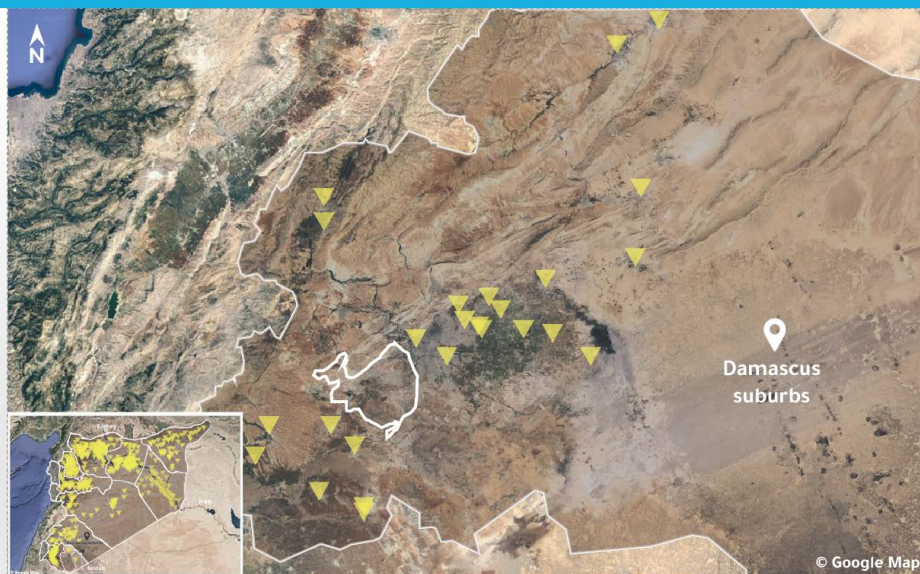


Damascus suburbs

governorate

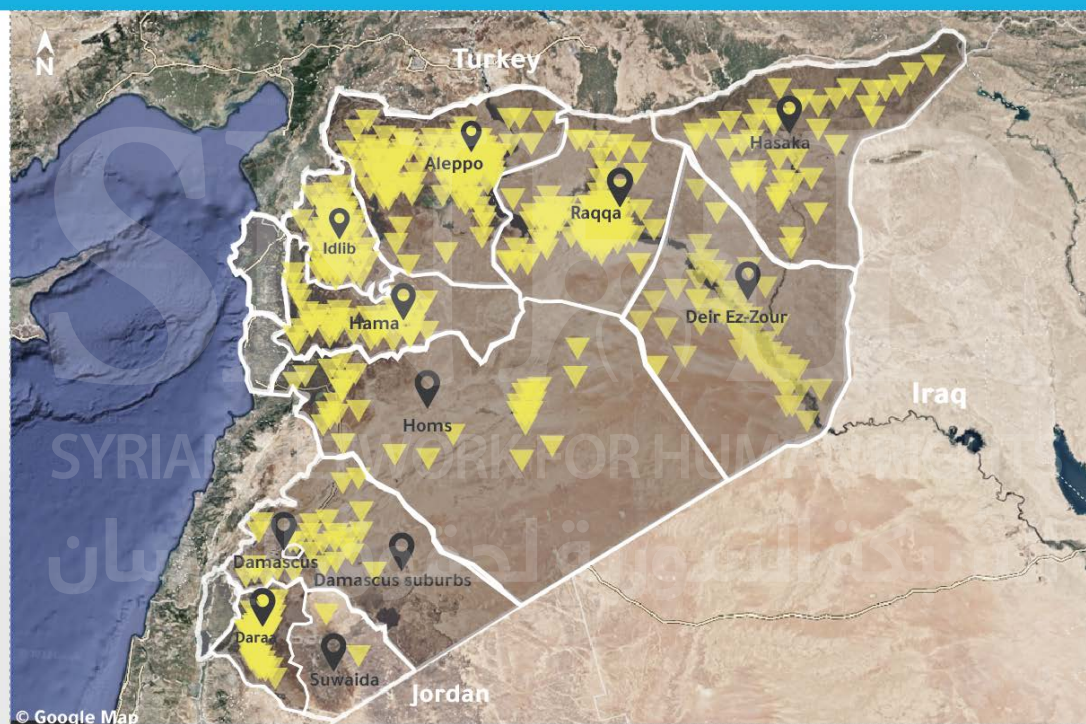
Locations of areas where civilians were killed as a result of landmine explosions in Damascus suburbs governorate from March 2011 to April 2023

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Locations of areas where civilians were killed as a result of landmine explosions in Syria from March 2011 to April 2023

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B. Maps showing the approximate location of areas where cluster munition remnants were dispersed

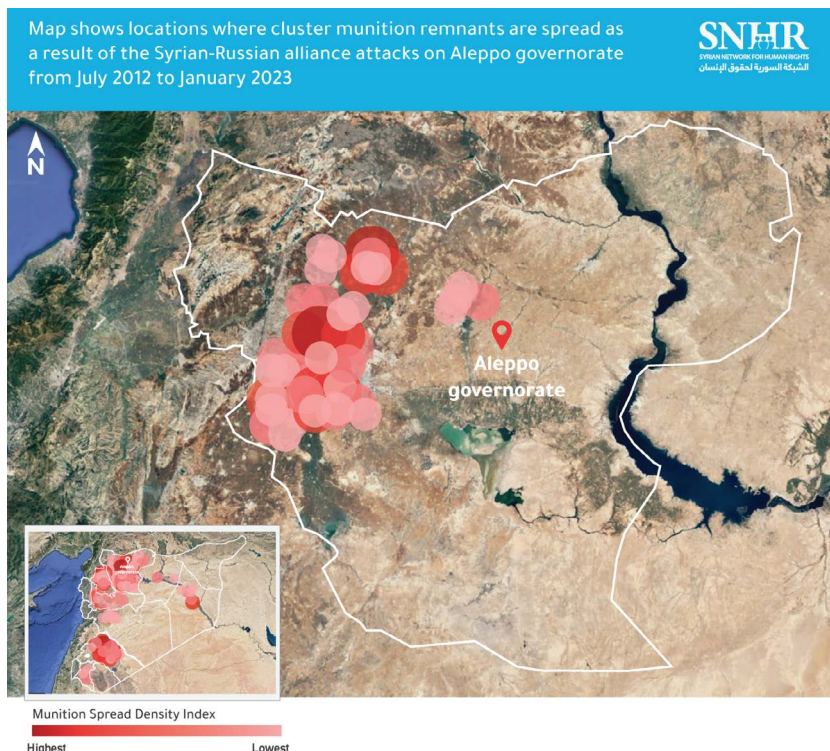
The maps we have created show areas which we suspect are contaminated with munition remnants and submunitions left from cluster munitions attacks. It should be noted that those areas marked on the maps reflect only the cluster munitions attacks we have been able to document and the resulting deaths from the explosion of submunitions. As such, they reflect the bare minimum of the scope of the dispersion of those submunitions. We have faced various challenges in creating those maps which hamper our ability to accurately estimate the numbers of submunitions remaining in the areas marked on the maps. Those challenges include:

- Dozens of types of cluster munitions have been used in Syria. Each type and model has a different range of dispersal and power, and each submunition contains a different number of fragmenting contents released on explosion
- When the container carrying the submunition explodes, it is not possible to ascertain the number of cluster submunitions that explode immediately. As such, there is no way to exactly determine how many live submunitions remain undetected, effectively turning them into landmines that can explode when anyone touches or approaches them.
- A certain area can be targeted in more than one attack. Some neighborhoods have been targeted in 10 separate attacks involving cluster munitions, while others were targeted in two. The number of attacks, and of rockets/shells used in each attack, as well as the type of cluster submunitions from each attack, their quantity, the percentage of those cluster submunitions that exploded, and the number remaining are all factors that affect the accumulation and distribution of cluster submunition in each area.

We have tried, insofar as possible, to design these maps in a way that shows the areas which saw a high frequency of cluster munitions attacks and a high death toll.

Below are six maps:

Aleppo governorate

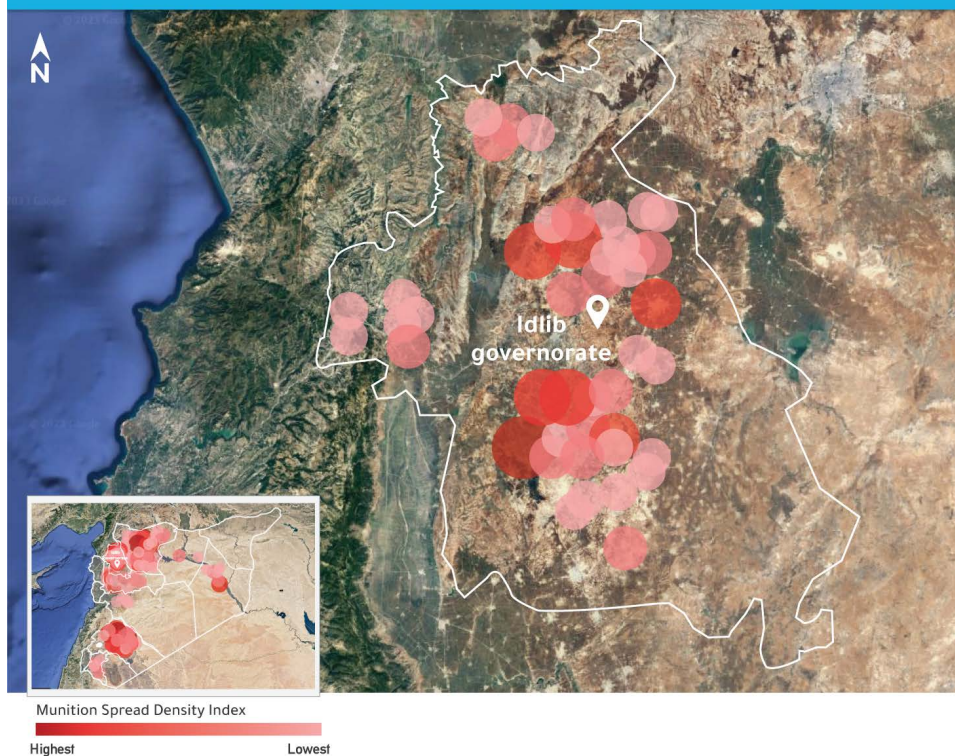


Idlib

governorate

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on Idlib governorate from July 2012 to January 2023

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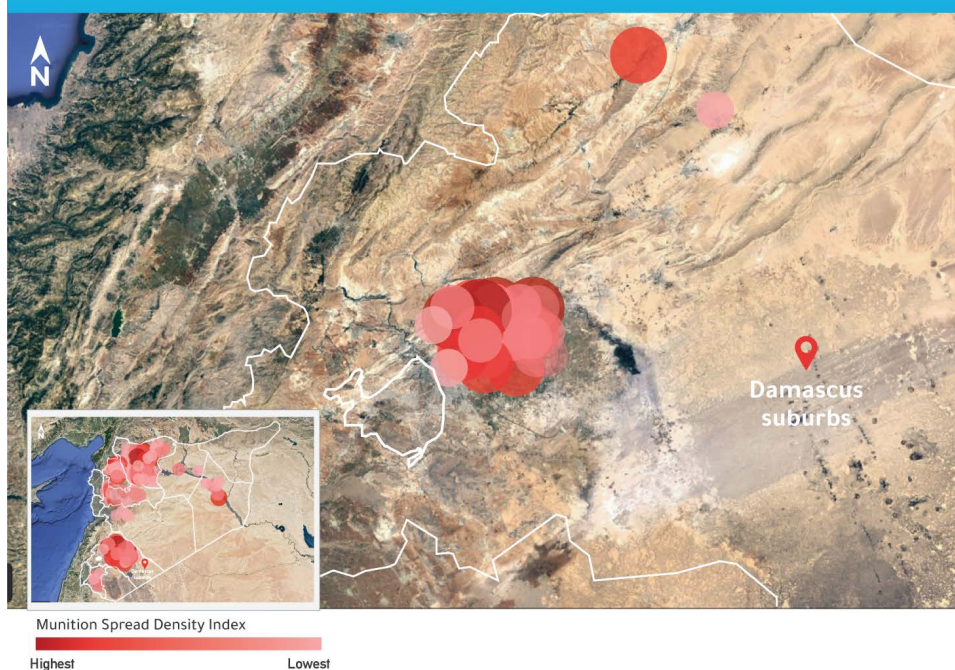


Damascus suburbs

governorate

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on Damascus suburbs governorate from July 2012 to January 2023

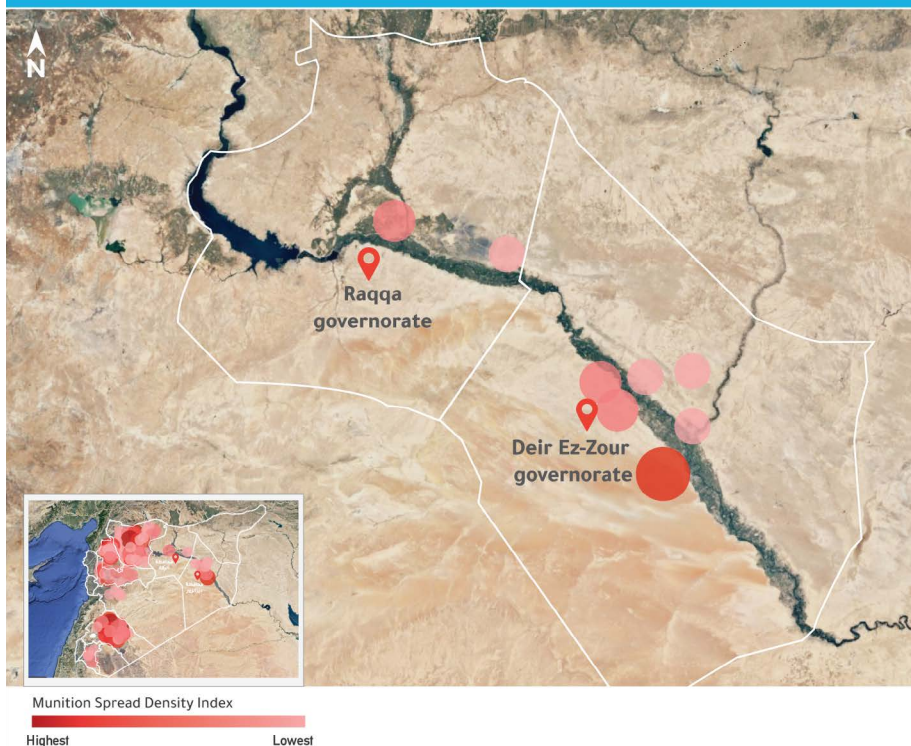
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Deir Ez-Zour and Raqqa governorate

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on the governorates of Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zour from July 2012 to January 2023

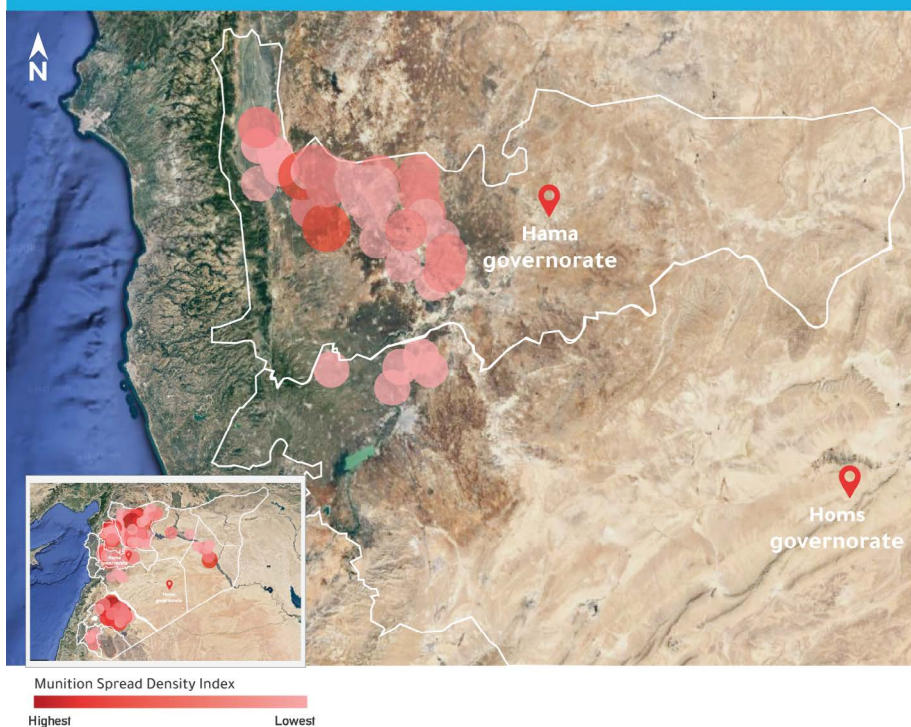
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Homs and Hama governorate

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on the governorates of Hama and Homs from July 2012 to January 2023

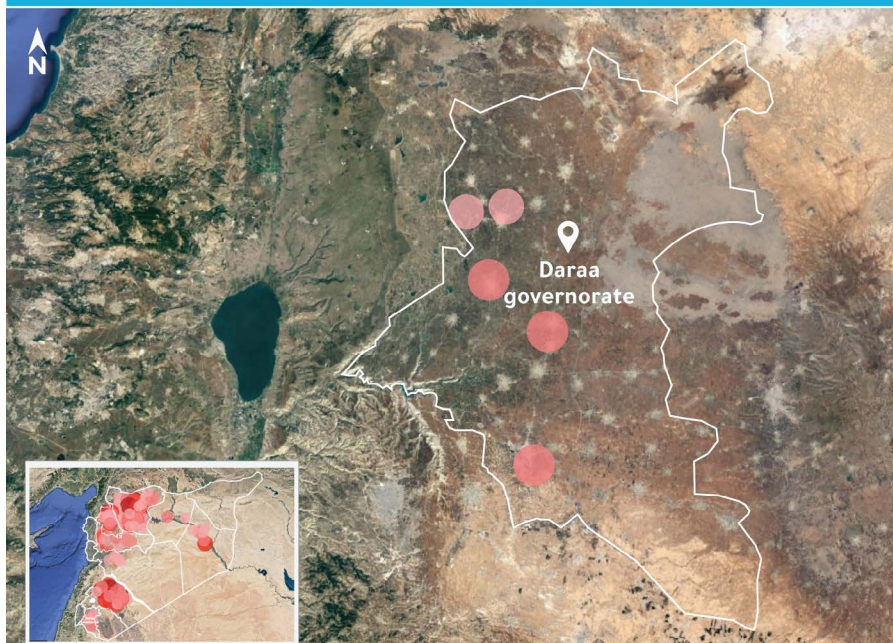
SNHR
SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان



Daraa governorate

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks on Daraa governorate from July 2012 to January 2023

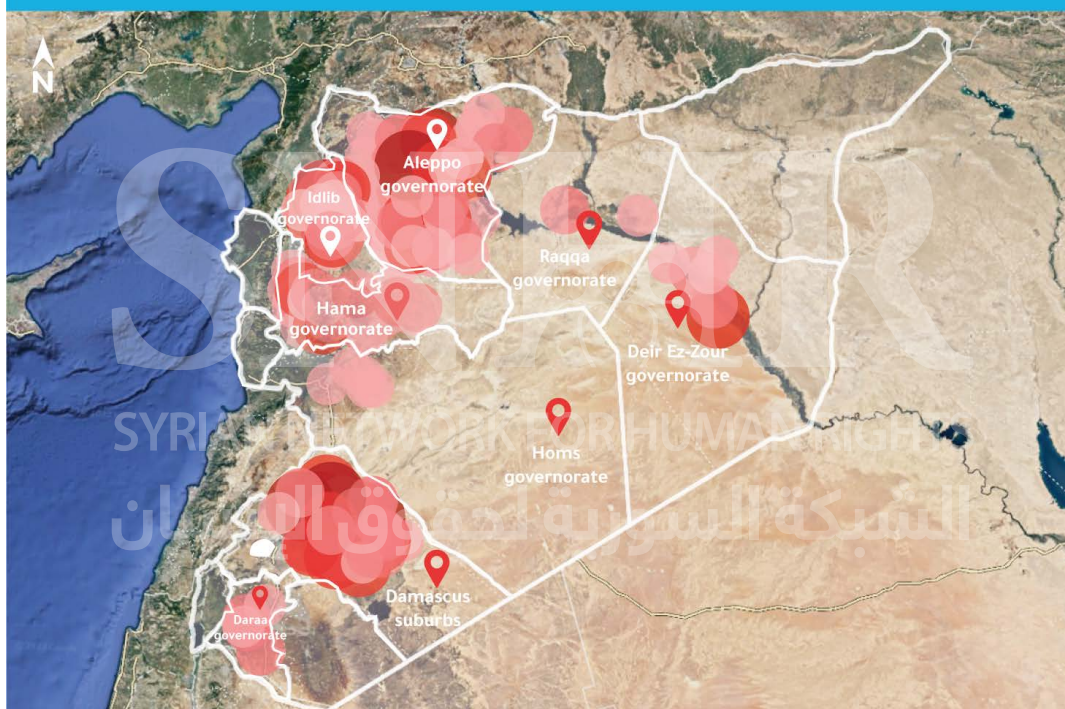
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Munition Spread Density Index
Highest Lowest

Map shows locations where cluster munition remnants are spread as a result of the Syrian-Russian alliance attacks in Syria from July 2012 to January 2023

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الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان



Munition Spread Density Index
Highest Lowest

In light of those maps, it is possible to say that certain characteristics marked the use of this indiscriminate weapon by the parties to the conflict and controlling forces, **most notably:**

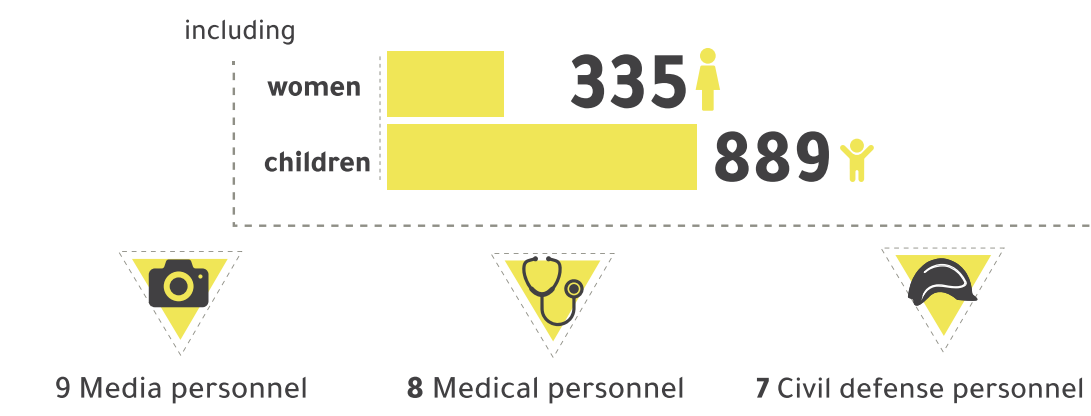
- ▼ The Syrian regime planted landmines in border areas, and on the illegal migration routes used by displaced people attempting to flee to neighboring countries, in order to obstruct the displacement of civilians. The Syrian regime's military arsenal and security apparatus spared no resource to pursue and terrorize those displaced who are still facing the horrors of death, bombardment, and arrest even after fleeing.
- ▼ The Syrian regime planted landmines initially to obstruct the advance of armed opposition fighters, but later to obstruct the advance of various other parties to the conflict. Landmines were used by the other parties for the same objective.
- ▼ The Syrian regime planted landmines at the entrances and exits of areas where the regime imposed a siege as a form of collective punishment in retaliation for embracing the anti-regime popular revolution. The two areas of Madaya and al-Zabadai are prominent examples of such cases. Other parties to the conflict and controlling forces also planted landmines around the areas they besieged. In this context, we monitored two types of siege - external ones aiming eventually to take control of a certain area (e.g., the two towns of Kafrayya and al-Fou'a which were besieged by the armed opposition for years), and an internal siege like the siege imposed by ISIS on most of the areas that fell under its control to prevent residents from escaping. To prevent residents fleeing from their areas, ISIS planted landmines on the routes used by civilians to flee.
- ▼ We also documented the use of locally made landmines by other non-regime parties to the conflict and controlling forces. Those parties may have also used Russian-made landmines which we believe they acquired after taking control of Syrian regime armories.
- ▼ The Syrian regime and other parties to the conflict and controlling forces planted landmines in some areas before withdrawal. This included planting landmines in roads, agricultural land, buildings, and even in vehicles and among furniture and other items in homes.

V. Analyzing the Death Toll Resulting from the Use of Landmines by the Parties to the Conflict in Syria

SNHR documented the killing of no fewer than 3,353 civilians; including 889 children, 335 women, eight medical personnel, seven Civil Defense personnel (White Helmets), and nine media activists, in hundreds of APL explosions in Syria between March 2011 and April 4, 2023. The death toll is divided into:

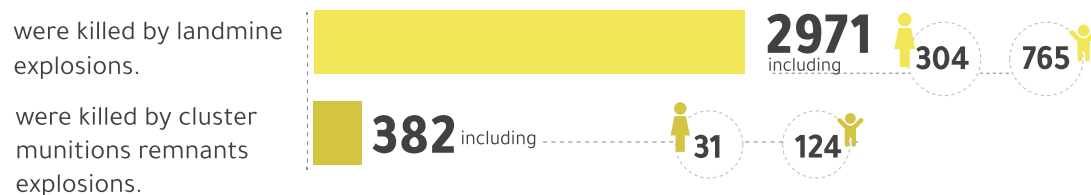
- 2,971 civilians, including 765 children and 304 women, who were killed by the explosion of landmines.
- 382 civilians, including 124 children and 31 women, who were killed by the explosion of cluster munition remnants.

At Least 3,353 Civilians have been killed



have been killed in hundreds of incidents involving anti-personnel landmines in Syria from March 2011 to April 4, 2023

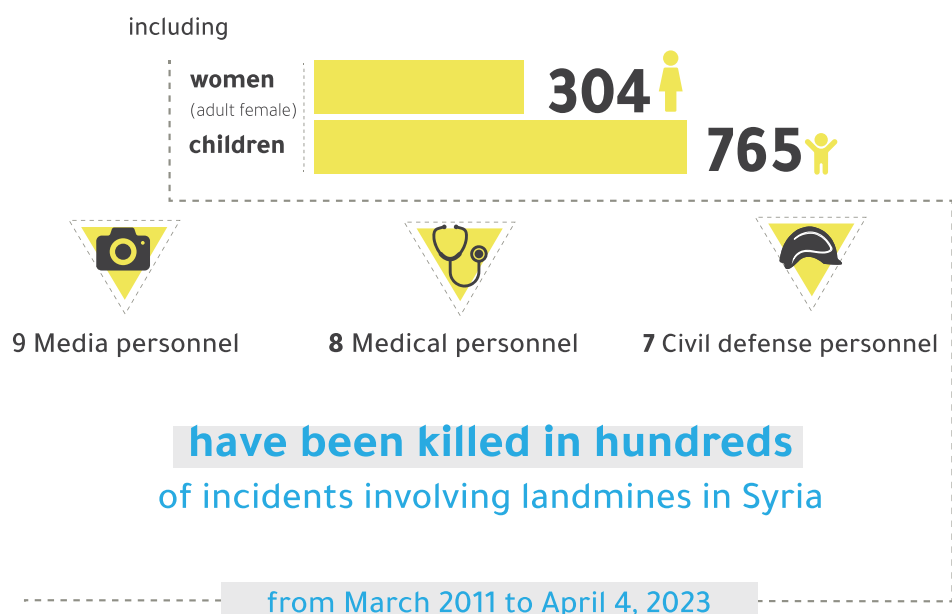
They are distributed as follows:



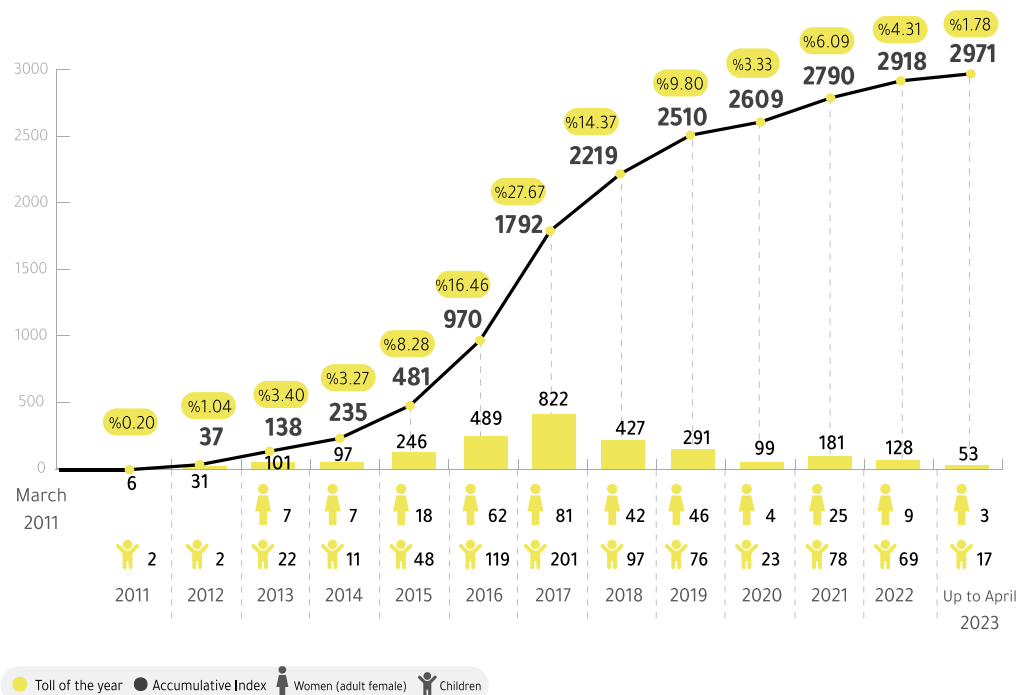
First: No fewer than 2,971 civilians killed by the explosion of landmines

SNHR documented the killing of no fewer than 2,971 civilians; including 765 children, 304 women (adult female), eight medical personnel, seven Civil Defense personnel (White Helmets), and nine media workers, in hundreds of landmine explosions across Syria. The death toll is distributed by year as follows:

At Least 2,971 Civilians have been killed

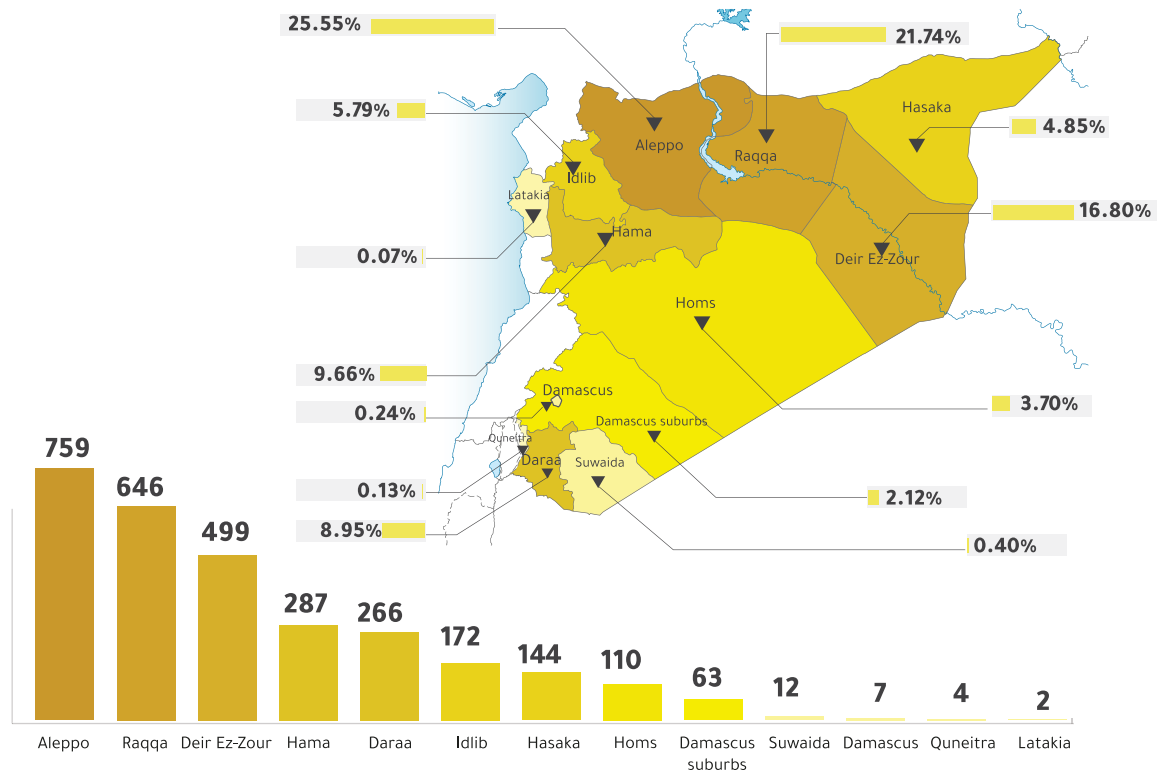


Distributed across the years as follows:



As shown on the graphs, approximately 28 percent of all victims killed by landmines were killed in 2017 which saw the highest number of deaths documented in any one year, followed by 2016 with 16 percent, and then 2018 with 15 percent. The graphs also show that deaths caused by landmines are still being documented despite the decline of military operations in Syria, and the fact that years have passed since minefields were established, as many of those are still being discovered by local organizations working on removing them, such as the Civil Defense (White Helmets). Accordingly, we believe that there are many minefields and sites containing undetected landmines, which will continue to pose a grave threat to Syria's future generations for decades to come, first and foremost to children.

The death toll is distributed by governorate as follows:



Analyzing the data shows that approximately 65 percent of all landmine-related deaths were documented in the three governorates of Aleppo (26 percent), Raqqqa (22 percent), and (17 percent), while approximately 25 percent of all landmine-caused deaths were recorded in Daraa (10 percent), Hama (nine percent), and Idlib (six percent). Meanwhile, the governorates of Damascus, Quneitra, Latakia, and Suwayda saw the lowest number of deaths caused by landmines with fewer than one percent taking place in all those governorates combined, and with no landmine-related deaths at all documented in Tartus. This disparity is caused by a number of factors, most notably the changes in military control, with multiple parties controlling a certain area over time; Aleppo governorate was one of the governorates that saw the highest rates of activity by various parties to the conflict and fast-moving changes in military control.

Second: No fewer than 382 civilians killed by the explosion of cluster munition remnants

Hundreds of cluster munitions that failed to explode have effectively turned into landmines.⁶ It is important to note that those remnants are still heavily scattered throughout Syria, as shown in the maps above. To this day, we still regularly encounter new incidents in which Syrian citizens are killed by the explosion of cluster munition remnants. We face special challenges in definitively attributing culpability in such incidents to either of the two parties to which we assign responsibility for attacks involving the use of cluster munitions, namely the Syrian regime and Russian forces.⁷ As such, we attribute culpability in cases of killing by the explosion of cluster munition remnants to the Syrian-Russian alliance.

SNHR documented the killing of no fewer than 382 civilians, including 124 children and 31 women, at the hands of the Syrian-Russian alliance forces. Those victims were killed by the explosion of cluster munition remnants that were left by cluster attacks carried out by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces between the first documented use of cluster munition in July 2012 and April 4, 2023.

At Least 382 Civilians have been killed

including



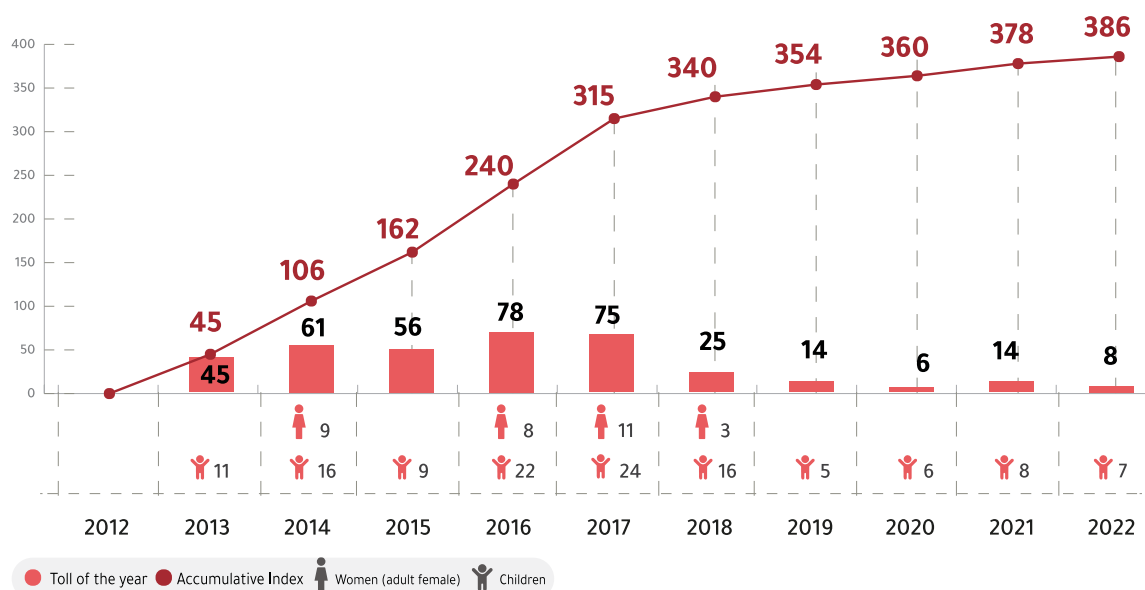
**were killed due to the explosion
of cluster munitions remnants that resulted
from cluster munitions attacks carried out
by Syrian-Russian Alliance forces**

from July 2012 to April 4, 2023

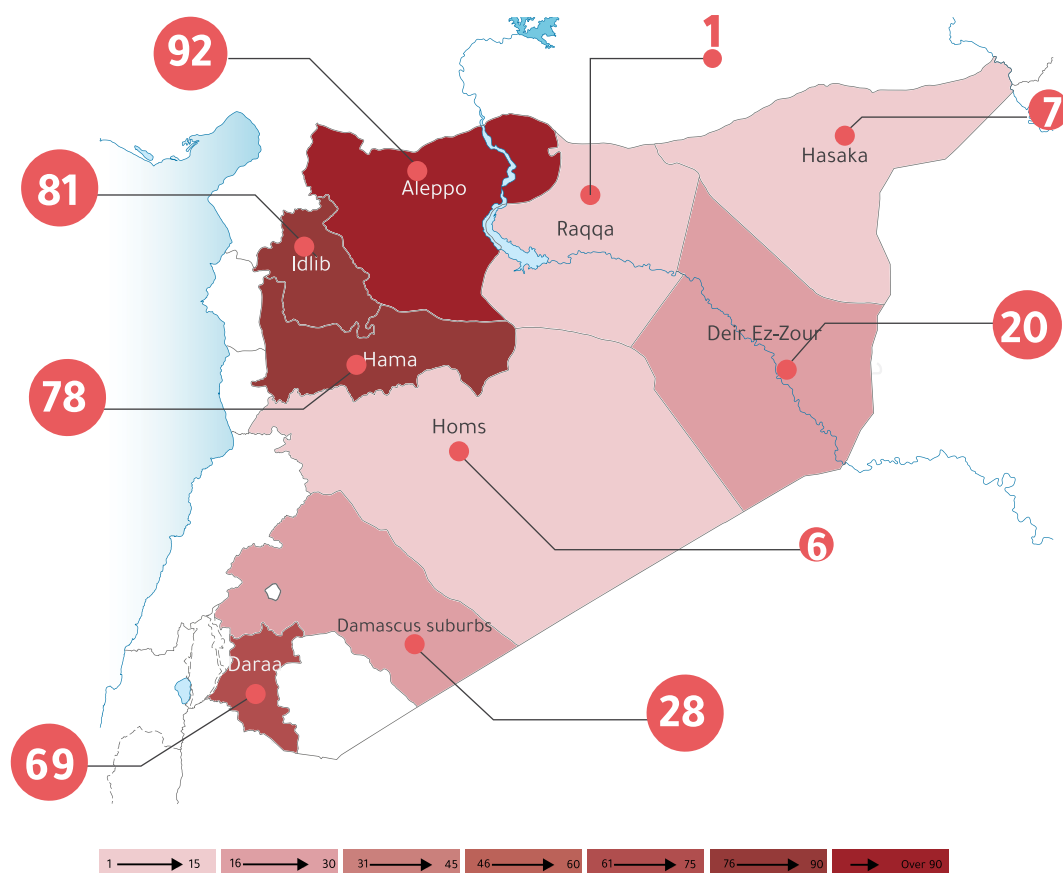
6. Approximately 10-40 percent of cluster submunitions do not explode at the time of the attack. Those can explode at any moment once they are touched. As such, they are effectively landmines.

7. Since the first documented use of cluster munitions in Syria, in July 2012, SNHR has been building a database specifically dedicated to the documentation of cluster munition attacks, feeling that this type of attack warrants special attention. SNHR's teams work tirelessly to ensure, insofar as is possible, that the type of munitions used in each attack, as well as the containers (both rockets and shells) carrying the cluster munitions, and the quantity of submunitions contained in each, are correctly identified. Carrying out this exacting work also helps in subsequently estimating the areas that have been contaminated by unexploded cluster bomb submunitions or bomblets. We also focus on identifying the launching platforms used or the airbases from which the warplanes that carried out the airborne attacks took off. According to the data we've collected through monitoring to date, the Syrian regime and Russian forces are the only parties that have used cluster munitions in Syria. Those attacks have been carried out using rockets or shells containing dozens/hundreds of submunitions that were dropped from warplanes or fired from launching platforms believed to be stationed in the Mediterranean sea or via rocket launchers. We have tried to distinguish between the attacks carried out by the Russian regime and the Syrian regime as much as possible.

The death toll is distributed by year as follows:



The death toll is distributed by governorates as follows:



On the subject of injuries

Landmines have caused disfigurement and serious injuries to civilians. In any landmine explosion, it's usual for hundreds of fragments to penetrate the victim's body, possibly resulting in amputation and the rupturing of arteries and blood vessels, not to mention eye and ear injuries. Even though it is difficult to accurately determine the number of victims injured as a result of landmine explosions, we estimate that at least 10,400 civilians have been injured, with many having to undergo amputation of limbs as a result amputated, and now being in need of artificial limbs and rehabilitation and support programs. Therefore, the continuing presence of landmines continues to pose a major obstacle to the work and return of IDPs, as well as the work of relief workers, Civil Defense personnel, and to their equipment, not to mention to the process of reconstruction and development.

VI. Notable Incidents of Landmine Explosion that Resulted in Casualties

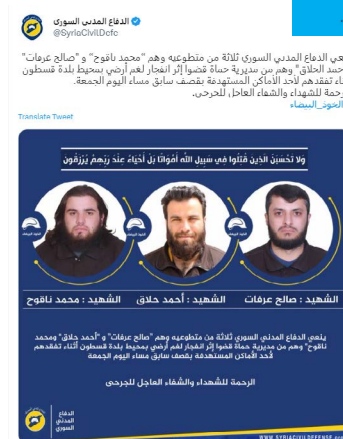
On Sunday, July 4, 2014, a 15-year-old boy named [Awwad Ali al-Mhidi](#) was killed by the explosion of a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, while he was herding sheep in Harasta city in eastern Damascus suburbs governorate, which was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time. Awwad is from al-Mayadeen city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour.



Awwad Ali al-Mhidi

On Friday, December 13, 2019, a landmine planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in Qastoun village in Sahl al-Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama governorate, killing three Civil Defense members: Ahmad Hal-laq, Mohammad Naqouh, and Saleh Jeran Arafat, while they were inspecting the area and removing war remnants. The victims were members of the War Remnants Removal Team responsible for defusing Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) at Qasatoun Civil Defense Center. The area was under the control of armed opposition factions/SNA at the time of the attack.

[The Civil Defense published a tribute](#) mourning the deaths of Ahmad, Mohammad, and Saleh on its official Twitter page.



- [Ahmad Hallaq](#), 27-year-old, from Atshan village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, has worked with the Civil Defense since 2014. Ahmad was the head of the War Remnants Removal Center.
- [Mohammad Naqouh](#), 23-year-old, from Ma'ar Zita village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, was married with two children, has worked with the Civil Defense since 2015.
- Thirty-five-year-old [Saleh Jeran Arafat](#), from Kafr Zita city in the northern suburbs of Hama governorate, who was married with one child had been working with the Civil Defense since 2014.



Saleh Arafat, Ahmad Hallaq, Mohammad Naqouh

On Sunday, March 7, 2021, a landmine, planted in the outskirts of al-Shahatiya village in the Wadi al-Izeib area in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded when a vehicle passed over it, [killing the 18 civilians in the vehicle, including 11 women](#). The vehicle was transporting civilians, workers who were gathering desert truffles. The village was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Friday, April 9, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded near the al-Omar Oil Field area in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, killing a child, a boy named Amjad Shukri al-Hamri, from al-Boukamal city in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate. The area was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, April 10, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in al-Mray'iya village in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour, killing [an engineer named Mohammad Ahmad al-Bad'i](#) from the same village. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, May 2, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in northern al-Rahjan village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate. The blast took place near a car owned by a civilian named Ibrahim Abdou al-Tabsh, leading to his death. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, August 1, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in Kafr Sajna village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, killing a woman named Alaa Abdul Karim al-Eisa, and wounding her sister. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, August 11, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded near al-Bara village in the Jabal al-Zawiya area in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, killing a child, a boy named Mohammad al-Sahou, from the same village. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the attack.



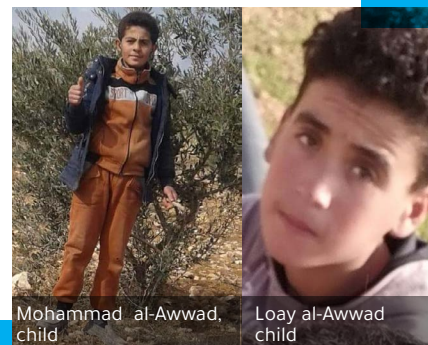
Mohammad al-Sahou, child

On Friday, November 5, 2021, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded on a dirt road in the al-Dawa area to the west of Tadmur city in the eastern suburbs of Homs governorate, when a car passed over it. The explosion killed seven civilians, including one child and two women. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Monday, January 3, 2022, landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land to the west of al-Sheikh Helal village, which is administratively a part of al-Salmaiya city, in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, killed a 17-year-old child, a boy named Rabeh Khaled. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, February 15, 2022, landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural lands to the east of Aqareb village in the eastern suburbs of Hama governorate, killing two children while they were herding sheep in the area. The children, a 15-year-old boy named Saif al-Numan and a 14-year-old girl named Najma al-Nouman, were nomadic travellers from the suburbs of Raqqa governorate. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Tuesday, March 1, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land in southern al-Mahsnli village in the suburbs of Manbej in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo, killing two children, boys named Mohammad & Loay al-Awwad from al-Jrad village in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, while they were herding sheep. The explosion also wounded three other children. The area was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.



Mohammad al-Awwad, child

Loay al-Awwad child

On Thursday, March 10, 2022, a 15-year-old boy named [Wahid Mohammad Qasim](#), from Handarat Camp in Aleppo city, died of wounds sustained the day before, March 9, 2022, in the explosion of a landmine whose source we have not yet been able to identify that took place inside al-Uruba School in Jub al-Qabba neighborhood in Aleppo city. The explosion took place while Wahid was playing nearby in the schoolyard. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Thursday, May 5, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have not yet been able to identify, exploded in al-Mwyeleh village in the western suburbs of Raqqa governorate, killing a 20-year-old male civilian from the village, named Hassan al-Mes'ef . The area was under the control of SDF at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, May 7, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have not yet been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land in the vicinity of al-Fqea village in the northern suburbs of Daraa governorate, killing two children from the village, boys named Abdul Rahman Zaki al-Masri and Mohammad Naser Foad al-Masri. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Saturday, July 30, 2022, seven-year-old girl named Dumou' Ghassan al-Ruji, from al-Sermaniya village in western Hama governorate, was killed, while her brother was injured by the explosion of a cluster submunition left from a previous bombardment by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in al-Ghassaniya village in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

On Wednesday, August 24, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land near the village of San in the eastern suburbs of Idlib governorate, killing three civilians while they were collecting the fig harvest. The three civilians were: Abdul al-Rahman al-Abdullah and his son Sanad, from Abu Rwyel village in the southern suburb of Aleppo, and Zakwan Khalil from Qmainas village in the suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the attack.

On Tuesday, August 16, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land located between the villages of Kansafra and al-Fattira in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate, killing two civilians while they were collecting the fig harvest. The two civilians have been named as [Mohammad Omar Khalil](#) and [Saddam Dani](#), both from Kansafra village. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the attack.

On Monday, September 5, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in a building not intended for residency, killing four sibling children while they were playing there. The children were named as Safa (aged eight), Nour (aged nine), Randa (aged 12), and Ahmad Bassam al-Mustafa (aged 14), from Jabala al-Gharbiya village in the southern suburbs of Idlib governorate. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and HTS at the time of the attack.

On Sunday, October 24, 2022, Mahmoud Mohammad Nafisa, a child born in 2011 from Douma city in Damascus suburbs governorate, was killed, while another child was wounded, by the explosion of a cluster submunition left by a previous bombardment by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in an agricultural land near al-Rahma Mosque in al-Hajjariya neighborhood in southern Douma city, in Eastern Ghouta, Damascus suburbs governorate. The city was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, November 13, 2022, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land near Maqta' Hajar Kabir village, which is administratively a part of Manbej city in the eastern suburbs of Aleppo governorate, killing two civilians from the village, 22-year-old [Hasan al-Jneid](#) and 25-year-old Hamid Theeb al-Ibrahim. The village was under the control of the SDF at the time of the incident.

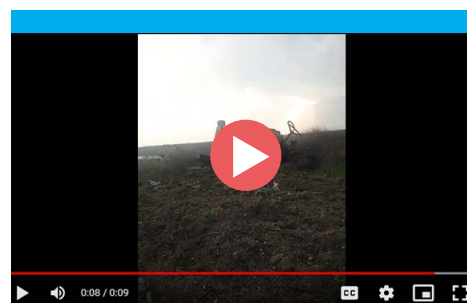


On Sunday, November 20, 2022, child named Mohammad Saleh al-Daghli was killed by the explosion of a cluster submunition left by a previous bombardment by the Syrian-Russian alliance forces in an agricultural land near al-Dghali village, administratively a part of Jesr al-Shoghhour city, in the western suburbs of Idlib governorate. The village was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, January 15, 2023, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in al-Dwair town in the eastern suburbs of Deir Ez-Zour governorate, killing two eight-year-old boys, Ryad Assad al-Hadri al-Iliwi al-Hassan and Sayyaf Mohammad al-Khadr al-Iliwi al-Hassan, and critically wounding a third child named Moatesem Abdullah al-Hadri. The explosion took place while the three children, all from al-Dwair, were herding sheep. The area was under the control of Syrian regime forces at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, January 29, 2023, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded near Bashmra village, which is administratively a part of Nahiyat Sherawa in the suburbs of Afrin in the northern suburbs of Aleppo, killing a 14-year-old boy from the village, named [Eisou Rahmou Arabou](#), while he was herding sheep in the area. The area was under the SDF's control at the time of the incident.

On Sunday, January 29, 2023, a landmine, planted by a party we have so far been unable to identify, exploded in agricultural land to the east of al-Qahera village in Sahl al-Ghab in the western suburbs of Hama, killing a civilian named [Anas Ahmad Abdul Karim al-Saeed](#), from al-Laj village in the western suburbs of Idlib, while he was plowing his land. The fire caused by the explosion also burnt his tractor. The area was under the joint control of armed opposition factions and the HTS at the time of the attack.



Video showing the tractor burning following a landmine explosion in al-Qahera village in Sahl al-Ghab - January 29, 2023

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

- To this day, landmines are still causing deaths and injuries, which is an alarming indication of their extensive use by the various parties to the conflict in Syria. This also suggests that there are many areas in which landmines were planted and yet to be discovered.
- The Syrian governorates that saw changes in control over time and have been under the control of different forces are likely the ones with the highest spread of landmines. There is a persistent threat to the lives of those governorates' residents, especially children.
- Over one-third of the victims who were killed by landmines were women and children according to SNHR's database on victims, which demonstrates the indiscriminate nature of this weapon.
- Landmines are an indiscriminate weapon that is prohibited by international law, and whose only aim is to create mass terror and fear. According to Protocol I to the Geneva Convention, indiscriminate attacks are: "those which are not directed at a specific military objective; those which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or those which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited."⁸ As such, landmines clearly violate the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets,⁹ as well as the principles of precautions and proportionality in attacks.¹⁰ The disregard for those rules constitutes a war crime according to international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- All of the parties involved in the conflict have failed to disclose maps showing where landmines are planted, and failed to seriously work on removing them.
- The Security Council should bear primary responsibility for the state of insecurity in Syria, due to its miserable failure to protect civilians in the country for the past 12 years, and to bring about a process of political transition so far. As long as the conflict is going on, chaos, violations, and prohibited acts will continue to run rampant.

Recommendations

UN and the international community

- Increase the logistic assistance to the local organizations and local police working on detecting and disarming landmines.
- Allocate a significant sum from the UN fund for the removal of landmines to the issue of removing landmines in Syria, especially in areas that show willingness to undertake this mission in a transparent and honest way.

8. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (1977), Article 51 (4). <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-51?activeTab=undefined>

9. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Rules 1-10 of the international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule1#~:text=international%20armed%20conflicts-.Rule%201..not%20be%20directed%20against%20civilians.>

10. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Rules 11-24 of the international humanitarian law. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule11#~:text=international%20armed%20conflicts-.Rule,Indiscriminate%20attacks%20are%20prohibited>

- Start compensating victims and their families, and focus on providing psychological treatment for the survivors, as well as support humanitarian organizations working on providing psychological care.
- There will be no true stability and security in Syria without a political transition towards democracy and human rights. This will not come to be without making serious efforts and applying serious pressure within a concrete and strict timetable.

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI)

- Condemn the use of landmines by the various parties to the Syrian conflict.
- Prepare a report to shed light on this dangerous trend in the Syrian conflict, and call on the Security Council and the international community to spend more resources to address this issue on all fronts, including by raising awareness and providing logistic assistance.
- Train Syrian organizations in removing landmines and cluster munition remnants, and raise awareness at the local level of these types of threats. Furthermore, work on pinpointing the most prominent locations where landmines were planted.

All parties to the conflict

- Respect the rule of international humanitarian law and of international human rights law.
- End the practices of planting landmines that target civilians and civilian objects, which do not distinguish between civilians and fighters, and which are prohibited by international law, and destroy all stocked landmines.
- Every party should start the process of removing landmines in their respective area of control, especially areas where landmines have been planted, whether that area is under the party's control or has regained control of said area and is aware of landmines' locations.
- Produce detailed maps of where landmines were planted, especially for civilian areas or areas with close proximity to residential gatherings.

Acknowledgment and Condolences

We extend our most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and affected we have known and documented. Our most sincere gratitude goes to the local families and activists and victims' families for their valued contribution to our databases and to this report.



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